The Journey to Academy Principalship

by

Rona Mackenzie-Batterbury

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Abstract

This study explored the life and career journeys of twenty Principals leading sponsored academies in disadvantaged areas, which opened in England during 2010. The research focused on: the emergence of the academy programme; the significant influences on the life and career journey; the reasons behind the Principals' application for academy leadership. The career pathway model identified by Gronn (1999) acted as the reference framework, focusing on the phases of formation and accession.

This qualitative study adopted interview survey methodology, utilising the semi-structured interview method. Interviews were undertaken between September 2010 and January 2011 and explored the significant influences on three phases of leader development: the formative years; the journey to academy principalship; academy principalship.

The findings showed that the process of leader formation for these respondents was influenced throughout their lives by contextual factors. In the formative years, family and schooling experiences were significant. During the career pathway, four categories of significant influence were identified: influential people; significant experiences; opportunities and rewards; impediments and challenges. These nurturing experiences influenced the development of the leaders' values, personal qualities and leadership ambitions. An emerging theoretical framework is proposed to demonstrate the key influences.

The emergence of the sponsored academy programme is detailed within the Review of Literature chapter. The fundamental factors underpinning the motivation to lead an academy were found to be driven by core values, promulgated from formative experiences and enhanced during the career pathway. The academy model was seen to provide a fresh start and aid the realisation of their ambition to work in a challenging, disadvantaged educational environment, making a positive difference to raise aspiration and improve the outcomes for students and their families.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to a number of people for their support during my doctoral journey. The academy Principals, for agreeing to be interviewed during such a critical time in their new principalship. Dr. Chris Rhodes, for his reassuring 'elephant' advice for doctoral success...'bit, by bit, by bit'. Professor Tom Bisschoff, for his steadfast belief and supportive challenge, who both sustained my motivation and fuelled my desire to produce the best doctoral thesis possible. My husband, Paul. This remarkable journey has been even more special thanks to his love, support, generosity of time and outstanding proof reading skills! Having spent the best part of six years chattering on about my research I am certain that the production of this thesis is welcome respite for us both. And, guess what? I get to wear that floppy hat now!

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Chapter Three: Research Design

Chapter Four: Presentation of Empirical Work

Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

AAA   Anti-Academies Alliance

ASCL   Association of School and College Leaders

BERA   British Educational Research Association

CPD   Continuing Professional Development

CTC   City Technology College

DCSF   Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007 - 2010)

DE   Department for Education (1992 – 1995 and 2010 - present)

DES   Department of Education and Science (1964 – 1992)

DFEE   Department for Education and Employment (1995 - 2001)

DfES   Department for Education and Skills (2001 – 2007)

GCSE   General Certificate of Secondary Education

HE   Higher Education

LA   Local Authority

LEA   Local Education Authority

NAHT   National Association of Headteachers

NAO   National Audit Office

NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters / Union of Women Teachers
NC	National College
NCSL	National College of School Leadership
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate of Education
PwC	PriceWaterhouseCooper
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SSAT	Specialist Schools and Academies Trust
TES	Times Educational Supplement
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UK	United Kingdom
YPLA	Young People's Learning Agency

Chapter One: Introduction

Table of Contents

Introduction

The experiences of secondary school practitioners during their pathway to headship have been well researched and documented (Gronn, 1999; Day & Bakioglu, 1996). Researchers have explored the early socialisation influences that have made a significant contribution to the development of the educational values of the Head Teacher as they move through their career (Gronn, 1999; Parker, 2002). Factors including upbringing, significant people, professional encounters and career opportunities have been identified as critical in shaping not only the person as an individual and leader but the journey that secondary practitioners follow, contributing to their ultimate success in achieving headship (Weindling & Earley, 1987; Gronn, 1999).

Academics have identified, refined and mapped out the stages or phases believed to constitute the pathway towards and through the tenure of headship, with the emergence of a number of time-framed career pathway models, including Gronn (1999) and Earley and Weindling (2004). Such models collectively define the headship journey as a planned, linear and progressive pathway. In contrast Ouston (1997) identified each individual's pathway to headship as a unique and diverse experience, created through opportunities, choices and decisions. Ouston surmises that there is no pre-requisite or 'mould' which guarantees an ability to lead in education, commenting that, "...good educational leaders emerge from a wide range of backgrounds and experience" (Ouston, 1997:170).

It appears to the researcher that there lies a gap within the literature regarding school leadership. In-depth, critical research that explores the journey from early childhood

encounters, through formal education, encompassing professional opportunities and experiences, ultimately leading to the successful appointment as a school leader, appear not to have been comprehensively explored in the last ten years. As noted by Fidler and Atton, "...there is little in the literature about career paths before headship" (Fidler & Atton, 2003:128).

Research Context

Focusing specifically on the secondary school sector, of interest to the researcher is the development of a range of new educational establishments in England. As a result of these changes that have taken place over the last quarter of a century, the nature of headship has undoubtedly changed (Macbeath, Oduro, Jacka & Hobby, 2006). From the introduction of City Technology Colleges (CTCs) in 1988, the United Kingdom New Labour government's desire to, "provide alternatives to traditional education" (Ward & Eden, 2009:51) promoted the financial involvement of businesses in funding educational establishments. The introduction of 'city academies', latterly termed 'academies', following the 2002 Education Act, built on the work of the CTCs and the 'Fresh Start' policy and signified the start of a swift and nationwide development of the academies programme.

The title of this thesis identifies the research focus on the academies sector. It is critical to clarify that this research is undertaken within the 'sponsored' academies setting. This first wave of academies, subsequently referred to as 'sponsored' academies, have been defined by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, renamed the Department for Education (DE) in May 2010 (Shepherd, 2011a)) as:

"...all-ability, state-funded schools established and managed by sponsors from a wide range of backgrounds, including high-performing schools and colleges, universities, individual philanthropists, businesses, the voluntary sector and the faith communities" (DCSF, 2008a).

Located predominantly in areas of deprivation, academies were intended to 'turn-around' underachieving or failing schools. Sponsors, predominantly from the business sector, provided the governance of these academies. With the restrictions of local authority protocols and controls removed, innovation and entrepreneurialism were located firmly at the heart of the programme.

By the summer of 2010 over two hundred sponsored academies had been formally opened throughout England, spanning eighty-three Local Authorities (LAs). The new coalition government, formed in 2010, fully supported the programme and as such hastily secured the Academies Bill in July 2010 (Toynbee, 2010). The academies model has continued to develop with changes including the removal of the financial pre-requisite previously required for an academy status application. This signified the emergence of a new wave of academies, ready to open from September 2010 onwards, commonly referred to as 'converter' academies (Machin & Vernoit, 2010). This research project does not address the experiences of leaders in converter academies and is located securely within the sponsored academy context.

The Academies Programme and the Role of the Principal

It is believed by the researcher that the introduction of the sponsored academy model, bringing changes in governance, accountability and autonomy, contributed to the re-synthesis

of the role and responsibilities of the Head Teacher. It is important to highlight the different terminology which will be adopted throughout this research project; within the academy context, the role of Head Teacher is referred to as an academy 'Principal'. Therefore, both the term 'Principal' and 'Head Teacher' will be used dependent upon the context within which they lead. The researcher will explore the journeys that have led educational professionals to their sponsored academy principalship; research into such journeys appears to be unchartered. Publications have noted the emergence of academy Principals from a variety of backgrounds, not solely through a traditional, education-based leadership route (Shepherd, 2009). Previous assumptions of a suitable age at which to achieve principalship appear to have been dismissed (Plummer, 2010). Alongside such changes, new job titles and roles were evident through weekly advertisements in the Times Educational Supplement (TES); this appears to reflect the changes in roles and the attached responsibilities. It is believed by the researcher that this project has taken place at a critical time, exploring the career journeys leading to the successful appointment to the post of Principal in a sponsored academy in a deprived area in England.

Research Focus

In order to secure the focus for this research, the micro-contexts and career phases defined by Gronn (1999) underpin this project. The exploration of the journeys of academy Principals, taking up post in a sponsored academy after 1st January 2010, explores whether their journeys mirror the experiences, influences and phases described by Gronn (1999). Focused on the three macro-contexts and the subsequent phases of formation and accession outlined by Gronn (1999), the experiences of and key influences on these Principals is explored, identified

and categorised. How have their personal experiences, through formative years, school education and professional career pathways, paved their journey to ultimately achieve academy principalship? The perceived impact that these factors have had on the journey to principalship is explored. This contributes to a wider discussion on the factors attracting Principals to take on the leadership of a sponsored academy. The creation of formulated research questions assist the researcher in structuring this thesis in order to develop an appreciation of the nuances of the life and career journey of academy Principals.

Research Questions

The key research questions capturing the focus for this research project are:

1. How have academies emerged?

2. Why did the Principals apply for the role of Principal in a sponsored academy?

3. What are the most significant influences in the journey to academy principalship?

4. Why have these influences been so significant?

The remainder of this introductory chapter sets the context for this research project. The justifications for conducting this research are outlined, including the researcher's personal motivations for embarking on the study. The literature search strategies, method and methodology deployed for the study are summarised, with an explanation of the critical ethical considerations and the audience for whom this research may be of interest. Finally, the structure for the following chapters of the thesis is outlined.

Research Justification

It is evident that the academies movement developed at great pace during this research project. The newly formed coalition government's desire to develop the academies programme has been emphasised through a number of actions, including hastily secured legislation (Toynbee, 2010), the increase in the number of sponsored academies and the changes to pre-requisite criteria, enabling schools other than those deemed as 'failing schools' to apply for academy status (Williams, 2010). Developments influenced not only the nature and key characteristics of the sponsored academies programme, but resulted in the emergence of the converter academies programme. Such changes evoked constant, almost daily, media furore around the academies programme. The apparent need for research to be undertaken in the academies setting (Gunter, Woods & Woods, 2008) suggested this was a timely and well-situated focus for academic research.

A key motivating factor for this project lay in an apparent emerging gap in research and published literature. The academy Principal lies at the heart of this research project: Macaulay noted a significant lack of research undertaken with regards to this audience (Macaulay, 2008). National audits highlighted a lack of potential school leaders, contributing to a leadership crisis (NCSL, 2010a): it was increasingly evident that an increase in sponsored academies would contribute further to this issue (Howson, 2010). A great deal of our knowledge and understanding regarding the journey to principalship appeared out of date and growing in irrelevance as the nature of our educational establishments and the role of the Principal changed and developed. Research focusing on the personal experiences and career journeys of Principals in academies had not taken place at the time of writing. Equally, we

had yet to consider why leaders were selecting sponsored academies as the establishment of choice for their principalship post. As such, this research project appeared fitting and relevant to the educational climate of the time.

The personal motivations behind this project lay in the researchers desire to secure the post of Principal in her own professional career. The researcher holds the post of Deputy Head Teacher in a mainstream comprehensive school in the East of England, following promotion from the post of Director (commonly referred to as Deputy Head) in an academy in the North West of England. This research project may well have a direct impact on the researcher and other aspiring Principals as they analyse their own career journeys and consider their desire to lead a school or academy and thus map out their career pathway.

Literature Search Strategies

In order to secure the theoretical foundations of this research project a range of strategies were adopted to identify suitable literature. The use of internet search engines such as 'Google Scholar' identified appropriate websites and provided links to published academic literature. An electronic library catalogue search highlighted key authors, professional journal articles, books and research papers; reference lists were utilised to identify further reading.

In order to access new academic publications, a ZETOC search was set up to provide daily updates. The Guardian was viewed on a daily basis, due to the breadth and depth of educational articles published, and the TES was viewed weekly. The researcher continued to

utilise these literature search strategies throughout the period of the research project, given the ever changing nature of the academies programme and the frequent publication of literary updates.

The Review of Literature

This review of relevant literature commences with an exploration of the key terminology underpinning the research project. An initial investigation of the emergence of the academies programme focuses on a wide range of government publications, stemming from the Department of Education and Science (DES) (1986) and including more recent, critical work by authors such as Gillard (2008) and Chitty (2008). The political dimension of the academies programme is considered, initially through key documentation including the speeches of David Blunkett (2000), the annual academies evaluations conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) (2003-2008), the work of Ball (2007) and research undertaken by the Special Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) (2010).

In order to give an accurate account of the developments of the academies programme to the start of the research project, the controversy that surrounded their introduction is considered through the critical writing of authors including Hatcher (2006), Beckett (2007), Chitty (2008), Powell (2008), Glatter (2009) and Ward and Eden (2009). In order to explore the development and impact of the sponsored academies programme, evaluative studies undertaken by researchers including PwC (2003-2008), Needham and Gleeson (2006), the National Audit Office (NAO) (2007), Rogers and Migniuolo (2007) and Machin & Vernoit

(2010) are discussed. The work of Gunter, Wood and Woods (2008) and Macaulay (2008) in addressing areas worthy of research in the academies' movement is acknowledged.

In order to appreciate the motivation to principalship, research including that conducted by Early, Evans, Gold, Collarbone and Halpin (2002), Earley and Weindling (2004), Cranston (2007) and the NCSL (2009) is fully explored. The crucial reasons for selecting an academy as the setting for a school leadership post incorporates discussions around various research projects including those undertaken by Rogers and Migniuolo (2007), PwC (2008) and the National College (NC) (2011).

In order to appreciate the breadth of research conducted into the career pathways followed by school leaders, a number of critical works including those of Weindling and Earley (1987), Day and Bakioglu (1996), Ribbins (1997), Gronn (1999) and Weindling (1999) are explored. These act to secure the underpinning theoretical model for this research project.

Research Strategy, Methodology and Methods

This research project is firmly grounded in the humanistic domain (Ribbins & Gunter, 2002), seeking to unearth knowledge-for-understanding (Wallace & Poulson, 2003) regarding the career pathways of academy leaders. The ontological approach is nominalist and the project is grounded in both the interpretivist paradigm (Thomas, 2009) and the constructivist paradigm (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). This is explored in full in the third chapter of this thesis.

The research project utilised a qualitative approach. The multiple case study methodology was adopted, providing, "a unique example of real people in real situations" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:181). Twenty academy Principals were purposefully selected, all having taken up a principalship post in a sponsored academy in England after the 1st of January 2010. Curriculum vitae were requested prior to interview in order to explore Gronn's historical macro-context (Gronn, 1999), to aid the data collection process and to support triangulation.

The interview was chosen as the method for data collection. Through conducting semi-structured interviews, a series of pre-designed questions provided a suitably structured framework to ensure the data collected was focused and relevant. This method also offers the flexibility to respond to interviewee responses and modify questions appropriately. The design of interview questions around Gronn's three macro-contexts and first two stages of formation and accession (Gronn, 1999) provided structure and a theoretical grounding. In order to support the development of effective interview questions prior to embarking on the research project, a pilot study was undertaken with three academy Principals. Following the pilot study, interview questions were refined and then adopted as the framework for the following twenty interviews.

Principals eligible for inclusion in this research were identified through the records held by the SSAT and each was contacted, firstly by letter (Appendix One) and subsequently by email and telephone call. Once involvement was agreed and written consent secured, dates and locations for interviews were arranged. Where possible, interviews were arranged according to location and undertaken consecutively in order to reduce travel time, assisting the

interviewer in achieving a demanding schedule for completion. Taking into account the pressures of work within a newly opened academy, it was intended that the interviews would be conducted between September 2010 and January 2011.

It was intended that the interviews lasted for no longer than one hour. Each interview was recorded using a digital audio recorder, with supporting field notes taken after the interview. Each interview audio recording was transcribed and analysed. Transcript were read and the researcher undertook four data analysis processes: initial coding, incident-to-incident, with the development of transcript boards to raise tentative categories; focused coding with the development of a tabulated system, allowing for the development of conceptual categories; theoretical coding, leading to the refinement of conceptual categories; returning to the transcripts to confirm the conceptual categories reflected the respondents' journeys. At the end of this data analysis process, the emerging categories were identified and cross referenced to the theoretical model provided by Gronn (1999) and the work of theorists identified in the 'Review of Literature' chapter.

Ethics

The researcher considered and adhered to The British Educational Research Association (BERA) Guidelines (BERA, 2004) and additional guidelines determined by the University of Birmingham. An ethics form was completed for the latter institute prior to research commencing. Information regarding the purpose of the study, the main features of the design and the right to withdraw from research were shared with all participants prior to securing written consent for their involvement in the research project (Appendix Two). Confidentiality

and anonymity was assured at all times. Data recorded was stored centrally and securely following the Data Protection Act (HMSO, 1998) and was not accessible to any other party. The research participants were not perceived to be vulnerable adults, but should issues of disclosure have arisen these would have been addressed through the appropriate authorities.

Audience

It is believed that the findings of this research project may be of particular interest to a number of groups. With the new coalition government's embark of a widespread development of the academies programme, the SSAT, aspirant sponsors, local authorities and current aspirant secondary school leaders may find the outcomes of this research project relevant. The academies research community has identified a number of areas pertinent to further investigation, which the researcher hopes this thesis will contribute to. The career pathway model emerging from this research project is intended to be of significance to aspirant school and academy leaders, alongside professional development and training providers who seek to develop and support our future leaders.

Thesis Structure

This first thesis chapter has provided an introduction to the research project: the journey to academy principalship. The remainder of this thesis is divided into chapters. Chapter Two introduces the subject area and summarises the literature accessed and provides the theoretical basis for this project. Chapter Three discusses the research design, critically evaluating and justifying the method and methodology adopted. Chapter Four presents the empirical research

findings, enabling Chapter Five to discuss and summarise these findings. Chapter Five provides a detailed analysis of the emerging categories and relationship of the new findings to those proposed by Gronn (1999) and other identified key authors. Chapter Six presents the conclusions of this study and suggest avenues for further academic study.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Table of Contents

Leadership

Career Journeys

Introduction

This review of literature provides a theoretical framework underpinning the following research questions:

1. How have academies emerged?

2. Why did the Principals apply for the role of Principal in a sponsored academy?

3. What are the most significant influences in the journey to academy principalship?

4. Why have these influences been so significant?

This chapter begins with a clarification of the key terms and an overview of the literature search strategies adopted. It is intended that the first research question, 'how academies emerged', is addressed solely through this literature review chapter. Therefore, the section titled 'How Academies Emerged' provides an overview of the emergence of the academies programme, referring to literature stemming from the development of the CTCs in 1988. The initial aims of the academies programme, resultant academic publications, ongoing media responses and findings from initial evaluative studies are explored. Alterations and adaptations to the academies programme are outlined.

Of note in this chapter is the distinct gap in research relating to academy leaders (Macaulay, 2008). In order to ground the researcher's fieldwork for the second question, which explores a Principal's choice to lead an academy, it is evident that research on motivations for leadership positions in academies is scant. Therefore, the 'Leadership' section of this literature review considers the importance of leadership and the reasons behind teachers striving for and

securing secondary school leadership roles. The values, beliefs, attitudes and attributes of school leaders are explored. In order to secure this literature review in the academies setting, the qualities of academy Principals and the pressures they experience in their principalship role are identified and discussed.

The theoretical basis for research questions three and four, the life and career journeys experienced by Principals leading to their academy principalship, is outlined in the 'Career Journeys' section. Limited literature was available relating to the journeys experienced by academy Principals. Therefore, appropriate literature relating to the experiences of primary, secondary and special school Principals is explored. The researcher chose not to explore literature relating to women and gender issues in educational leadership as a result of the breadth of literature available, the limitations of word count and the specific focus of this thesis on life and career journeys of principals, irrespective of gender. The final section of this chapter provides justification for this research project, drawing together the key tenets of this chapter leading the reader to the subsequent 'Research Design' chapter.

Key Terms

In order to avoid confusion, key terminology must be defined. An online search of job advertisements in the TES highlighted the current use of a wide range of titles used to label the role of 'Head Teacher'. The terminology favoured in academies included Principal, Principal Designate, Executive Head Teacher and Chief Executive. They varied slightly in their definition, with the latter term allocated to those leading more than one academy. The terms 'Principal' and 'Principal Designate' appeared to be used most frequently; a search of

the SSAT website was unsuccessful in securing a definition of either term. For the purpose of this research project the term 'Principal' will refer to the Head Teacher or leader of a single academy:

> "...the Head of a school or other educational institution" (Collins, 2003:1290).

As this thesis discusses leaders of schools and academies, the researcher adopts both the terms 'Principal' and 'Head Teacher' in accordance with the context of the school. As such, the term 'Principalship' will relate directly to the 'headship': that is, the tenure of the Principal in the role as academy leader. The term 'academy', for the purpose of this research project, will refer to:

> "...independent, non-fee paying schools...generally located in areas of socio-economic disadvantage" (PwC, 2003:1).

It must be noted that this definition applies only to 'sponsored' academies. This term is not accurate for the subsequent 'converter' academies, a programme launched in August 2010 (Machin & Vernoit, 2010) and subsequently developed to allow any primary, secondary or special school to apply to 'convert' to academy status. These two academy models are discussed in more detail latterly in this chapter.

Literature Search Strategies

A number of strategies were adopted to identify suitable literature for this research project. Initial use of the internet search engine, 'Google Scholar', provided a number of key websites. Of these, in-depth exploration was conducted of websites maintained by the SSAT, the DCSF

Standards Site (re-named Department for Education (DE) from May 2010 (Shepherd, 2010)), the National College (NC, renamed from NCSL in May 2009) and the Anti-Academies Alliance (AAA). These gave access to a range of literature and provided additional references identifying further reading. Google Scholar was utilised to identify key authors and publications which were fully explored.

An electronic library catalogue search enabled key authors, professional journal articles, books and research papers to be identified and accessed. Initially the search was conducted using the following key words: academy, leaders, career and life history. Further searches were subsequently added to widen the field of study: motivation; leadership. Following this, additional key words were introduced to narrow the field of review, including 'Head Teacher' and 'Principal', as it became apparent that different authors adopted a range of terminology. Reference lists provided in professional journal articles were a valuable source for the identification of relevant literature for further study.

In order to keep abreast of new and emerging research a ZETOC search was set up. A number of initial search strings were utilised: education, leadership, academies, Principal, career, life histories and experiences. The latter two strings were removed after a short period of time as they generated the inclusion of numerous, irrelevant research papers.

The website of CERUK Plus, dedicated to explore current education and children's services research, was accessed and a fortnightly alert was set up relating to 'academies', 'Principals'

and 'careers'. The website was also used to identify relevant, current research projects. The Education Evidence Portal was also accessed on a regular basis between September 2008 and July 2011.

How Academies Emerged

Introduction

The academies programme was developed as a result of a number of educational initiatives (Gillard, 2008). In England the Conservative government, under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher and the Secretary of State, Kenneth Baker, established the CTC network in 1988. At this time the United States of America undertook a similar period of educational reform, developing the Charter School system. This model offered schools autonomy in their financial running, introducing a business model to education. In return, Charter Schools were required to be innovative and creative in their pedagogical approaches, whilst being fully accountable for the performances of staff, students and the school as a whole. Minnesota permitted the opening of the first Charter Schools in 1991; by 1995, a further eighteen states had followed suit (Gillard, 2008).

In England the CTC programme was launched with the intention of opening one hundred colleges (Gillard, 2008), offering increased parental choice through these additional educational establishments. The funding of CTCs was sourced directly from the tax payer: a key aspect of the model was the requirement for additional financial contributions to be provided by private business sponsors. The CTCs were unique in their relative autonomy:

freedom from Local Education Authority (LEA) protocols enabled business sponsors not only to own the college but to take an active role in its management and leadership. Whilst they were free to decide on criteria for admissions, removing the requirement for formal examinations on entry, they were expected to ensure the cohort was, "broadly representative of the local community" (DES, 1986:5). The focus was less on ability and increasingly on attitude and commitment towards learning. The curriculum promoted the study of practical, vocational skills required for working life, delivering a, "broadly based secondary education with a strong technological element" (DES, 1986:2).

This new notion of independence and the involvement of businesses in education caused widespread controversy (Ryan, 2008), resulting in the programme receiving considerable media attention. A number of difficulties were encountered, initially with the sourcing of sponsorship (Chitty, 2008). Despite support from small businesses and entrepreneurs, a lack of significant private sponsors and lower than expected investment forced the government to provide extensive financial contributions to ensure the programme went ahead. The involvement of private investors was interpreted negatively by many and viewed as another step towards the, "marketisation of education by involving private enterprise in the running of schools" (Gillard, 2008:12). Despite their ambitious intentions, the last of a total of fifteen CTCs had been opened by 1994. The policy was abandoned as too costly with the Labour government re-focusing their support, in 1995, on the Specialist Schools programme. As a result, by 2001 no fewer than six hundred and eighty-five schools had registered as a Specialist School (DfES, 2001).

Political Push

The advent of the New Labour government in 1997 brought further privatisation to education and increased the range of schools in England. The 1998 'Schools Standards and Framework Act' succinctly demonstrated this:

> "The gradual abandonment of the pursuit of a single template for the state school...opened the door to a diversification of provision...with generations of school types including grant-maintained, beacon schools, schools with links to Education Action Zones, city technology colleges and now the trust schools and academies" (Powell, 2008:92).

The Labour government evaluated the CTC programme and the "Fresh Start" policy (Blunkett, 2000). Andrew Adonis, Education Advisor to the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, worked alongside David Blunkett and Tony Blair to develop new education reforms. Successful elements of the CTC model were highlighted, including, not only the improvement in academic results but an increase in, "energy and dynamism which was too often absent in other local schools, particularly in deprived areas" (Ryan, 2008:3).

The review of the CTC model, observations of international developments in countries including Sweden and concerns over the poor outcomes of traditional secondary schools in England led to the birth of the 'City Academies' programme. This was launched by David Blunkett in March 2000:

> "In some of the most challenging areas, we believe a more radical approach is needed...we intend to launch pathfinder projects for new City Academies. These academies, to replace seriously failing schools, will be built and managed by partnerships involving the government, voluntary, church and business sponsors...The aim will be to raise standards by breaking the cycle of underperformance and low expectations" (Blunkett, 2000:14).

The statutory basis for the programme was born from, "legislation in the Education Reform Act 1988....subsequently amended" (Rogers & Migniuolo, 2007:8). These first academies were defined as:

> "...independent, non-selective state-funded schools that fall outside the control of local authorities. These schools are managed by a private team of independent co-sponsors. The sponsors of the academy school delegate the management of the school to a largely self-appointed board of governors that has responsibility for employing all academy staff, agreeing levels of pay and conditions of service with its employees and deciding on the policies for staffing structure, career development, discipline and performance management" (Machin & Vernoit, 2011:2).

The Department for Education (DE) identified three main objectives for these academies, namely to:

> "...raise the educational achievement of their pupils; provide inclusive, mixed-ability schools; contribute to raising aspirations and standards in the local community" (NAO, 2010:4).

The programme intended to focus upon schools located in areas of social and economic disadvantage, who had been placed in 'special measures' or were deemed to be underperforming. Such schools were to be closed, in some cases amalgamated with other local schools, and subsequently replaced with a newly opened academy. One key aim of the programme was defined succinctly by Machin and Vernoit (2010):

> "...improving educational outcomes in deprived areas. Poorly performing schools were awarded academy status by taking over or replacing schools...seen as underachieving. The hope was that the combination of independence to pursue innovative school policies and curricula, with the experience of the sponsor, would enable academies to drive up the educational attainment of their pupils (Machin & Vernoit, 2010:19).

The first three pathfinder academies opened in 2002 in Brent, Lambeth and Liverpool. In the following years new academies opened steadily: twelve were open by 2003, seventeen by 2004 and twenty-seven by 2006. By September 2007, eighty-three academies were open in forty-nine local authorities (PwC, 2008). By September 2009, two hundred academies were open in eighty-two local authorities (Gunter, 2011). The rise continued, with a further three academies opening in January 2010, taking the total number to two hundred and three across eighty-three local authorities.

Of these academies, notable statistics include: fifty-four academies with faith designation; twelve academies emerging as new schools; twenty academies educating students from three through to sixteen or eighteen years of age (SSAT, 2010). Academies were promoted for their freedom and innovation and, as such, they were unique in many aspects including their management, leadership, staffing and governance methods (Ball, 2007).

Key Components of Sponsored Academies

The creation of a sponsored academy involved six distinct phases: brokering; expression of interest; feasibility; implementation; delivery; opening. This process, intended to take between six to eighteen months (DCSF, 2009) was undoubtedly unique to each sponsored academy.

The involvement of external sponsors, recruited from a variety of backgrounds, was heralded as a key aspect of the sponsored academies programme. Set up as charitable companies, the

sponsors were initially required to contribute the lower of either two million pounds or ten percent of the capital costs: this was latterly altered to require an annual endowment of half a million pounds to be spent on, "educational needs" (NAO, 2007:5). The government committed to provide the remainder of the funding, covering capital expenditure and running costs. Concerns voiced by local authorities regarding the widespread costs of the sponsored academies programme were in some way alleviated by the vast capital expenditure programme subsequently launched by the government, enabling one thousand one hundred new schools to be built between 1997 and 2007 (Ryan, 2008).

In return for their financial investment the sponsors formed the majority of the governing body, named the academy, and received, "a controlling interest in the company" (Needham & Gleeson, 2006:4). This raised concern regarding the degree of control they held over the academy which was viewed to have been 'bought' for a relatively small sum of money. Further concern was voiced in cases where academy sponsors appeared to have little prior knowledge of education (Beckett, 2007).

Given that the predecessor schools had a history of underperformance, some authors supported the involvement of private businesses believing that their, "high expectations and a track record of success" (Moynihan, 2008:14) would impact positively on the new academy outcomes. However, the perceived shift in power and responsibility for educational leadership and accountability was met by many with suspicion. One aspect under close scrutiny was the possible 'hidden agenda' of sponsors, ostensibly for philanthropic or altruistic reasons or for the purpose of business development:

> "The academy schools programme...is creating organisational arenas in which the relationship and boundary between the public and private are being reconfigured and which offering challenging contexts and implications for how and where educational decisions are made" (Woods, Woods & Gunter, 2007:237).

The belief that privatisation by sponsors would result in the raising of standards was rejected by some observers (Powell, 2008). However, the opportunities for innovation were evidently applauded:

> "The academy schools programme is one of the opportunities through which players in the field of education can respond to the entrepreneurial imperative (Woods, Woods & Gunter" 2007:243).

The notion of autonomy was central to the academies programme. Much like the CTC model, sponsored academies were placed outside of the control of the local authority, not bound by the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (DCSF, 2008b) thus enabling different conditions of service and workforce composition. Whilst the Principal was identified as being, "responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the academy" (DES, 2005:10), the sponsors benefitted largely from the autonomy as they held responsibility for creating the, "ethos, vision, curriculum, organisation, staffing management and leadership" (DCSF, 2009:4). Indeed, the sponsors led every aspect of the creation of the academy including the appointment of the Principal, the timing of which was not fixed by the phased approach. As it was evident that the sponsor-Principal relationship is crucial (PwC, 2005) it was surprising to note that it was recommended that the Principal should be appointed in phase five (DCSF, 2006). Ensuring the sponsors and Principal identify a shared vision, collaborate and communicate effectively and use a common language is not only challenging but crucial to achieving successful outcomes. A late appointment could possibly contribute to

a mismatch of vision between the sponsor and Principal; an inappropriate appointment could result in tensions. This subsequently became evident within the United Learning Trust, the sponsors of fifteen academies, who replaced eight Principals within the first two years of their tenure (Marley, 2009). The high turnover of Principals in other academies has been observed (Beckett, 2007) and may well be related to this issue.

During the identification of the strategic direction of the academy, the curriculum structure must be designed. Alongside the requirement of a broad and balanced curriculum with a, "commitment to educational excellence and the capacity to bring it about" (NAO, 2007:5), the academy specialist subjects are selected and, by nature, defined the foci for the curriculum planning and delivery. A diverse range of specialisms emerged over the nine years of the academies programme, including 'digital media and engineering and production', 'health, care and medical science' and 'the natural environment'.

Ultimately, academy sponsors were accountable for the performance of every person within the academy, including teachers, support staff and students. They were accountable to parents and to the government, through methods such as the analysis and comparison of annual examination results and through the Ofsted framework, which was intended to provide relative transparency when comparing educational establishments. Support and guidance was provided by the DE and SSAT and, despite their relative autonomy, collaboration with Local Authorities was promoted in order to consider the impact of the academy on the educational opportunities available for all children within the community (PwC, 2007).

Impact of the Academies Programme

Controversy surrounded the launch of the sponsored academies programme. The government's lack of prior consultation raised concerns (Rogers & Migniuolo, 2007), resulting in a feeling of:

> "...resentment...a sense of academies being 'outside the system', not really part of it" (Rogers & Migniuolo, 2007:30).

Opposition arose from many groups including parents, trade unions, lawyers and teachers (Ball, 2007). Groups such as the AAA were formed in opposition to the programme and as the programme developed it became increasingly contentious (Ward & Eden, 2009).

The difficulties encountered by the researcher whilst navigating through media articles and professional journals to find a sense of 'truth' in the information and opinions surrounding the academies movement is worthy of note:

> "Much of the misinformation or misinterpretation surrounding the governance, leadership and funding of Academies has, arguably, been perpetuated by the media" (Macaulay, 2008:3).

Numerous professional journal articles were quick to criticise the work of academies, airing negative views particularly where the sponsor was the focus of their publication. Professional journal articles which portrayed a balanced view were limited. A number of authors, including Hatcher (2006), Beckett (2007 & 2008) and Chitty (2008) wrote a range of articles but their personal or political agenda is evident. For example Beckett (2007 & 2008) worked as a newspaper education correspondent and openly admitted to being a member of the AAA. As

such, the personal nature of his wordsmith in 'The Great City Academy Fraud' (Beckett, 2007) makes it difficult to accept his views as an objective and measured critique of the academies programme.

Evaluative Studies

The first significant, relatively longitudinal and independent evaluative study was delivered through PwC, in association with The University of York, through their annual evaluation of sponsored academies. This study was commissioned by the DfES in 2003, with the aim:

> "...to assess the overall effectiveness of the initiative, in terms of its contribution to educational standards and other related outcomes" (PwC, 2003:1).

Further evaluative studies were conducted by unions, namely the National Association of Schoolmasters / Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) (Needham & Gleeson, 2006) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) (Rogers & Migniuolo, 2007), providing additional but potentially biased perspectives on the progress made to date. These evaluative studies provided a range of differing views on the success and effectiveness of sponsored academies.

In the fifth academies evaluation (PwC, 2008) a number of key challenges and areas worthy of investigation were outlined. They included: aspects of particular interest to unions, such as the effect on pay and conditions; issues related to staff recruitment and morale relative to the persistent 'under the spotlight' attention on academies; the challenges encountered in securing continually improved standards of academic achievement. Other notable issues emerging

included: the methods of involvement of parents and the wider community; curriculum relevance and diversity; the affects of the changing degree of autonomy experienced in recently opened academies (PwC, 2008). Issues around funding grew and were widespread:

> "There were claims of unfair funding...academies are funded in revenue terms on the same basis as comparable maintained schools. But the capital costs of some of the early academies were higher than the norm, occasionally topping £30 million. Some of the extra cost reflected imaginative designs by leading architects, or the lack of economies of scale as each academy had its own construction programme" (Ryan, 2008:6).

Despite a myriad of negative reports on the impact of sponsors, it was noted by Moynihan (2008) that the academy sponsor was a critical factor, positively affecting school improvement in a manner greater than simply as a provider of funds:

> "Academy conversion supported by a private sponsor has the same impact on the school's culture in terms of providing a shock to the system and a realisation by all stakeholders that things must change. Sponsors bring hope, new possibilities, new ways of doing things and the expectations that improvement must happen. Being backed by a sponsor can also raise the self-esteem of a school and its community" (Moynihan, 2008:21).

However, the ultimate conclusion at the time was that, "the variability of the academies studied in both character and performance...meant that no distinctive uniform 'academy effect' could be observed" (Glatter, 2009: 105). This was noted by others, including Powell (2008), as a critical factor hindering effective longitudinal evaluation of the programme:

> "While evaluations of academies are generally positive...it is too early to tell whether academies are successful: their histories are relatively short and they have different bases for their establishment" (Powell, 2008:98).

This is further supported by the NASUWT commissioned research:

> "It is clear that academies are not homogenous institutions. They do not follow a set pattern and are highly diverse, both individually and as a category, in terms of their institutional antecedents, ethos, specialisms, location, stage and phase of development. Equally, their forms of governance and accountability vary through trusts, business consortia, LA, HE, foundation, diocese and individual sponsors" (Needham & Gleeson, 2006: Section 10).

The Development of the Academies Programme

Nevertheless, the pace of development of the academies programme did not falter, with the DCSF announcing the intention to open four hundred academies (NAO, 2007). This was met with opposition from a number of parties, coupled with repeated requests for an exhaustive evaluation of the programme in order to provide a wider evidence-base (Gunter, Woods & Woods (2008) & Glatter (2009)). The Education and Skills Select Committee (ESSC, 2005) reported the need for a thorough evaluation prior to "embarking on a major expansion of an untested model" (ESSC, 2005:25), which was echoed by the NASUWT:

> "...it is hardly surprising that so many commentators on academies have reached the same conclusion: suspend the academy programme and use existing academies as pilots to assess the success of the model over a longer period before rolling it out more widely" (Needham & Gleeson, 2006:Section 10).

These requests for a detailed evaluation of the impact of the academies programme prior to its development appeared to be disregarded. Indeed, since the commencement of this research project in September 2009 the programme developed significantly:

> "The trouble with writing about academies is that they are shape-shifters. They change shape with a speed and efficiency not normally found outside science fiction. Every time you think you've understood exactly what they are, and can form a view about it, the government shifts the goalposts" (Beckett, xx, in Gunter, 2011).

The original intention of the academies programme, to replace failing schools in areas of social and economic disadvantage, evolved. Important developments in the academies model can be seen in Table One, below, adapted from that of Gunter (2011):

- Widened pool from which sponsors could be drawn

- £2million sponsor investment abolished for universities, schools and colleges in 2006

- No financial sponsorship required for new academies opening from 2011

- Academies opened in non-urban areas from 2002

- Curriculum requirements altered for all academies to deliver Maths, English, Science and IT

- Increased involvement of Local authorities including the co-sponsorship of academies

- National Challenge Schools (those identified as not meeting the national floor targets of 30% 5A*-C in GCSE results) given the opportunity to become academies

- Emergence of 'chains' of academies, under the direction of a particular sponsor

- Emergence of academies as federations and all-through schools

Table One: Major changes in the sponsored academies programme (adapted from Gunter, 2011:5).

These changes received mixed responses. For some observers, the shifting sands were viewed as an indication of the government's admittance that the original programme was an ineffective model, requiring continual alteration and development. Equally, the addition of

educationally based sponsors was seen as the government's response to the continued criticism of the recruitment of sponsors with little experience of education (Chitty, 2008).

Impact of the Coalition Government

The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government, elected in May 2010, immediately opened the door for any school deemed by Ofsted as 'outstanding' to apply for academy status. This, for the first time, included schools in the primary and special school sectors. Legislation was passed through the Academies Act in July 2010 (HMSO, 2010) prior to the conclusion of any major research on the outcomes of the sponsored academies programme. The first comprehensive reviews of these academies were published by the NAO in September 2010, by PwC in the same month and subsequent research followed from the Centre for the Economics of Education in April 2011 (Machin & Vernoit, 2011).

Within the first week of the invitation for outstanding schools to convert to academy status, over one thousand schools were reported to have expressed an interest, reflecting perhaps the desire of Head Teachers to gain greater freedom and independence to lead their schools (Vaughan, 2010). However, by September 2010 only one hundred and eighty-one schools had formally applied and of those, one hundred and forty-two converter academies were due to open in the academic year 2010-11. In addition to these outstanding schools, a further seventy-four sponsored academies were also expected to open that year (NAO, 2010).

The key findings emerging from the aforementioned NAO research were: an increase in students' academic attainment in most academies in comparison with their predecessor schools; sixty-seven percent of academies rated by the Ofsted as outstanding or good for overall effectiveness; rapid improvements for student attendance, with absence rates falling faster than those of maintained schools with similar intakes (NAO, 2010). Subsequent recommendations identified: the need for clarification of the objectives of the academies programme, including how success against these objectives will be measured; increased rigor in monitoring the sponsors and governance to check expectations of their roles and responsibilities are achieved; consideration for the funding of future academies as the programme develops; tightening of the requirements for and processes to collect relevant data from academies (NAO, 2010).

In September 2010 PwC were commissioned by the National College to research leadership in sponsored academies, focusing on:

> "...established academies in order to understand what is distinctive about leading a successful academy, and the leadership development implications of this; recently converted academies in order to establish an improved understanding of what is distinctive about leadership of these academies and the conversion journey, and what this looks like in practice" (NC, 2011:3).

Key findings from this research project, of relevance to this thesis, identified: the key motivating factors for academies include autonomy and independence, particularly in relation to raising standards rapidly; the key challenges include the enormous pressure to achieve rapid improvement; the changes in the structure and function of governance, resulting in a sharper scrutiny of performance; a weakening in the relationship with the local authority for

half the academies, despite the belief of the local authority that they continue to play an important role as a service provider, especially in the case of aspects such as human resources support (NC, 2011).

By 1st March 2011, one hundred and ninety-five 'outstanding' schools had converted to academy status (NC, 2011). Media reports continued to frequently criticise the academies programme; articles outlined a range of key issues which are perceived as the fundamental difficulties with the academies model, including financial status. In particular, Shepherd (2011b) commented on the role of the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and their £1.9bn budget dedicated to support and develop academies. In 2010 the YPLA were reported to have committed nearly £7m to support academies experiencing dire financial deficits. These deficits were born as a result of the actions of the predecessor schools: as academies are not permitted to run with a deficit budget outside intervention could be viewed as inevitable. Nevertheless, this financial commitment received fierce criticism.

A high court claim was filed by twenty-three councils, requesting a judicial review in protest of the redirection of funds from local authorities to academies (Shepherd, 2011b). The requirement for every local authority to undergo a "top slicing" of all general grants, irrespective of the number of academies that they have within their boundaries, received fierce opposition (Millar, 2011). Media reports outlined the disquiet of local authorities and the schools that they fund, identifying concerns that local education authorities were not able to fully and effectively support the schools remaining under their financial control as a result of such falling budgets. Nevertheless, these difficulties did not appear to have dissuaded

school leaders from embarking on the academy conversion process. A poll by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) in March 2011 (cited in Baker, 2011) found that almost half of secondary schools had either converted or were actively considering converting to academy status. Only nineteen percent of school leaders confirmed that they did not intend to convert. Of those actively doing so, seventy-two percent cited financial incentives as a key motivating factor. As the number of schools converting increased and the amount of money devolved to local authorities decreased, it appeared that more school leaders may feel compelled to convert. In some areas, local authorities actively encouraged schools to convert as a group (Baker, 2011). This would potentially enable them to coordinate their purchasing of outsourced requirements, ensuring they can share expertise and work in a cost effective manner. It appeared to the researcher that this process was simply replacing local authorities with mini-authorities created by clusters of schools. The researcher questions whether it is possible for school leaders to employ suitable staff to replace the collective wisdoms of those working within the local authority.

Further challenges observed include the increase of leadership salaries. One-in-ten state schools were reported to have offered a salary of over £100,000 for the role of Head Teacher (Shepherd, 2011c). Professor John Howson (cited in Shepherd, 2011c) also identified that the introduction of academies had increased Principals' salaries and as such increased salary barriers.

Expanding the Academies Programme

By April 2011 five hundred and forty-seven secondary schools held academy status, sixteen and a half percent of the total number of secondary schools (Shepherd, 2011d). Further reflecting the breadth of the expansion of the academies programme, an additional eighty-two primary schools had converted to academy status and the government outlined their commitment to considering applications from special schools (Shepherd, 2011d). In May 2011 the DE announced that one-third of all secondary schools were either academies or in the process of converting (Rentoul, 2011), with the observation by media reporters that most secondary schools will be, "out of local authority control by 2015" (Rentoul, 2011:npn).

Emerging Evaluative Studies

Research conducted by Machin and Vernoit between 2001 and 2009 was heralded as, "a breakthrough in rigorous assessment of the academies experiment" (Rentoul, 2011:npn). Their research provided an appraisal of the sponsored academies model and highlighted the impact of academy conversion on intake, student performance and the effects on other local schools. Machin and Vernoit evaluated the performance of academies opened under the Labour government against the performance of schools due to become academies under the coalition government, but who had not made the transition to academy status by 2009. Increasing validity and reliability, they ensured the comparison group of schools had similar, "pre-academy characteristics to the pre-academy characteristics of the schools that had already become academies" (Machin & Vernoit, 2010:19).

Key findings of the research project re-wrote previous misconceptions. It was acknowledged that academies replaced England's most challenging schools with the worst examination results and as such it took time for improvements to be measured. Academies open for two years or more were found to have generated a significant improvement in their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) performance compared with subsequently opening academies. This critically supported the Government's initial intention for creating sponsored academies by suggesting that:

> "...academy schools can deliver faster gains in GCSE performance than comparable schools...converting to academy status – at least under the Labour government's model of converting disadvantaged schools to academies – may actually deliver significant improvements in GCSE performance" (Machin & Vernoit, 2010:20).

Much of the report highlighted the impact of increased autonomy. In terms of impact on student intake:

> "...moving to a more autonomous school structure through academy conversion generates a significant improvement in the quality of pupil intake" (Machin & Vernoit, 2011:3).

They found strong evidence to suggest that the impact of increased autonomy was greatest in sponsored academies open for the longest period of time and, "for those who experienced the largest increase in their school autonomy" (Machin & Vernoit, 2011:3). The perceived impact of academy conversion on neighbouring schools had previously received mixed media reports; opponents of academies commented that the success of an academy could act to de-motivate other local schools (Rentoul, 2011). Despite the research evidence noting that schools neighbouring academies experienced a decrease in the quality of the Year Seven

intake it also found a, "small significant improvement in the performance of students enrolling in neighbouring schools" (Machin & Vernoit, 2011:3). As supported by Rentoul (2011):

> "...the success of one school spurs staff and pupils at other local schools to try harder. Competition is finally, cautiously and emphatically vindicated in schools reform" (Rentoul, 2011:npn).

Significantly, Machin and Vernoit were able to confirm through their research that the sponsored academies programme had been successful in achieving the aims intended by the Labour government:

> "Under the Labour government, the programme was aimed at combating disadvantage, and we find evidence that it may actually have achieved this objective in schools that have had academy status for a long enough period" (Machin & Vernoit, 2010:21).

Academy Definitions

The writer now finds herself in a position whereby the definition of the term 'academy' has altered dramatically. There is a distinct difference between the Labour and coalition academies, with the sole similarity being independence from the local authority. This has been acknowledged by the House of Commons:

> "There is a clear difference between sponsored academies seeking to raise educational standards in deprived areas and the new converter academies, which already perform well academically" (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2011:2).

As 'outstanding' schools were invited to become academies, followed closely by those judged by Ofsted as 'good' schools and subsequently including primary schools and special schools,

the traditional use and definition of the term 'academy' could have become misleading, not only to those working in education but also to the general public:

> "The education policies of the coalition government have reawakened controversy about academies. This seems to stem largely from the change of the academies programme...the academies that opened in September 2010 – and the schools that have applied to the coalition government to become academies in due course – are significantly more advantaged than the average secondary school. They are even more advantaged compared with those schools that were approved to open as academies under Labour" (Machin and Vernoit, 2010:21).

Conclusion

This first section of the review of literature chapter has sought to address the first research question, namely detailing the emergence of the academies programme in England. The developments from the early CTC programme have been outlined, including the most recent alterations in the programme resulting in the introduction of the terms 'sponsored' and 'converter' academies. Detailed explanations of the key components of sponsored academies have been provided. Evidence of the impact of the academies programme has been outlined, commencing with the first PwC publication in 2003 and culminating in seminal research by Machin and Vernoit in 2011. This section has acted to set the scene for the subsequent literature review sections which will focus upon leadership and career journeys.

Leadership

Introduction

This section of the literature review will focus on school leadership. Acknowledging the significant impact of leadership on school improvement, the factors believed to motivate school teachers to seek and secure leadership positions will be explored. The personal values, beliefs, attributes and attitudes identified as being of significant importance to successful school and academy leadership will be discussed. Subsequently, the pressures faced by school and academy leaders, emerging as a result of the changing face of secondary schooling in England, will be discussed.

The Importance of Leadership

Leadership has been defined as, "the guidance and direction of instructional improvement" (Elmore, 2000:13). Without doubt, one critical element required for the transformation of an underperforming school is an effective leader:

> "There are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader" (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004:3).

A report published by the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts in 2011 highlighted the continuing government priority to provide support for academies in order to ensure they had the capacity to identify outstanding school leaders to effectively fulfil the role of academy Principal (House of Commons, 2011). However, defining the exact role and responsibilities of the Principal had become increasingly difficult:

"The unremitting plethora of government initiatives has resulted in the gradual attrition of the traditional role of Head Teacher" (Barrett-Baxendale & Burton, 2009:91).

It is not the intention of this research project to address this concern. However, the researcher hopes that the identification of factors motivating leaders to work within the academy context may contribute to the discussions around the role of academy leaders.

Leadership Motivation

The Fullerton Longitudinal Study, initiated in 1979, sought to unearth the motivational roots of leadership. Gottfried, Gottfried, Reichard, Wright Guerin, Oliver and Riggio (2011) utilised the data from this study with a view to exploring: academic intrinsic motivation; intelligence; motivation to lead. Academic intrinsic motivation was defined as:

"...enjoyment of school learning characterized by an orientation toward mastery, curiosity, persistence, and the learning of challenging, difficult and novel tasks" (Gottfried et al, 2011:512).

The report findings concluded that:

"From childhood to adolescence, those with higher academic intrinsic motivation, that is, who enjoy learning for its own sake, are more likely to want to lead because of enjoyment and without regard to external consequences of leadership during adulthood" (Gottfried et al, 2011:516).

The attributes identified as having a positive impact on leadership in adulthood included curiosity, persistence and a desire to engage in challenging and difficult tasks. The research participants identified as having higher academic intrinsic motivation were found to be more likely to have a greater desire or higher motivation to lead, particularly in situations involving:

> "...chartering new directions and change; persistence in the face of challenging, difficult and novel situations and tasks; and enjoyment of leadership per se without expecting external rewards or privileges" (Gottfried et al, 2011:516).

Within the academies context, in the face of new, unpredictable and challenging situations, this research is believed to be of relevance to this research project.

Other significant research findings related to the respondent's formative experiences within the family home:

> "...the enjoyment of the learning process...is...linked to motivation to lead...facilitative home environments contribute to the development of motivation to lead" (Gottfried et al, 2001:517).

Evidently the actions undertaken by parents and the support that they provide are intrinsic in the development of leadership motivation during childhood. Specific identifiable activities were identified as cultural activities and events, hobbies and supportive engagement in learning opportunities. These activities were identified as promoting intrinsic academic motivation, thereby positively impacting upon motivation to lead. These factors were also noted to be, "above and beyond the role of socioeconomic status" (Gottfried et al, 2011:517).

Respondents involved in the research of Pascal and Ribbins (1998) included those who, from an early age, viewed teaching as a vocation as well as others who fell into teaching quite by accident. With regards to motivation to principalship, some respondents demonstrated their intention to secure a headship role from an early age (Pascal & Ribbins, 1998). Research conducted by Sieber (2011) found that few respondents:

> "...embarked on their teaching careers with the definite intention of seeking to become Head Teachers" (Sieber, 2011:5).

Many did not seriously consider seeking a headship position until they themselves were Deputy Heads, with one participant actively avoiding headship until it was, "thrust upon her in tragic circumstances" (Sieber, 2011:7). It was evident early in the twenty first century that this was the ambition for sixty percent of Deputy Heads involved in the research of Early, Evans, Gold, Collarbone and Halpin (2002). Similarly, research undertaken for the NCSL in 2009 found that sixty-nine percent of senior leaders aspired to be a Head Teacher (NCSL, 2009). Annual research has identified that this figure has steadily increased since 2007 (NCSL, 2009).

Formative experiences can evidently inspire some to enter the teaching professions. Whilst Rayner and Ribbins (1999) identified the influence of family members, the role of teachers at school was viewed from both a positive and negative perspective:

> "One of our main motivations for entering the teaching profession had been that we couldn't really do it as badly as some of the teachers we had when we were at school. We felt, quite strongly, that we would do it considerably better than most of the teachers we had known" (Rayner & Ribbins, 1999:20).

During their career pathway, the experience of working for other Head Teachers was evidently a significant influential factor for a number of school leaders:

> "I decided I had seen a number of people who I didn't respect professionally doing the job and I thought, I could do that job and I think I could do it as well if not better" (Rayner & Ribbins, 1999:23).

Cranston (2007) identified three key factors: the capacity to positively influence the learning and lives of young people; the opportunity to work with diverse individuals and groups in the

school and wider community; the capacity to have a more strategic influence on education (Cranston, 2007). This supports the findings of Earley and Weindling (2004) who identified similar factors including the opportunities to: make a difference; have an influence; implement their own vision (Earley & Weindling, 2004). They also noted the aspirant leaders' drive to achieve school success, realised through developing "harmonious relationships" with staff, students, parents and the community (Earley & Weindling, 2004:44).

NCSL research, conducted in 2009, reported that the moral purpose of school leadership was the critical motivating factor for sixty-six percent of their respondents (NCSL, 2009). Other key factors cited included personal and professional development and the opportunity to make a difference to the lives of children (NCSL, 2009), supporting the earlier research findings of Rayner and Ribbins (1999) and Earley and Weindling (2004). These factors have been supported by subsequent NCSL publications, identifying the reasons to become a Head Teacher as:

> "...to help children and young people reach their potential... work in partnership with the community...develop your staff and leadership team...see your vision for the school come to life" (NCSL, 2010b:1).

The critical motivating factors identified by Sieber (2011) and Barber, Whelan and Clark (2010) include the desire for greater control or influence over decision-making, enabling them to make a difference to the lives of the children in their schools and to develop the staff that they worked alongside. This is supported by Inman (2011), in her identification of drivers for career progression:

"...the constant desire to learn...an impatience to achieve where they felt they could make a difference and contribute to driving the faculty forward...serendipity seemed to play a significant role, although it is clear that their competence ensured that this actually happened" (Inman, 2011:235).

Motivation for Leading an Academy

Research specific to motivation to lead in the academy context is sparse. Whilst the fifth PwC evaluative study noted that Principals reported high levels of job satisfaction, the reasons for working in an academy were simply noted to include: making a rapid and observable difference to students; re-engaging the community; regenerating a previously run-down area; the perceived freedom to make decisions (PwC, 2008). The desire for autonomy was also identified through research conducted by the National College (NC, 2011). Three significant factors were believed to motivate school leaders to secure an academy principalship:

"...independence from the local authority...raise standards rapidly using the academy freedoms...additional financial resources from government and sponsorship" (NC, 2011:31).

The significance of this perceived autonomy has been supported by Ball (2007) but questioned by Rogers & Migniuolo (2007), as other state schools in deprived communities have achieved great success without academy status. This view is supported by Glatter:

"...many of the features of academies such as significant autonomy, external partners and a new management regime can be achieved through other models" (Glatter, 2009:106).

Other reasons cited in the National College research included greater freedoms to: manage resources and improve value for money; develop staff accountability for educational

standards; innovate the design and delivery of the curriculum without the constraints of the national curriculum; collaborate with others schools to share best practice (NC, 2011). It is intended that this research project will develop our understanding around the motives driving school leaders to secure the post of academy Principal.

Leadership: Vision, Values and Personal Qualities

Every school leader is responsible for shaping their school vision. This vision will be specific to the: leader; school context; students it serves; community within which it sits; particular period in time. The vision will underpin the development and actions of the school and its members. The day-to-day enactment of the vision will influence the values that the members of the school community hold, develop and take forward within them to their adult lives.

Values have been defined by Halstead (1996) as:

> "...principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as points of reference in decision-making or the evaluation of beliefs or action and which are closely connected to personal integrity and personal identity" (Halstead, 1996:5).

When applying for a principalship, aspirant school leaders select specific establishments that they believe match their vision and underpinning values. Exploring the vision already held by the school, they will interweave their own values, beliefs and ideals, culminating in the development of a vision that they present to the school community. It is evident that their life and career experiences, including the actions of Head Teachers of the schools they attended

both as a student and as a teacher, will contribute to shaping their values as the school leader (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997). These underpinning values have been viewed by Halstead as critical to enabling the Head Teacher to, "sustain vision" (Halstead, 1996:148). Given the impact that the school leader will have on the staff, students and school community as a whole, the matching of values, context and community is critical:

> "What many people seem to want from schools is that schools reflect the values that are central and meaningful in their lives. If this view is correct, schools are cultural artefacts that people struggle to shape in their own image. Only in such forms do they have faith in them; only in such forms can they participate comfortably in them" (Greenfield, 1973:570).

It is acknowledged that school will not be the sole provider of 'values' education for students; other significant groups including family, friends and the community will inevitably play a significant role. Nevertheless, the role of the school leader in setting the context within which children learn at school will be critical:

> "To have a clear and well-articulated set of values, to exercise moral leadership...are... fundamental to successful school leadership" (Day, 2003:175).

Research commissioned by The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) in 1998 to, "identify, examine and celebrate good leadership practice" (Day, Hadfield & Harris, 1999:npn) involved extensive interviews within primary, secondary and special schools. Significant research findings identified the core values exhibited by school leaders:

> "...care, equity, high expectations and achievement, which were clear to and shared by the overwhelming majority of the school constituencies and which were the drivers for the life of the school" (Day, 2003:166).

These core values were identified as being an intrinsic part of the school leader, not merely values demonstrated solely within their professional role. The study identified leaders as: values led; people centred; achievement orientated; inwards and outwards facing; able to manage a number of ongoing tensions and dilemmas (Day, 2003). Leaders demonstrated that they were driven by a moral imperative, displaying commitment to the development of students and staff, maintaining high standards and expectations of all working within the school.

This is supported by the research of Flintham (2010), who found that the core values held by leaders were people-centred. Once more, respondents demonstrated a strong sense of moral purpose:

> "...personal conviction and respect for others, tenacity in advocacy for young people and a resilience in standing by them...tempered by a degree of personal humility. They combine high levels of emotional intelligence and a confidence in risk taking with a passion for the development of the pupils, for the school and for the role of Headteacher" (Flintham, 2010:6).

Flintham found that leaders were energised by:

> "...challenge and by the drive to make a difference to both their schools and their communities...a strong belief in the potential for success of such schools...and by the excitement and unpredictability of the leadership role" (Flintham, 2010:6).

Parker (2002) also identified the powerful belief held by leaders that they had the capacity, and were highly motivated, to make a difference to children's lives, eagerly seeking new challenges along their career journey. This is supported in the research of Barber et al (2010),

who identified a range of beliefs, attitudes and personal attributes possessed by successful school leaders. They were found to include: a focus on student achievement; putting children ahead of personal or political interests; resilience and persistence to achieve goals; adaptability in context and alongside personnel; willingness to take risks; ability to challenge accepted beliefs and behaviours (Barber, Whelan & Clark, 2010).

Qualities of Academy Leaders

The availability of research, conducted prior to 2010, focusing on leadership in academies is limited. Davies and Macaulay (2006) created a taxonomy of knowledge, skills and qualities required to be an effective leader and manager of an academy. Macaulay (2008) also identified the leadership styles, qualities, skills and the contextual dimensions that support the effective leadership and transformation of an academy. This included the ability of the Principal to: be politically aware; prepare and support staff; invite and involve the local community; build and develop relationships with the media; have an open door and actively network (Macaulay, 2008).

The skills demonstrated by Principals were also explored in the fifth PwC report (2008), with commentary highlighting attributes shared by effective academy leaders as:

> "...they are...highly experienced, confident leaders, who all have previous school leadership experience" (PwC, 2008:125).

Despite the PwC annual reports repeatedly declaring the need for, "strong leadership" (PwC, 2006:21) subsequent attention has primarily focused on key behaviours contributing to effective leadership, including: visibility; a focus on achievement and behaviour; and a strategic approach to developing leadership and performance management (PwC, 2007).

A resource published by the National College (NC, 2010) sought to identify the key attributes which were believed to be critically important for effective academy leadership. Such qualities, behaviours and personal characteristics included:

> "...having a passion for learning, excellence and equity in order to close the achievement gap...creativity and innovation...engaging effectively with the local community...the appetite to work autonomously...passion for the needs of all children...courage...humility...patience, tenacity and resilience" (NC, 2010:3-4).

Further research conducted by the National College (NC, 2011) included the identification of adopted leadership styles and the key personal skills and attributes displayed by Principals of sponsored academies. Accountability, financial management, diplomacy and change management skills were believed to be crucial to effective leadership in the academy context (NC, 2011) with creativity, decision-making and risk-taking attributes rated highly by academy leaders.

Whilst published research acknowledged the skills held by academy Principals, scant attention had been paid to the life and career experiences which they encountered and which subsequently contributed to successful academy leadership tenures. Equally, the impact of the

changing face of academies as they increasingly replaced schools of all ages, abilities and levels of prior performance, was yet to be considered.

Leadership Pressures

Leading a school is challenging: the role, responsibilities and accountability of Principals have grown significantly in the last decade (Cranston (2007) and NCSL (2010b)). Research conducted by Day (2003) identified difficulties faced by school leaders. Within the school, factors identified included the need to balance: effective leadership and management; the development of staff versus systems maintenance; the pressures of external initiatives and change against the practicalities of internal delivery. From a personal perspective, Day identified the need to work long hours and associated support required from family and colleagues (Day, 2003).

The pressure on academy Principals has been commented upon, namely in the third PwC report where it was identified that of the twenty seven academies open at that time, five were under the leadership of a second Principal (PwC, 2006). Issues around the recruitment of academy leaders without a background in education received widespread media coverage, as did the termination of Principals under a cloud of uncertainty (Beckett (2007) and Daily Mail (2010)). However, the secrecy shrouding some tenure endings renders it difficult to identify the true reasons behind the Principal leaving their post.

Alongside the national Head Teacher leadership crisis (Philips, 2008), the potential difficulty in recruiting exceptional Head Teachers had been noted by many (Beckett (2007), Rogers and Migniuolo (2007) and Wilby, (2009)). With the flexible model for pay and conditions, salaries for academy Principals could be considerably higher than those in other equivalent educational establishments (Ward & Eden, 2009). This was evident not only through research (NAO (2007) and Rogers & Migniuolo (2007)) but was also identified in the, "Annual survey of senior staff appointments in England and Wales" (Howson, 2010). The survey found sixty schools advertising a Principal post with a salary in excess of £100,000, attributing this to the high level of risk involved in academy leadership (Howson, 2010). Such inflated salaries may have had a negative impact on the recruitment of Principals in other schools and, given the new government's increase in the academies programme, this may well also impact on the salaries of newly appointed Principals. It is also unclear as to how such escalating salary costs can be maintained, given the financial climate of the time.

Within the research conducted by Barber, Whelan and Clark (2010), of significance is the large proportion of school leaders, namely eighty percent, who cited accountability as an obstacle to seeking a principalship (Barber, Whelan & Clark, 2010). A recent report published by the National College (NC, 2011) identified the main leadership challenges as: raising student attainment; student's background and/or interest in learning; quality of teaching staff (NC, 2011). The complexity of academy leadership is evident and cannot be underestimated:

> "With the new freedom and additional resources that accompanied academy status came an enormous pressure to achieve rapid improvement. Therefore, the subsequent challenges for leaders in these academies were of a strategic, operational and organisational nature, and included revisiting the vision and ethos of the school, revising school policies and realigning leadership structures" (NC, 2011:34).

It is hoped that through this research project it has been possible to explore the pressures experienced by current academy leaders, allowing for an appreciation of the challenges they have overcome in their principalship and the elements that may dissuade potential academy leaders from applying for a similar post.

Conclusion

It is evident that effective leadership is critical to transform underperforming schools. This section of Chapter Two has briefly explored literature underpinning research question two, factors that motivate teachers to pursue and secure the role of Principal in a school or academy. Their underpinning values, vision and the beliefs, attitudes, attributes and qualities that have been identified as significant for successful school leadership have been identified. The undoubted pressures that academy leaders find themselves under have been acknowledged. This section now leads to explore the career journeys experienced by school leaders.

Career Journeys

Introduction

Despite the undertaking of a range of research relating to academies (Gunter, Woods & Woods, 2008), including the nature of effective leadership styles, qualities and skills (Macaulay, 2008), literature on the journey appears to be unavailable. Suggested areas for further research have included, "the leadership and management of academies, particularly the appointment, ideologies, practices and identities of Principals" (Gunter, Wood & Woods 2008:5). Given that new coalition government's intention is to create a further two thousand academies (Wintour & Watts, 2010), an understanding of the journey to academy principalship is believed, by the researcher, to be of importance:

> "Research evidence from the published literature of career planning in teaching is sparse" (Wilson, Powney, Hall & Davidson, 2006:242).

This section of the literature review will focus on the career journeys experienced en-route to securing the post of Principal in a secondary school: acknowledging the elements regarded as influential in the formative years; detailing the stages or phases of career progression identified by researchers as commonly followed by school leaders. The importance of looking at the full length and breadth of a leader's journey is supported by Kelchtermans (1993):

> "Teacher's professional behaviour is largely determined by and has to be understood from their experiences throughout the career. Their professional development can only be understood properly if it is conceived of as a result in a life-long process of learning and development" (Kelchtermans, 1993:443).

Career Journeys

The work of many researchers, including Weindling and Earley (1987), Day & Bakioglu (1996), Ribbins (1997) and Gronn (1999) has resulted in the theorisation of the professional pathways experienced by Principals through the identification of stages or phases of a leadership career. These different models commonly include phases which account for the experiences immediately prior to and during the principalship. As noted by Ouston, these pathways are neither predictable nor uniform (Ouston, 1997).

The small-scale work of Parkay and Hall (1992) explored the first year in post of twelve school leaders in the United States of America and postulated a five-stage career progression model followed by Principals. Day and Bakioglu's (1996) more extensive research, involving both surveys and focused interviews, resulted in the creation of a four-phase career pathway model. Again, this covered the period of time in-post. Reeves, Mahony and Moos (1997) conducted research in three countries, albeit with a small cohort leaders, over a three year period. Their exploration of the perceptions of what constitutes a good or effective school leader culminated in the identification of an eight-stage model, stemming from the point at which the principalship was achieved. Given that these research projects focus upon time in the leadership role, they were of peripheral relevance to this research project.

The seminal work of Gronn (1999) provides a comprehensive theoretical framework of a career pathway followed by school leaders. Gronn, driven by a desire to empower future leaders through his work, compared the lives and careers of school Head Teachers:

"...at any one point in time across space, place, circumstance and time, in order to provide them with a vantage point from which to get their own lives as possible future leaders into perspective" (Gronn, 1999:21).

Gronn's development of a career journey emerged as a result of two factors: his research on the life of Sir James Darling, a secondary school Headmaster educated in the English public schools who subsequently led in the Australian education system; his delivery of two Masters Degree programmes and resulting interactions with students and leaders of education. Gronn noted through this research that the career journey of school leaders appeared to have a sense of structure and direction:

"…I was witnessing something much more significant than a mere set of forces that had shaped the life of one man. Rather there was a system of sorts at work – a system with an at times loosely coupled, uneven, ragged or even ramshackle appearance, but a system, nonetheless, in which young males were being groomed for leadership roles vital to the running of an empire" (Gronn, 1999:ix).

Gronn's research was influenced by the work of Armstrong (1973), who explored the preparation of males with a high social status for leadership roles across a variety of European countries. His research projects were grounded in the education of men, notably those from affluent backgrounds who attended public schools and were deemed to be well-educated. In acknowledging the published literature and his own research, Gronn surmised that it was feasible to:

"…monitor the progress of individuals aspiring to leadership roles as they progress down pathways – formally laid out or of their own making – and negotiate the various barriers, constraints, demands or opportunities confronting them" (Gronn, 1999:xi).

As such, Gronn's work was intended to provide:

> "...a way of enabling students of leadership to be able to compare leaders' lives at any one point in time across space, place, circumstances and time, in order to provide them with a vantage point from which to get their own lives as possible future leaders into perspective...doing justice to the uniqueness of the individual experience while at the same time bringing together shared features and anchoring them around core themes" (Gronn, 1999:21).

Gronn explored in detail the carer journey of school leaders through two concepts, namely character, "the totality of the moral, personal and social attributes that comprise the person" (Gronn, 1999:xii) and strategy, "the typical patterns or repertoires of behaviour generated in response to ongoing challenges to preferred definitions of the self and one's life goals" (Gronn, 1999:xii). Gronn found educational leaders followed a pre-structured career pathway, with the opportunity to select their own destiny and the speed at which they progress through it. Figure One (p.60), taken from Gronn (1999:33), provides a diagrammatic representation of Gronn's career model of leadership:

HISTORICAL ERA

CULTURAL CONTEXT

SOCIETAL CONTEXT

LEADERSHIP CAREER

Formation

Accession

Incumbency

Divestiture
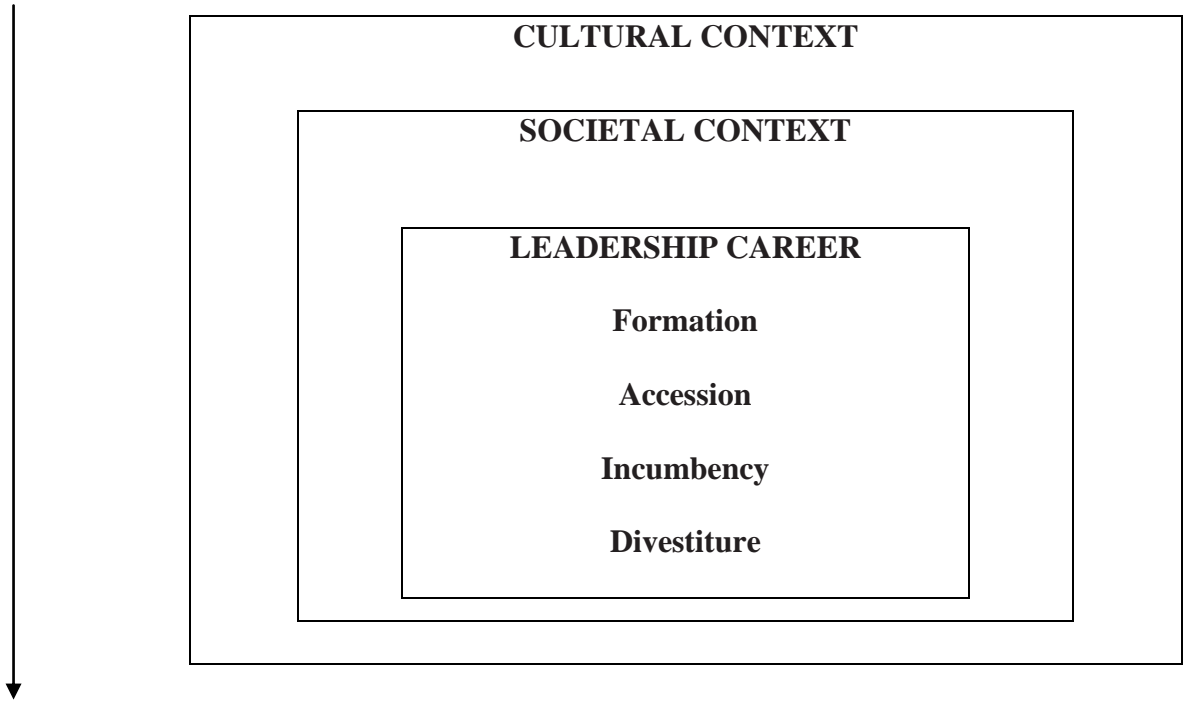
Figure One: Gronn's career model of leadership (Gronn, 1999:33).

Figure One clearly shows the three 'macro contexts' identified by Gronn as affecting a leader's career: historical; cultural; societal (Gronn, 1999). These contexts, out of the conscious control of the individual, frame the time in history within which they are born, the cultural influences in which they grow up and the impact of society at that time. The downward pointing arrow to the left of Figure One demonstrates Gronn's awareness of the historical influences impacting upon career journeys. Gronn believed that in order to fully understand the experiences, the decisions taken and the pathways followed by leaders, these three macro-contexts must be explored fully (Gronn, 1999). This opinion is echoed by Gunter (2001):

> "Who teachers are and their backgrounds is important, and cannot be written out of the storying of their headship practice" (Gunter, 2001:100).

Figure One identifies Gronn's placement of the leadership career at the centre of these three macro contexts. He provided further structure by developing four distinct, sequential phases to depict a typical career pathway for school leaders, namely: formation; accession; incumbency; divestiture (Gronn, 1999). The first phase of this model, formation, can be seen in full in Figure Two (p.62). The formation phase takes into account the early influences of 'socialisation agencies', such as family and schooling, and of 'reference groups', including friends, mentors and significant others. Gronn surmised that the impact of such influences would contribute to shaping the individual and their, "leadership character" (Gronn, 1999:35). A discussion of these significant influences can be found in the following section of this chapter.

Stage 1: Formation

An individual candidate's passage through

Socialisation agency   FAMILY   SCHOOL

and contact with

Reference Groups   PEERS   FRIENDS   MENTORS   CONSCIOUSNESS

SHAPING MEDIA

generates a conception of

SELF

and lays the basis of a

STYLE   and   OUTLOOK

LEADERSHIP CHARACTER
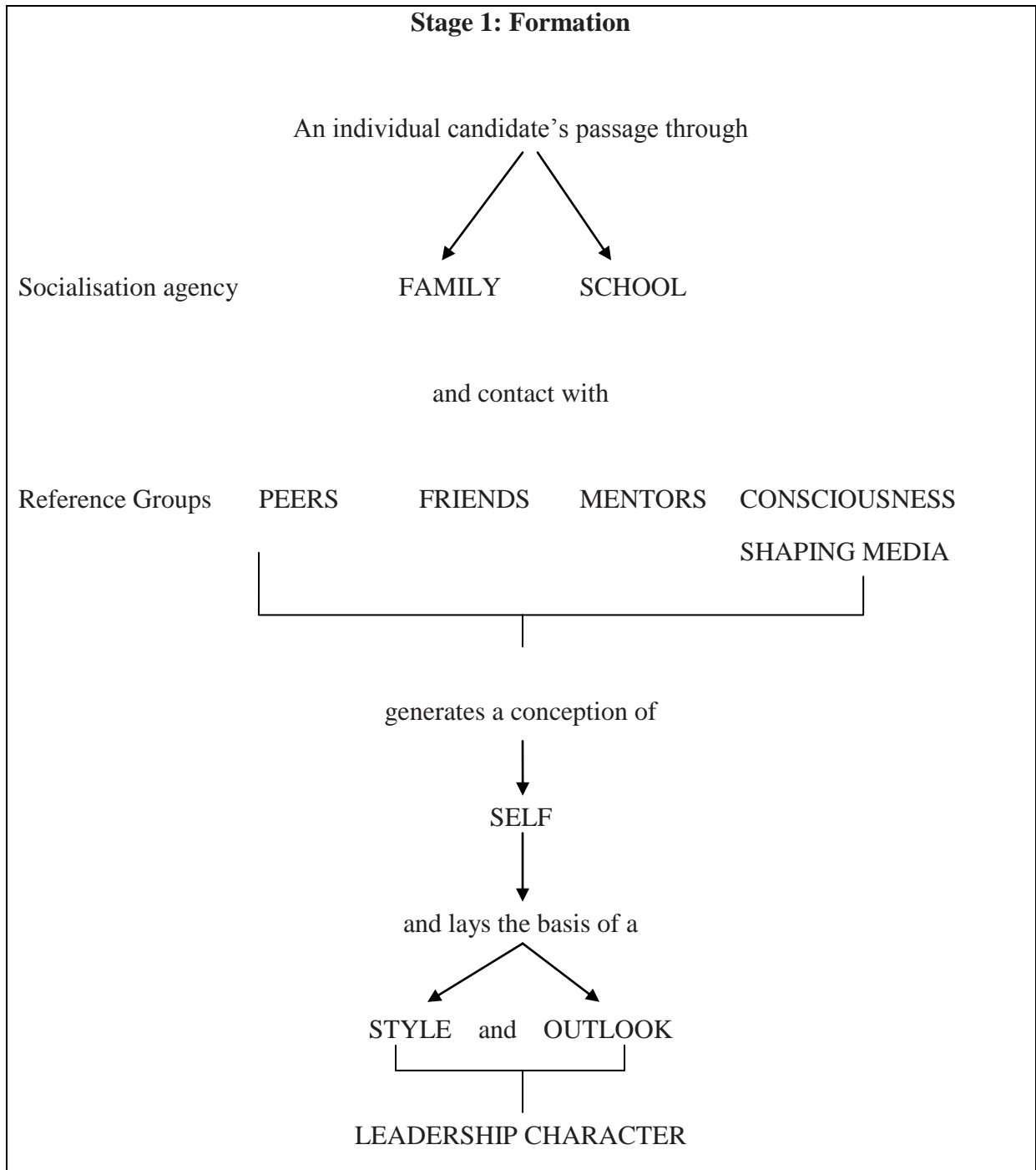
Figure Two: The process of leader formation (Gronn, 1999:35).

The formation phase leads to the accession phase, whereby the individual explores their capacity to lead. This can be seen diagrammatically in Figure Three (p.64). Gronn believed that the self belief of an individual and the degree of confidence they have in their ability to

be effective in their role is demonstrated through their daily behaviour and the degree of confidence they display. Through engagement in practice or rehearsal of aspects of the leadership role they are preparing for formally achieving the status of school leader, what Gronn refers to as, "grooming or anticipation" (Gronn, 1999: 34). This was believed not only to develop the individual but equally provides an opportunity to inform potential employees of the ability and preparedness of the leader to take on a leadership role.

During this period the leader compares their own performance with others in similar roles and those holding roles that they aspire to achieve. This comparison aids them in their understanding of whether they themselves are ready for the next step in the leadership career journey. Through the development of a set of leadership skills and behaviours they demonstrate that they are, "highly credible" (Gronn, 1999:36) and have a reputation which is, "unsullied and unblemished" (Gronn, 1999:36). Of note is Gronn's observation of the hidden and potentially unnoticed true feelings that leaders may mask:

> "...the strong motivation to achieve and be successful displayed by many leaders and would-be leaders often masks a profound sense of inadequacy and failure" (Gronn, 1999:36).

The accession phase can be seen diagrammatically in Figure Three (p.64).

Stage 2: Accession

An aspirant leader's internalised

SELF-BELIEF

entails a sense of

Domain of   PERSONAL EFFICACY and SELF-ESTEEM

inner work

which finds expression in

Domain of   A SELF   A CREDIBLE

public   or   PERFORMANCE

perception   REPUTED SELF   ROUTINE

and equips that aspirant leader to negotiate successfully

SUCCESSION

SELECTION

INDUCTION

towards

ROLE MASTERY
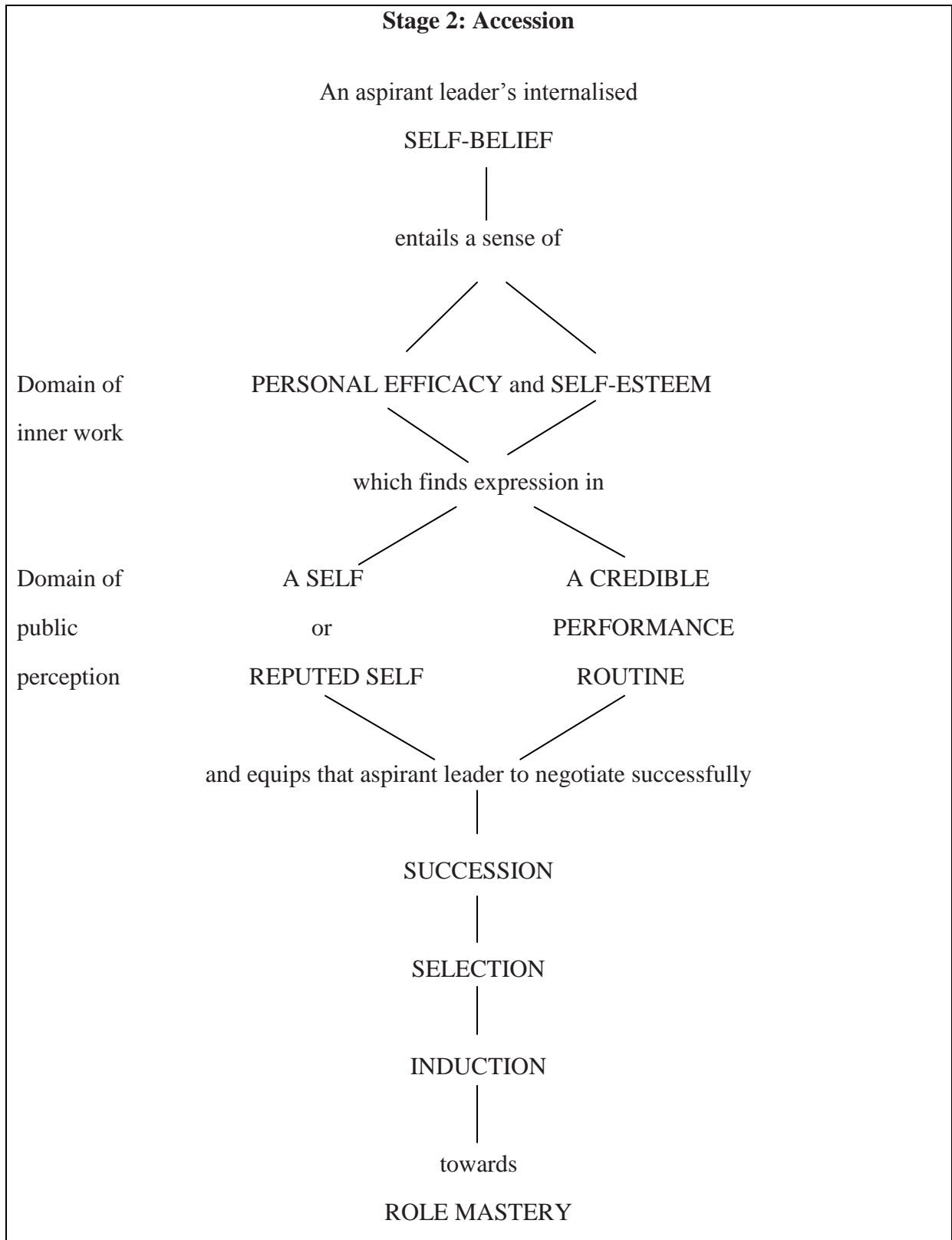
Figure Three: The process of leader accession (Gronn, 1999:37).

The subsequent phases of incumbency and divestiture have received widespread attention from other researchers. Incumbency covers the period of time in-post, also known as "leadership proper" (Gronn, 1999:38), with divestiture referring to the time of "letting go" (Gronn, 1999:39) of the post of Head Teacher. Both phases have been developed considerably by a range of researchers. The latter phase has been developed by Pascal and Ribbins (1998) to acknowledge the feelings emerging as a result of the experiences of the leader, whereby enchanted leaders experience "reinvention" whilst disenchanted leaders experience "divestiture" (Pascal & Ribbins, 1998:13).

It is important to note the more recent research conducted by Inman (2007 & 2011), utilising the aforementioned frameworks proposed by Day and Bakioglu (1996), Gronn (1999) and Ribbins (2003). Although this research project focussed upon eighteen middle leaders in Higher Education settings, Inman was able to support many assertions promoted by Gronn (1999) and Ribbins (2003). Inman identified three sub-phases located within Gronn's accession phase: the experiential phase, trying out new roles and jobs; the developmental phase, developing expertise in a role; the consolidation phase, taking on new responsibilities and learning from the consolidation of one's experiences (Inman, 2011). Inman also developed three additional phases within Gronn's (1999) 'incumbency' phase (Inman, 2011) but these will not be discussed as they are not considered to be of significance to this research project.

Significant Influences on Career Journeys

The justification for the exploration of the fourth research question, the significant influences on career journeys experienced by academy Principals, is evidently supported by Stevenson (2006):

> "There is an imperative to better understand the career trajectories of teachers as they potentially move towards...and into...Principalship. The need is to...begin to understand the experiences and motivations of teachers as they progress through their careers...for better understanding the phases within which teachers' careers develop" (Stevenson, 2006:409).

Family

A number of significant influences identified by Gronn (1999) have been highlighted in the previous section of this chapter. Within the formation phase, Gronn identified the influence of the family environment and importance of significant family members. This has been supported through the research of Dimmock and O'Donoghue (1997) and Inman (2007). These formative experiences were believed to contribute to the development of personal qualities, defined as:

> "...bright, energetic, responsive and ambitious; the sort of individuals who would be easily dissatisfied with the status quo if it were not to their liking" (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997:148).

Qualities such as patience, independence, self-reliance and confidence in the face of change were identified; the ability to develop appropriate, well-planned strategies and actions were believed to have been acquired during the formative years and developed throughout the career journey. Principals were found to place the development of their students at the heart of

everything that they did. This concern was identified as stemming from childhood experiences, leading to the formation of strong values, high expectations and an eagerness to unearth and seize opportunities as they sought to, "realise a vision of a 'better life'" (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997:150) for the students in their care. Indeed, their formative experiences evidently contributed towards their educationally-focused career choice:

> "The high value placed on learning can, in most instances, be traced back to childhood, to the inculcation of family values and to past successful experiences in learning" "Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997:158).

Pascal and Ribbins' (1998) small-scale research project with primary school leaders also noted that personal backgrounds could be characterised as, "warm, hard-working and supportive families, characterised by a high regard for the importance of education" (Pascal & Ribbins, 1998:15). Subsequent research by Rayner & Ribbins (1999) also identified aspects of family and upbringing as key influences in shaping the attitudes and values of leaders. In particular, they noted the impact of: social class; fathers and mothers; members of their immediate family; wives and husbands (Rayner & Ribbins, 1999). Parker (2002) and West-Burnham (2009) also noted the need for a secure childhood, with the former author citing the need for supportive parents with a desire for their child to be successful (Parker, 2002).

Schooling

Gronn (1999) clearly identified the importance of school as a 'socialisation agency' in the process of leader formation (Figure Two, p.62). Indeed, his inclusion of peers, friends and mentors as 'significant reference groups' identifies the important influences of people located within the school environment. Rayner and Ribbins (1999) also identified the significance of

formative school experiences, for both positive and negative reasons. In their research project, female participants viewed school positively, whilst male participants were, "a good deal less satisfied with some or much of the schooling they received" (Rayner & Ribbins, 1999:15). Reasons cited for this dissatisfaction included: large class sizes; uninspiring curriculum material; corporal punishment. The role of examinations was deemed to be significant. In particular, the impact of success or failure in the Eleven-Plus examination was found to be considerable, which evidently led to separation:

> "...from brothers and sisters and from friends and friendship groups which they had established in their primary schools" (Rayner & Ribbins, 1999:16).

The resulting different educational experiences, whereby successful participants went on to attend grammar schools whilst their failing siblings or peers attended secondary modern schools, evidently shaped the opinions of their research respondents towards educational settings and ideology:

> "...my brother who is bright but not academic was badly served...I'm very pro-comprehensive. I am for a school for all abilities" (Rayner & Ribbins, 1999:16).

This is supported by the findings of Parker (2002), who identified the importance of experiencing both positive and negative personal school experiences on the development of leaders, and West-Burnham (2009), who noted the important influences of friends and friendship groups.

The recent research conducted by Inman (2007) identified the significant role of teachers during the formative years. Whilst Rayner and Ribbins (1999) found that few participants recalled teachers at school who had been a significant influence, those who did highlighted the notions of excellence, dedication, kindness and support as critical influential factors (Rayner & Ribbins, 1999).

Career

During the accession phase (Figure Three, p.64) educational leaders encounter a number of significant people and engage in a variety of experiences that may impact on their leadership development. Gronn (1999) identified a range of critical factors, including: qualifications; opportunities; the timing of career moves; critical turning points; adaptability and flexibility; career incentives and disincentives (Gronn, 1999). His identification of "critical turning points" (Gronn, 1999:28) are mirrored by Parker (2002) through his notion of "defining moments" (Parker, 2002:25), motivating leaders during their career journey.

With regards to particular people, West-Burnham (2009) highlighted the impact of specific students on leadership career journeys. He noted that such experiences strengthened the commitment of leaders to young people and their families. West-Burnham (2009) also identified the impact of a wide range of in-school professionals, including, "Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers, teachers, a personal assistant, a teaching assistant and tutors" (West-Burnham, 2009:20). These colleagues were found to demonstrate a range of personal qualities that were highly valued by the respondents. Gronn (1999) identified the influence of, and experiences with, the most senior staff. This was supported by Pascal and Ribbins (1998) and

subsequently by Barber, Whelan and Clark (2010), who identified formative experiences and encounters with significant leadership role models as making a considerable contribution to a leader's development.

In particular, Parker (2002) cites the value of learning from the strengths and weaknesses of Head Teachers during a leader's career journey. Respondents in the research of Sieber (2011) collectively recalled sixty Head Teachers who they identified as being significant to their own career journeys. A small proportion of these Head Teachers were regarded as inspirational, predominantly due to their vision and values, modesty and commitment to developing others (Sieber, 2011). However, a significant proportion of these leaders were regarded as role models due to some form of weakness in their leadership; working alongside these colleagues was deemed to provide critical learning experiences. This has been supported by West-Burnham (2009):

> "Respondents learnt, not only from what they judged to be done well, but also from what they judged could have been done better. The contrast between good and poor practice often had far-reaching consequences" (West-Burnham, 2009:19).

With regards to career development, participants in the research of Parker (2002) placed great value on the opportunities for rapid, early promotion (Parker, 2002). Barber, Whelan and Clark (2010), identify the value placed by school leaders on, "early experiences of leadership roles" (Barber, Whelan & Clark, 2010:11), citing this as one of the primary reasons for becoming a Head Teacher. The small scale research of Barrett-Baxendale and Burton (2009) identified a common journey of school leaders, commencing from the role of newly qualified teacher and, "progressing through the ranks" (Barrett-Baxendale & Burton, 2009:96) to the

post of Head Teacher. They also commented upon the desire of Head Teachers to seek

promotion, rising rapidly through management positions as a result of their own motivation:

> "All had enthusiastically engineered their personal development, acknowledging potential barriers to aspiration and actively negotiating successful strategies to surmount potential obstacles through their own personal endeavour. This indubitably demonstrates the universal personal drive and commitment of all respondents" (Barrett-Baxendale & Burton, 2009:99).

The importance of continuing professional development has been identified by Barber,

Whelan and Clark (2010), utilising formal and informal methods such as training courses,

coaching, mentor support and personal guidance. West-Burnham (2009) also highlighted the

values of structured courses, visits, observations and collaborative working practices. Such

personal, professional development opportunities were viewed as important not only in

developing knowledge but also a leader's educational philosophy (West-Burnham, 2009).

In concluding their research, Barber, Whelan and Clark (2010) note not only the value of

extensive support in the leadership development journey, but also the importance of stringent

recruitment procedures:

> "Leaders are grown through experience and support...leaders learn best in context and from a diverse range of sources (including peers, superiors, online resources and formal training)...selecting a school leader is one of the most important decisions for an education system" (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010:28).

Conclusion

In support of research questions three and four, this section of the literature review explored a

wide range of research undertaken with a focus on the career journeys experienced by school

leaders. Research settings include a range of different countries and different types of school. The seminal work of Gronn (1999) has been identified as the literature underpinning this research project. Given the imperative to focus upon the journey *towards* achieving principalship, for the purpose of this research project Gronn's three macro contexts and first two phases of formation and accession has been utilised. The final two phases outlined by Gronn, incumbency and divestiture, are not of significance and as such were not addressed.

This section subsequently explored the significant influences experienced by school leaders during their career journeys. Research undertaken in a range of contexts has been explored, enabling the identification of a number of significant influences within the family, school and career.

Emerging Theoretical Framework

This review of literature has addressed the first research question in full, providing a theoretical basis for the emergence of academies in England. The career pathways model created by Gronn (1999) has been highlighted as of significance to this research project. In particular, Gronn's three micro-contexts and first two phases of a leader's career pathway, namely formation and accession, have been identified as underpinning the theoretical framework upon which this project has developed.

The researcher acknowledged the three macro contexts devised by Gronn (1999) during this research project. The influences of the time in history in which the leader was born and the

society and culture at that time were taken into account when exploring how their lives began and developed. The formation phase was believed by the researcher to be a critical period within the leaders' life. This project explores the significant influences within this period of time which are believed by the researcher to contribute to the formation or shaping of the leader and as such affect the career journey they follow. The degree of influence these factors may have had on the leaders' career pathway may well vary at different times in their lives; therefore, the researcher was eager to thoroughly explore each leader's journey to ensure that the degree of influence of each factor was clearly appreciated.

The researcher wished to appreciate the accession phase defined by Gronn (1999). The experiences of leaders in their professional lives, namely the roles that they hold and the way in which their personal skills and self-belief developed, will be explored. The researcher also intends to explore their interactions with significant others, both in their careers and their personal lives, and sought to understand if any incidents or occurrences were significant in their career journey. Equally the researcher wished to understand how they, the leader, navigated their way through their career: how have they secured leadership positions; how did these opportunities arise; did anything prevent them from following a specific career pathway of their choice? These factors, alongside their personal motives for developing their career will enable the researcher to gain a more complete picture of these critical steps in the leadership journey.

Finally, and most critically, the researcher intends to apply the final stages of the career journey to the academy context with the intention of beginning to appreciate and understand

what drove them to achieve the role of Principal in an academy. Their values and personal motives for working within the academy context, the perceived opportunities that an academy could or has provided for them and the potential pitfalls and barriers they have identified are fully explored. This enabled the researcher to appreciate the career journey followed by leaders in the setting of sponsored academies.

Chapter Three: Research Design

Table of Contents

Introduction

This chapter will describe, critically evaluate and justify the design of this research project. Through an exploration of the underpinning theoretical, philosophical and research design theories, the chapter will provide justification for the chosen methodology and methods. In order to succinctly guide the reader the chapter will be split into sections, commencing with an outline of the research focus and the wider frameworks within which the research is located. The philosophical approach to knowledge will be explained, including the ontological and epistemological contexts. The selected research strategy, audience for dissemination, methodology, methods and management of the project will be outlined and justified and the critical considerations of access, characteristics of the sample and data analysis methods will be discussed. Finally, the crucial notions of reliability, validity and ethical considerations will be explored. It is intended that this chapter will enable the reader to fully appreciate the researcher's underpinning beliefs and practical approach to conducting the fieldwork for this research project.

Research Focus

This research project focuses on sponsored academies opening after 1st January 2010 and the life and career journeys experienced by their Principals. The questions underpinning the research are:

1. How have academies emerged?

2. Why did the Principals apply for the role of Principal in a sponsored academy?

3. What are the most significant influences in the journey to academy principalship?

4. Why have these influences been so significant?

The motivations for embarking on this research project are born firstly of an observed gap in literature. Whilst the career pathways of school leaders have been explored in depth by researchers, including Ribbins (1997) and Gronn (1999), the literature is dated. The researcher believes that the career pathways outlined do not take into account over a decade of changes in the context of secondary schooling, namely through the introduction of academies, which has inevitably impacted on the nature of secondary school leadership (Cranston, 2007). Neither does the literature reflect the recent or current educational and political climates. This project is also poignant for the researcher due to a personal desire to achieve principalship. The researcher was eager to explore and learn from the journeys and experiences of successful academy leaders.

This research project is underpinned by the seminal research of Peter Gronn, culminating in the creation of career pathway model for secondary school leaders (Gronn, 1999). Gronn's three micro-contexts and first two phases of a leader's career pathway, namely formation and accession, act as the theoretical framework underpinning this research project. The researcher seeks to uncover the personal and professional experiences and encounters of academy Principals during their journey to principalship. These experiences are explored and analysed. Subsequently, at the end of the research process, the data collated is compared to that outlined by Gronn and other key authors identified within the Review of Literature chapter. The intention of this research project is to propose a career pathway model which outlines the common features of the career journeys of academy Principals, identifying the key influences arising through their journeys. Thus, this research project intends to provide a model of reference for aspirant academy leaders.

Wider Frameworks

In order to explain the type of knowledge this research project uncovers, this section will explain the wider theoretical frameworks, or paradigms, within which it is situated. This clarification is critical as it:

> "...influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted...it sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research. Without nominating a paradigm as a first step, there is no basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, methods, literature or research design" (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006:194).

Using the five 'knowledge domains' provided by Ribbins and Gunter (2002), namely conceptual, critical, humanistic, evaluative and instrumental, this research project is firmly grounded in the humanistic domain. At the core of the humanistic philosophy is the belief:

> "...that human interests and dignities should be of primary importance" (Scott & Marshall, 2005:283).

The nature of the enquiry of this study requires the researcher to:

> "...gather and theorise from the experiences and biographies of those who are leaders and those who are led" (Ribbins & Gunter, 2002:378).

The gathering of experiences is fundamental to this research project. However, in order for the interactions between the researcher and respondents to be effective the three principles outlined by Rogers (1979) required for effective human interaction are at the forefront of the researchers mind. That is, that the encounters engender: empathetic understanding; realness or genuineness; acceptance and trust (Rogers, 1979).

Wallace and Poulson (2003) provide further frameworks for studying the social world which are relevant to this project. Of their five 'intellectual projects', 'knowledge-for-understanding' has been defined as:

> "Attempting to develop theoretical and research knowledge from a disinterested standpoint towards an aspect of the social world, in order to understand, rather than improve, practice and policy and their underlying ideologies" (Wallace & Poulson, 2003:23).

This research project seeks to unearth "knowledge-for-understanding". Through the creation of a career pathway model and the identification of key influences it is intended that the research findings may be considered and appreciated by aspirant leaders in relation to their own career journeys. Therefore, the model is not intended to improve practice and policy, more so to assist the development of an understanding of the shared experiences of current Principals in sponsored academies.

Aspects of this research project include descriptive research (Robson, 2002:59). Detailed factual information, such as the educational background, roles and responsibilities held during the career pathway of each Principal are critical to aid the researcher in setting the context for each Principal. This in turn aids triangulation, a term used in social research to denote the use of more than one source of evidence, and subsequently assists the data analysis process. The researcher believes that this increases the validity of the findings emerging from this research project.

Philosophical Approach

Ontological and Epistemological Stance

To fully understand the methodology and methods adopted for this project it is necessary to clarify the researcher's philosophical viewpoint. This is achieved through an explanation of the ontological and epistemological approaches adopted by the researcher.

Ontology has been defined by Thomas (2009) as:

"...a study of what there is or what exists in the social world" (Thomas, 2009:87).

Ontology is concerned with the nature of being, of reality and of truth. It explores what the nature of the world is and what really exists. Within the nominalist-realist debate (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000) the realist defines reality as being external to the individual whilst the nominalist believes that each individual creates their own reality. In this project each academy Principal has constructed their own social world in their own unique way, as life stories are recollected and the meanings that they attach to their experiences are explored. Therefore, the researcher's ontological approach is nominalist.

Epistemology focuses on the study of knowledge. That is, "how do we know about the world that we have defined ontologically?" (Thomas, 2009:87). It attempts to answer the questions: what distinguishes true, adequate knowledge from false, inadequate knowledge; how do we know what knowledge is and how do we obtain it? This research project is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, focusing on people:

> "...what they think and how they form ideas about the world; how their worlds are constructed" (Thomas, 2009:75).

Reality and truth are believed by the researcher to be the product of an individual's perception. A number of realities can be experienced which may be shared by a number of individuals. The researcher believes that it is only possible to study their experiences and the meanings that they attach to them by seeing the world from each of their individual and unique perspectives.

This project requires an exploration of the depth, richness and complexity of the experiences of academy Principals. The project is underpinned by the three "macro contexts" outlined by Gronn (1999), encapsulating the historical, cultural and societal aspects of a career pathway. This provides focus for the specific contexts within which formative years, educational studies and career developments of each academy Principal took place. This knowledge is crucial in assisting the researcher to appreciate the ways in which each Principal now understands and interprets the environments within which they were brought up, lived and worked. In acknowledging that the social world at the heart of this research project will be constructed by each academy Principal in their own unique way, the adoption of the interpretivist approach (Creswell, 2009) was felt to be appropriate.

This project utilised a qualitative approach to research. The appropriateness of this method in relation to this project is seen through Creswell's (1994) description:

"Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem...the only reality is constructed by the individuals involved...thus multiple realities exist in any given situation: the researcher, those individuals being investigated, and the reader or audience" (Creswell, 1994:5).

Key characteristics of qualitative research include: the researcher as the key instrument; research undertaken in a natural setting; inductive data analysis; a focus on the meaning participant's attach to their experiences; interpretive enquiry; emergent design (Creswell, 2009:175). Therefore, qualitative research in the interpretivist paradigm was deemed by the researcher as suitable for the purposes of this research project.

Research Strategy

In order to effectively conduct a research project, a research strategy must be identified. The researcher must focus on the purposes of the study, seeking to understand the information required to answer specific research questions and identifying the strategies that will be most effective in obtaining such information (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

The selected research strategy for this project is constructivism. Constructivism has been defined by Crotty (1998) as:

"...the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998:42).

In the constructivist paradigm, born from the philosophies of phenomenology and hermeneutics (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006), the researcher holds the belief that reality is socially constructed (Mertens, 2005). The relationship between the researcher and the research participants is critical and "...central to capturing and describing the lived experience of the participants" (Ponterotto, 2005:131). The constructivist researcher does not embark on the research project with a theory that they wish to test. They begin with an open mind, aware of their own personal experiences and beliefs, and seek to learn from the views of the research participants in order to generate patterns, categories and theories.

This research project is grounded in constructivist paradigm. The researcher utilises Gronn's (1999) model as an underpinning framework but does not use it as a theory against which to test the career pathways of current academy Principals. The researcher embarks on the research project with an open mind, seeking to uncover the experiences and journeys of academy Principals. By listening to their stories and appreciating their perceptions, the researcher intends to understand and analyse each individual's journey in its own unique context. Ultimately, the researcher aims to draw together emerging categories that occur through these stories. The researcher is aware of her position as a senior educational leader but worked with an open mind to prevent bias from detrimentally affecting the research project.

Audience

It is believed that the findings of this research project may be of particular interest to a number of groups. The proposed career pathway model and identified key influences are

believed to be of relevance to aspirant school and academy leaders. With the new coalition government's embarkation of a widespread development of the academies programme, groups including the SSAT, aspirant sponsors and local authorities may also be interested to read the findings of this project. The academies research community has identified a number of areas pertinent for further investigation (Gunter, Woods & Woods, 2008), and this research project will contribute to a developed understanding of the backgrounds of Principals currently leading sponsored academies.

Research Methodology and Methods

Methodology has been defined by Robson (2002) as "the specific techniques utilised to collect data" (Robson, 2002:81). The researcher initially intended to adopt the multiple case study methodology, involving twenty individual cases. The case study "provides a unique example of real people in real situations" (Cohen et al, 2000:181) and has been defined by Robson (2002) as a "development of detailed, intensive knowledge about a...small number of related cases" (Robson, 2002: 89).

Initially, the justification for using this methodology was reflected in the hallmarks outlined by Hitchcock and Hughes (1995), including: a concern with a rich and vivid description of relevant events; focus on individual actors, seeking to understand their perceptions of events (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). However, the case study has received criticism for a notable lack of systematic handling of data, weak basis for scientific generalization, lengthy completion time and vast amount of produced documentation (Yin, 2009). Equally, the case study demands multiple sources of data that are rich in context, including documentation,

archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation and physical artefacts (Yin, 2009).

It became apparent to the researcher that access to such a range of data was not feasible. The sources of some information could lie with family members and previous work colleagues and may well be of a sensitive nature. The Principals, embarking on their first term as an academy leader, would not be able to commit the extensive amount of time required to fully explore these multiple data collection methods. Therefore, the researcher selected the interview survey as the methodology of choice.

This research project involved eliciting the views of a cohort of twenty academy Principals, subsequently referred to as the 'respondents'. Whilst the interview survey is most commonly used in large scale, quantitative research it has been noted by Denscombe (2003) as a suitable methodology for small scale, qualitative research. Given that the respondents are sourced from a cohort of incumbent Principals, leading academies that opened from 1st January 2010 onwards, the researcher adopted the method of purposive sampling:

> "...when the researcher is already knows something about the specific people or events and deliberately selects particular ones because they are seen as instances that are likely to produce the most valuable data" (Denscombe, 2003:15).

The interview has been chosen as the data collection method:

> "Research interviews…can most simply be seen as a conversation between an interviewer and respondent, which sets out to provide data for the former. As such all interviews have their basis in human interaction" (Paterson, 1997:1).

The face-to-face interview process is supported by a framework of pre-designed questions, providing a suitably structured approach to ensure data collected is focussed and relevant. This supports the definition of in-depth interviews outlined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), whereby the interviewer:

> "...follows standard rules with a minimum of personal judgement and poses questions in a predetermined sequence" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:82).

The semi-structured nature of the interview also offers a degree of flexibility to alter questions appropriately in light of interviewee's responses:

> "Interviewers have their shopping list of topics and want to get responses to them, but they have considerable freedom in the sequencing of questions, in their exact wording, and in the amount of time and attention given to different topics" (Robson, 2002:278).

Semi-structured interviews are widely used within qualitative research as a data collection instrument (Robson, 2002). They have been noted by King (1994) as a valuable tool for unearthing the history underpinning the development of a particular phenomenon. The advantages of this method include: the need for little technical equipment; the ability to undertake the interview in any appropriate location; the flexible and adaptable nature of questioning, allowing for focus on the important research aspects alongside the opportunity for modification of a line of enquiry or the addition of subsequent questions to probe and develop ideas; the opportunity to observe non-verbal cues to aid understanding of the verbal response (King, 1994). Denscombe (2003) noted a high response rate for this tool as interviews are scheduled in advance, held at a mutually agreeable location and time. He also acknowledged the "therapeutic" nature of the interview through the enjoyment of conversation and reflection in a non-critical environment (Denscombe, 2003:190). This is of

significance to this research project as the researcher sought to obtain narratives of individual life and career stories.

The semi-structured interview may also encounter difficulties. The process of conducting interviews and transcribing recorded conversations is time-consuming. The effect of the interviewer and recording instrument may affect the interviewee, stifling some of the early exchanges whilst both parties settle into the interview. The presence and perceived power of the interviewer could potentially prevent an honest account from being obtained from the interviewee (Denscombe, 2003). The data produced will be specific to each interviewee, therefore rendering analysis complex and lengthy. The quality of data obtained is dependent on the ability of the interviewee to articulate their thoughts, as noted by Creswell (2009) through the observation that, "not all people are equally articulate and perceptive" (Creswell, 2009:179).

It was deemed to be of importance to address these issues prior to embarking on field research. From the outset, the researcher has demonstrated a commitment to devoting extensive time to this study in order to achieve the highest possible research standards. The researcher appreciated the need for skilful interview technique, such as asking appropriately worded questions to aid the interviewee in their understanding and the ability to put the interviewee at ease so as to support them in responding openly and honestly. The completion of a pilot study, whereby interviews were held with three academy Principals not subsequently involved in the formal field research, provided ample opportunity to practise, evaluate and develop the researcher's skills.

To provide structure to the interview format, Gronn's three macro-contexts and first two stages of formation and accession (Gronn, 1999) underpin the research questions. The questions utilised in the aforementioned pilot study are:

1. What experiences and encounters in your formative years do you believe led you into teaching?

2. How has your career progressed? How did these opportunities arise?

3. What would you describe as the most influential factors in your journey to principalship?

4. What attracted you to take up principalship within a sponsored academy?

The three pilot interviews informed the development of these interview questions, allowing opportunity for refinement. The refined questions adopted as the framework for the twenty subsequent semi-structured interviews were:

1. I wonder if you could set the scene and talk about the period of time in which you were born, your family background, childhood and early schooling.

2. In your formative years, were there any specific experiences or incidents that led you to decide to embark on a career in teaching?

3. Similarly, were there any significant people who supported or influenced you to go into teaching?

4. Could you please outline your career development from leaving University through to where you are today?

5. What were the factors that influenced your career progression? How did these career opportunities arise?

6. What has driven you to seek and achieve the role of Principal? Who or what have been your significant influences?

7. Why did you move to a sponsored academy to advance your career?

As previously discussed, the researcher acknowledged that these questions may not necessarily be asked using these specific words and in this exact order during each of the interviews. The researcher was sensitive to the manner in which the interview progressed, asking questions as and when appropriate, but ensuring that the respondent was given the opportunity to provide detailed information regarding each element during their interview.

During the interview process the first three of Kvale and Brinkmann's "six steps of analysis" (2009:195) were taken into consideration:

> "A first step...when subjects describe their life world...a second step...the subjects themselves discover new relationships during the interview, see new meanings in what they experience and do...in a third step, the interviewer, during the interview, condenses and interprets the meaning of what the interviewee describes, and "sends" the meaning back. The interviewee then has the opportunity to reply" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:195).

This third step, clarification, was utilised during the interview in order to increase the reliability and validity of the data collected. The fourth step, data analysis, is discussed in the relevant section of this chapter.

The researcher felt that the fifth step of interview, the re-interviewing of each research participant, would not be feasible due to: the geographical location of each Principal; the arising access difficulties; the demanding work schedules of both the researcher and the respondents. Therefore, the researcher sought to ensure that the single interview collected substantial data in preparation for analysis.

The sixth step was defined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) as:

> "...to extend the continuum of description and interpretation to include action, by subjects beginning to act on new insights they have gained during their interview" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:196).

The researcher chose not to undertake this stage in the research project. The interviewees may reflect on the interview and then, as a result, take actions on the insights they have gained. However, this was not the prime motivation of this research project and would therefore be a subsequent action which is not explored by the researcher.

Access and Characteristics of the Sample

The researcher had held a senior leadership role within a sponsored academy and at the time of writing held the role of Deputy Head Teacher within a converter academy. Therefore, the researcher has an understanding of the academies sector and had frequent contact with other academies. The researcher is also aware of the role of the SSAT and the support that they offer, specifically in terms of providing up-to-date information regarding newly opened academies. Their involvement was crucial to accurately identify academies and Principals

eligible for this research project and to provide key information regarding contextual factors such as academy location, sponsors and the history of the predecessor school.

In order to conduct the field research, twenty academy Principals were purposefully selected. The selection criteria demanded that they had been appointed to their first post of Principal in a sponsored academy, opening in 2010. A dual approach for identification was adopted. From September 2009, advertisements in the Times Educational Supplement (TES) for academy Principal posts were recorded. This provided a broad picture of the number of academies opening and the potential research participants available. Collaboration with the SSAT enabled the swift location of accurate data, outlining the key characteristics of all academies in England. Critically, this data included the opening dates of all (current and proposed) academies, details of the Principals and contextual data such as location, telephone numbers, websites and email addresses. This data enabled suitable research participants to be accurately identified.

It was critical to ensure that selected Principals were undertaking their first academy principalship. Triangulation methods adopted to confirm this included an initial cross-referencing process, utilising the SSAT database and checking each new academy's website, alongside subsequent internet searches. These searches provided newspaper archives, announcing the appointment of the successful candidate and commenting upon the posts they had previously held. Additionally, a request was made for a copy of the Principal's curriculum vitae prior to the interview being held. The intention of this request was to confirm that the Principal was eligible for the research project and to allow Gronn's (1999) historical

macro-context to be explored, so placing the life and career of the Principal into a specific period of time. This document allowed the researcher to appreciate the critical steps in the Principal's career journey, subsequently providing a loose framework for additional questions or prompts that may be necessary during the interview process. This additional data collection tool aided triangulation, promoted reliability and increased the likelihood of the inclusion of a breadth of contexts as the researcher was able to ensure that participating Principals led academies with different sponsors.

Following the identification of Principals suitable to participate, thirty nine were formally approached by letter to request their involvement in the research project (Appendix One). This large cohort was selected to ensure that the optimum sample size of twenty could be guaranteed. The researcher chose this sample size in order to ensure that, through the exploration of life and career experiences, the identification of common themes and categories would be identifiable in the stories from a significant number of respondents and therefore valid conclusions to draw. This sample size did not allow the researcher to explore some issues in greater depth but this was felt by the researcher to be unavoidable. Such issues will be identified as aspects notable for further research.

Following the first formal letter, an email was sent one week later to each Principal's Personal Assistant, reiterating the research context, focus and method. Where a response was not received, a subsequent email was sent two-weeks later.

The researcher intended, from the outset, to ensure that the twenty Principals were of an equal gender split. Once the eligibility criteria had been met it emerged that the gender split of eligible academy Principals included nineteen men and twenty women. Following requests for involvement in the project, the gender balance of those giving consent included thirteen women and seven men. Three men and one woman informed the researcher that they did not wish to be involved. The remaining fifteen Principals declined to respond to the researcher's request for their involvement.

Once consent had been given, either by letter or email, a date, time and location for the semi-structured interview was arranged (Appendix Two). Acknowledging the considerable workload of a newly appointed academy Principal, securing a suitable period of time to conduct the interview was deemed to be potentially problematic. To overcome this, the researcher offered to conduct each interview within the Principal's academy or at another convenient location and on a date and time of their choice. The researcher intended to conduct the interviews between January 2011 and March 2011. Following the success of the pilot interviews the formal letters were sent to Principals on 1st September 2010. Twelve Principals responded within one week of receiving the letter, each confirming their involvement. Due to the rapid response and apparent eagerness to be interviewed at their earliest convenience, the interviews were scheduled immediately. As a result, all twenty interviews were completed by January 2011.

Where feasible, interviews were paired according to location and undertaken consecutively in order to both reduce travel time and assist the researcher in achieving the demanding

interview schedule. This occurred on four occasions. However, due to the nationwide academy locations and the extensive prior engagements of Principals it was necessary for the researcher to travel a great distance on a number of occasions in order to include all consenting Principals in the field research.

The semi-structured interviews were intended to last for no longer than one hour. The interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder. Following each interview the audio recordings were transcribed by a professional company and returned to the researcher within twenty-four hours. Supporting field notes were not taken during the interview in order to avoid distractions or a loss of focus during the interview. Instead, the researcher took an audio recording of her observations immediately after the interview had concluded, outlining non-verbal cues and behaviours witnessed and expanding on the impressions and feelings that were felt to be worthy of comment. This was transcribed by the researcher and referred to during the analysis process.

Data Analysis

Following completion of each interview the researcher was intent on immediately recording key factual information, feelings and perceptions arising from the interview. In order to do so in a coordinated manner a contact summary sheet (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was completed immediately after each interview in order to ensure no crucial information was lost between the time of interview and time of data analysis. A compact version of the structure of the summary sheet can be seen in Table Two (p.95).

Name / Code:	95
Academy / Code:	
Sponsor / Code:	
Date / Time of Interview:	
Location of Interview:	
Context of interview	
Age of Principal:	
Summary of roles held:	
Emerging categories:	
Thoughts:	

Table Two: Contact summary sheet.

The aforementioned fourth step of interview analysis defined by Kvale and Brinkmann, whereby, "the recorded interview is analyzed by the interviewer" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:195) was subsequently conducted using aspects of the Grounded Theory approach introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The researcher acknowledges their invitation to "use grounded theory strategies flexibly" (Charmaz, 2009:9). The work of Charmaz (2009) as "a leading proponent of constructivist grounded theory" (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006:31) contributed towards the data analysis methods adopted for this research project. The principles of this theory are complimentary to qualitative research, providing systematic strategies for research practice:

> "Glaser and Strauss... proposed that systematic qualitative analysis had its own logic and could generate theory....intended to construct abstract theoretical explanations of social processes" (Charmaz, 2009:5).

The defining components of grounded theory practice have been summarised as: simultaneous data collection and analysis; constructing analytical codes and categories from data as opposed to preconceived hypothesis; adopting the constant comparative method of data analysis; advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2009).

The grounded theory research process begins with the posing of a question which in turn develops a theory regarding an aspect of social life. In the case of this research project: what are the life and career journeys experienced by Principals in newly opening, sponsored academies? It is critical that the researcher embarks with a proposed area of study, generating rather than testing theory (Mark, 1996). This research project was initiated through the

framework designed by Gronn (1999); this acts as a theoretical framework underpinning the research project. It is not tested against during the research process.

An issue lies in the selection of research participants. Grounded theory demands that "sampling is aimed at theory construction, not for population representativeness" (Charmaz, 2009:6). That is, the research participants are not predicted at the start of the research project, but emerge as the project develops. In the case of this project, given the small scale of eligible participants and the need for targeted identification, this aspect of grounded theory was not be feasible. However, the researcher did utilise:

> "...a systematic set of procedures for data collection...with multiple individuals who have participated in a process about a central phenomenon...to saturate categories and detail a theory" (De Vos, 2002:274).

Figure Four (p.98) has been adapted from a model designed by Charmaz (2009). This stepped process was designed by the researcher and was adopted as the data analysis process for this research project.

9. Comparison of model with those formulated by Gronn (1999) and theorists identified in 'Review of Literature' chapter.

8. Identification of model detailing career pathway and key influences.

7. Fourth data analysis – re-reading initial transcripts to confirm conceptual categories are a true reflection of the respondents' journeys.

6. Third data analysis – theoretical coding leading to the development of conceptual categories.

5. Second data analysis – focused coding (incident-to-incident) through development of tabular system and the refining of conceptual categories.

4. First data analysis: initial coding (incident-to-incident), development of transcript boards raising tentative categories.

3. Research interviews: data collection – completion of interview summary sheets and initial memos.

2. Pilot interviews: data collection, analysis, development and clarification of research questions.

1. Identify research problem: design opening research questions.

Identification of research focus and relevant literature. Familiarisation of key concepts and disciplinary perspectives.

Figure Four: The data analysis process (adapted from Charmaz, 2009:11).

The pilot study provided an opportunity to collect the first set of data (Figure Four, p.98, box two). Interview transcripts obtained through the interviewing of three Principals of existing academies were used to analyse and subsequently refine the researcher's interview technique and the interview questions. The data emerging from these interviews was not used at any subsequent stage of the research process. At the conclusion of the pilot study, the twenty semi-structured interviews began. Contact summary sheets were completed immediately after each interview was conducted (Figure Four, p.98, box three). The arrows surrounding boxes three and four demonstrate the simultaneous process of conducting interviews and undertaking the first data analysis process. The data analysis methods adopted utilise aspects of the coding methods detailed in grounded theory:

> "...coding generates the bones of your analysis. Theoretical integration will assemble these bones into a working skeleton. Thus, coding is more than a beginning; it shapes an analytical frame from which you build the analysis...by careful...coding, you begin weaving two major threads in the fabric of grounded theory: generalizable theoretical statements that transcend specific times and places and contextual analyses of actions and events" (Charmaz, 2009:46).

Coding involves three phases: initial coding; focused coding; theoretical coding. Coding has been defined as "categorising segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarises and accounts for each new piece of data" (Charmaz, 2009:43). Initial coding requires a number of key aspects: "remain open; stay close to the data; keep your codes simple and precise; construct short codes; preserve actions; compare data with data; move quickly through the data" (Charmaz, 2009:49). The researcher conducted data-driven, "incident-to-incident" coding (Charmaz, 2009:53), closely reading the transcripts and coding the key incidents as they arose. The method outlined by Strauss (1987) was adopted: cutting the transcripts into segments where a potentially important aspect was noted; sorting the

segments into piles, creating categories; noting the frequency of the category (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this first data analysis process (Figure Four, p.98, box four) the researcher took the categories of transcript segments and literally glued them to large 'transcript boards' to create a visual display. These related sections of transcripts delineated tentative categories. The researcher believes that this visual method supported the completion of a thorough initial data analysis process. As this was undertaken alongside the ongoing research interviews, it was felt to aid the constant comparative process (Charmaz, 2009). As the interviews were conducted, transcribed and the emerging data was analysed, codes and categories emerged, were then compared and subsequently refined in a cyclical process.

Following this data analysis step the researcher annotated the 'transcript boards'. This process led to the creation of initial memos, "the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing of draft papers" (Charmaz, 2009:72). Although the researcher maintained a research diary which recorded emerging key information on a daily basis, initial memos provided a more detailed commentary of specific emerging aspects. Whilst memos may utilise a variety of formats, the researcher instinctively felt that, due to a lack of experience, the 'clustering' method (Rico, 1983) was a suitable tool to commence with.

The second data analysis process (Figure Four, p.98, box five) then commenced: focused coding of all twenty interviews was undertaken. Focused coding has been defined as:

> "...using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data. One goal is to determine the adequacy of those codes. Focused coding requires decisions about which code makes the most analytical sense to categorise your data incisively and completely" (Charmaz, 2009:58).

This process ensured that the codes attached in initial coding were accurate and closely reflected the true meanings of the interview data collected. Through this active process the researcher engaged in deeper analysis, creating categories that best defined clusters of codes. The researcher utilised a tabular system to display the emerging categories and related codes, clearly identifying the location of the evidence within the interview transcripts. This demonstrated the pattern of commonality across all twenty respondents.

At this point in the data analysis process the researcher was able to refine conceptual categories through the third data analysis process, namely theoretical coding (Figure Four, p.98, box six). This process drew together the codes and categories emerging from the data, identified relationships and enabled proposed theories to be drawn from the research findings. Here the researcher reached saturation point and was able to see strong repetition of emerging categories related to the research questions. In order to ensure the researcher had remained true to the journey described by each Principal, the researcher conducted a fourth data analysis process (Figure Four, p.98, box seven). The researcher returned once more to the initial transcripts and read each interview in full, rendering the "participant's experiences into readable theoretical interpretations" (Mills et al, 2006:32). Throughout this lengthy data analysis processes, the researcher utilised the constant comparative method, which "involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis" (Charmaz, 2009:5).

This data analysis process culminated in the design and theorisation of a career pathway model, identifying the key influences that shaped the career journey to academy principalship (Figure Four, p.98, box eight). The researcher then engaged in a thorough analysis of the

findings of this research project against the published theories of Gronn (1999) and the relevant literature identified in Chapter Two (Figure Four, p.98, box nine).

The author is aware that this is a small-scale research project undertaken at a very specific point in time. Therefore, the subsequent stages outlined in grounded theory of theoretical sampling, whereby the researcher repeatedly collects data, analyses it and selects the subsequent pathway for data collection, were not feasible. This may, however, be a suitable avenue of research for subsequent researchers who may wish to utilise the findings of this research project.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability is traditionally defined as the ability to replicate or repeat research to obtain the same results (Kirk & Miller, 1986). The researcher wishes to use Lincoln and Guba's (1985) term 'dependability' which, "closely corresponds to the notion of reliability in quantitative research" (Golafshani, 2003:601). The context within which this research project takes place is ever changing and therefore not easily replicable. However, the researcher has carried out a number of steps to increase the dependability of the research findings. In order to make the research process "transparent" (Silverman, 2006:282), the following actions were undertaken: the main interview questions formulated were followed for all interviews; following the interviews, transcripts were checked for obvious mistakes; during transcript analysis, codes adopted were defined and checked for accurate usage during the analysis process (Creswell, 2009). Through the writing up of this research project a clear explanation of the theoretical standpoint, rich description of the research strategy and detailed explanation of the methods

used for data analysis have been provided. The aforementioned codes are grounded in a very detailed process: the researcher believes this increased the dependability of the resultant categories and the emergent career pathway and key influences.

Validity, "the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which is refers" (Hammersley, 1990:57), can also be described as trying to get as close to the truth as possible. In order to increase validity the researcher intended to gain access to each participant's curriculum vitae prior to the interview. This proved problematic, but where it was feasible it enabled the career pathway to be accurately understood, acting as a triangulation tool to assist the researcher's understanding of verbal responses during the interview process. Access to the academy website and prospectus prior to interview gave an insight to the context and the academy vision and ethos: this knowledge helped the researcher to fully understand the responses given to specific interview questions.

Prior to commencing the research project a pilot study was undertaken with three academy Principals. This gave opportunity to confirm the appropriateness of the interview questions and allowed for detailed discussions to be held outside of the pre-planned interview questions. As a result, the selected interview questions were altered accordingly to increase reliability of data collection. The researcher found the need to utilise a variety of additional types of interview questions which could not be planned prior to the interview, including: follow-up questions; probing questions; specifying questions; silence; interpreting questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Wider reading was conducted prior to embarking on the main body of interviews to ensure the researcher was able to appropriately utilise these techniques.

One critical piece of advice, worthy of note, became apparent from the outset:

> "The participant must do 90% of the talking. An interview is not a dialogue. The whole point is for the participant to tell the story. Limit your own remarks. Listen more and talk less" (Greeff, in De Vos, 2005:293).

As a result of the pilot study the researcher appreciated the importance of listening closely to the interviewee, actively refraining from passing comment and not considering the subsequent question until the story had unfolded. Other approaches adopted during the interview process included: checking for representativeness and researcher effects; following up on unexpected comments; looking for negative evidence; getting feedback from interviewees (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The researcher was also aware of the potential implications of Insider Research (Robson, 2002). The researcher was working within a sponsored academy at the time of conducting field work and was aware that this could influence the 'truthfulness' of the interview responses. As such, the researcher ensured the interview questions were structured to elicit information around life and career journeys first, focusing on personal experiences and encounters before latterly addressing the sponsored academy context. The researcher followed the interview questions carefully, listening fully and refraining from interjecting to allow the respondent to settle in to the interview. The degree of 'truth' emerging from responses was noted through a number of unexpected behaviours including the removal of smart footwear and donning of slippers, the relocation of the interview from a formal desk area to a sofa area, and the impromptu provision of refreshments. Specific verbal responses and observed

emotions also portrayed to the researcher that the respondents were able to respond to questions 'truthfully'. This included closing remarks such as:

> "Thanks. Honestly, that felt like therapy. The best therapy I have ever had. Thank you, I feel better for that, for getting it all off my chest".

Generalisability or transferability refers to, "the extent to which research findings can be applied in settings other than the setting in which the original research took place" (Thomas, 2009:109). The specific selection of Principals, across a range of academies with different sponsors and an approximately equal gender balance, is believed by the researcher to aid generalisability. Due to the relatively small sample size the findings of this research project will be limited and not truly representational of the experiences of all academy Principals. Whilst the findings will not be generalisable across all academies, they may relate to similar audiences and subsequently contribute to wider and more detailed research studies.

Ethics

The British Educational Research Association Guidelines (BERA, 2004) demand that all researchers:

> "...operate within an ethic of respect for any persons involved directly or indirectly in the research they are undertaking, regardless of age, sex, race, religion, political beliefs and lifestyle" (BERA, 2004:6).

The researcher fully considered and adhered to the guidelines determined by BERA and The University of Birmingham. An ethics form was completed for the School of Education at The

University of Birmingham prior to research commencing and The University Ethics Committee approved the research project.

As recommended by BERA (2004) an initial letter was prepared and sent to all potential interviewees, requesting consent for their involvement in the research project (Appendix One). In order to obtain informed consent, a subsequent document, "outlined the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:70) and explicitly detailed the rights of the participant to withdraw from the research project at any time (BERA, 2004) (Appendix Two). No incentives were offered for involvement in the research project. This ensured that bias was not encountered, "in sampling or in participant responses" (BERA, 2004:7). The intended audience to which the research project will be disseminated was also clarified.

Given the role, age and experience of the participants in this research project they were not perceived by the researcher to be 'vulnerable adults' (BERA, 2004). However, if issues of disclosure had arisen which needed to be addressed, appropriate authorities would have been informed.

Interviews were recorded through the use of a digital recorder; all recorded audio files were deleted following transcription. Transcription was undertaken by a professional transcription company who guaranteed confidentiality. Transcripts were amended by the researcher to remove personal details and information regarding specific individuals, schools and

academies. Names were altered to codes, ensuring that no link could be made between the transcript and a specific interviewee. Throughout the interview and writing up processes, confidentiality was assured and anonymity was guaranteed (BERA, 2004). All audio transcripts, thesis chapters and relevant materials were stored following the Data Protection Act (HMSO, 1998). They were held centrally on a single, external hard drive and locked securely at the home of the researcher (BERA, 2004). The data was not made accessible to any other party at any time during the research project.

Conclusion

This research project focuses on sponsored academies located in England and opening in 2010, and the career journeys experienced by their newly appointed Principals. This chapter has critically evaluated and justified the design for this research project. The motivations for embarking on the study and the theoretical framework underpinning this research project have been outlined. In particular, the three micro contexts and first two phases of the leader's career pathway (Gronn, 1999) have been identified as the models of reference which underpin the selection of research and interview questions.

This chapter has identified the wider frameworks, ontological approach and epistemological stance within which this research project is situated. The selected research strategy has been identified. The researcher has outlined her belief that reality is socially constructed and demonstrates an intention to learn from the experiences of the research participants in order to generate patterns, categories and theories. The audience for whom this research may be of interest has been identified.

The methodology of choice has been highlighted as the interview survey, with the semi-structured interview selected as the chosen data collection method: the benefits and potential difficulties of this method have been discussed in full. The interview questions utilised in the pilot study and subsequently refined questions prepared for the twenty interviews have been outlined. The appropriateness of the 'six steps of analysis' outlined by Kvale & Brinkmann (2009), intended to contribute to effective interviewing and data analysis, have been outlined and discussed.

This chapter has described the method adopted for the selection of research participants, acknowledging the contribution of these methods to promote effective triangulation. Data analysis procedures have been explained in detail. The notions of reliability, dependability and validity have been discussed and strategies adopted to promote transparency have been outlined. The researcher has demonstrated an awareness of the difficulties of generalisability; strategies have been detailed to increase the transferability of research findings to other individuals and settings. Finally, this chapter has outlined the critical ethical considerations utilised in the formation of this research project.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Empirical Work

Table of Contents

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings emerging from twenty semi-structured interviews held with Principals working in sponsored academies opening after the 1st of January, 2010. The interview schedule was structured around three areas of questioning: the formative years, from birth to the end of schooling; the journey through their working lives, leading up to their current role; their academy principalship. Within these three areas of questioning, categories emerged. These categories will be identified and described, with reference to interview data evidence.

Biographical Information

In order to place the interview data in context, an overview of the biographical information of the respondents is required. The twenty respondents interviewed included seven men and thirteen women; their gender and age-range can be seen in Table Three, below.

Age Range	Number of Principals	Male	Female
35-39	4	0	4
40-44	2	0	2
45-49	5	2	3
50-54	5	2	2
55-59	3	2	1
60-64	1	1	0

Table Three: The age range and gender of respondents.

Although the thirty-nine Principals initially contacted were of an almost equal gender balance, predominantly more women responded to the research request and gave consent to be involved in the project. Therefore, more women were interviewed and as a result the sample does not accurately reflect the gender balance of the cohort of Principals leading academies at that time. The ages of the Principals spans from thirty-seven to sixty-four years of age. They are relatively evenly balanced across the five-year age bands identified.

The researcher ensured that each respondent led an academy with a different set of sponsors. The academies were found to have between one and five sponsors who are classified in Table Four, below, according to their primary purpose:

Code	Primary purpose of sponsor	Total number of sponsors
B	Business	6
C	County Council	11
D	Charity	4
E	Education	28
F	Faith / Religion	2
H	Health Services	1
Total Number of Sponsors		**52**

Table Four: The primary purpose of the academy sponsors.

It is evident that nearly three-quarters of academies had more than one sponsor. Education is the primary focus for over half of the academy sponsors, with county councils forming the second largest group. These two categories account for thirty-nine of the fifty-two sponsors. Of the remaining fourteen sponsors very few emerged from faith, health and charity backgrounds. The proportion of sponsors from businesses was surprisingly few, accounting for only six of the fifty-two sponsors.

It was also evident that where a business sponsors an academy they are not the sole sponsor. In every case they work alongside sponsors with an educational focus, including further and higher educational establishments and universities. Where the county council are sponsors they also work in conjunction with sponsors from education. The only two faith-based sponsors worked collaboratively to support a single academy. Table Five (p.114) outlines each academy and the primary focus of each of their sponsors.

Academy	Sponsors				
1	D				
2	D	E			
3	B	E			
4	B	B	C	E	E
5	E	C			
6	B	E	E		
7	D				
8	E	E	E	C	
9	H	E	C		
10	E	E	E	C	
11	E	E	E	C	
12	E	C			
13	E				
14	D				
15	B	C	E	F	F
16	E				
17	E	C	E	B	
18	E				
19	E	C			
20	E	E	E	C	

Table Five: A detailed breakdown of the sponsors of each academy (definitions for each coded letter are detailed in Table Four on p.112).

In order to aid the reader it is important to clarify the terminology that is used in this chapter. Table Six, below, identifies each term and the corresponding number of respondents:

Term	Number of respondents
All	20
Most	11 or more
Many	5 to 10
Few	1 to 4
None	0

Table Six: Selected terminology and the related number of respondents.

The researcher acknowledges that the category 'most' could be misleading due to the large range of respondents that it includes (eleven to nineteen). Therefore, in instances where the researcher believes the number of respondents is significantly large but does not constitute 'all'. For example where nineteen respondents support a notion, the exact number of respondents will be detailed.

This chapter describes the findings emerging from the semi-structured interviews. The chapter is split into three sections, each identifying a specific period of time in the life and career journey of an academy Principal: the formative years; the journey to principalship; academy principalship. Within each of these sections categories emerge that are discussed in detail. As

previously mentioned, the academy Principals will be referred to as 'respondents'. Where the independent variables of gender, age, social class and type of academy sponsor are of significance, this will be discussed. In order to aid the reader, the findings have also been presented in a tabulated format in Appendix Three. To demonstrate the format of the interview process, one interview transcript is provided in Appendix Four. Where quotes are used in this chapter which are evidently from that transcript, the respondent will be identified by the number (1) at the end of the quote.

The Formative Years

Introduction

This section details the responses relating to the formative years, namely: from birth; through early childhood; formal schooling; further education; through to the completion of University. The first category defines the critical contextual factors, including decade of birth, place of birth and their perceived social class. These are outlined and supported by data, presented in a table. The remainder of the section is structured by the categories that emerged from the field research: family influences; schooling influences; influential people; significant experiences; values underpinning the ambition to teach.

Contextual Influences

Of the twenty respondents interviewed, most were born between 1950 and 1969. One female respondent was born in the late 1940s. All the respondents born in the early 1970s were female. This was shown in Table Six on page one hundred and ten.

The respondents were born and raised in a range of geographical locations, outlined in Table Seven, below. One quarter of the respondents were born in the North West of England: a further quarter in the Midlands. The researcher did not stipulate geographical parameters at the start of the research project, seeking involvement from all eligible academy Principals. Therefore it is of note that such a high proportion came from these two areas of England. No respondents were born in the South of England. Most of the respondents have since relocated from their county of birth and now lead an academy in another part of England.

Location of Birth	Number of Male Respondents	Number of Female Respondents	Total number of Respondents
North West England	1	4	5
North East England	1	2	3
Midlands	2	3	5
Yorkshire	0	2	2
London	1	0	1
Wales	0	1	1
Scotland	1	0	1
Overseas	1	1	2

Table Seven: The location of birth of the respondents.

When describing their formative years, the respondents were keen to classify their social class; this was done without direct questioning or prompting by the researcher. Most respondents defined their upbringing as 'working class' and 'deprived'. Of the small percentage that did not, most were brought up in Yorkshire (Table Eight, p.118). This working class 'badge' with which they associate was given considerable emphasis by the respondents; it evidently affected their formative experiences, impacting on their views of education and their subsequent actions in adult life. This critical category is discussed throughout subsequent sections of this chapter.

Location of Birth	Total number of Respondents	Number of respondents classifying upbringing as 'working class'	Percentage of respondents classifying upbringing as 'working class'
North West England	5	5	100
North East England	3	3	100
Midlands	5	4	80
Yorkshire	2	0	0
London	1	1	100
Wales	1	1	100
Scotland	1	1	100
Overseas	2	1	50

Table Eight: The location of birth and social class of respondents.

Family Influences

Each respondent was asked to recount their childhood from birth, through formal schooling to the completion of sixth form. Specific parameters were not outlined by the researcher; respondents spoke of what they believed to be significant and relevant. Most respondents immediately described being brought up by a working class family, in a working class area and being deprived. No respondents attached negative connotations to this:

"Looking back, I suppose we were reasonably poor but we didn't feel like it because everybody else was in the same boat".

Many respondents were born to parents who experienced formal education through to sixteen; few respondents had parents who completed further or higher education. However, most respondents described at least one parent who was required to leave school at a young age in order to earn money to support their family. During the interviews these respondents were visibly saddened that their parents were denied educational opportunities:

> "My Dad's experience was he went to school in this mining village, passed his eleven-plus but couldn't go on, they were quite a poor working class family I suppose...couldn't go onto Grammar School. I get upset if I talk about it. Didn't know he'd passed his eleven-plus, I only found out...because I went to the school and I said, "Oh my Dad came here when he was fourteen or thirteen...I don't know what happened to him, he was a very bright man." They said he could only have gone there if he'd passed his eleven-plus and by then he was already dead so he never knew, which is really sad".

Irrespective of school experiences, most respondents described one or both of their parents as 'intelligent' and outlined a belief that their parents had missed out on opportunities in later life due to their lack of schooling:

> "When he (Father) was a kid he used to hide in the woods...he used to go there and do his homework...and read...he would have been told off by his father if he'd done school work at home. So he was very bright at school, top of the class...not that Granddad was a horrible man, but he'd left school when he was twelve...and the attitude was that you get out and get a job at sixteen".

Most respondents described their parents as 'ambitious', not just for their personal career advancement but ambitious for the opportunities available to their children. Indeed, most parents were described as valuing their children's education and respondents explained how their parents forwent money and personal career opportunities in order to provide stability, structure and opportunities for their children:

> "...although my Mum and Dad were very working class, both of them left school at fifteen, they believed strongly in the value of education and so didn't want to move my brother or I (sic) around".

Many respondents recalled an upbringing where literacy was regarded as an important aspect of family life. As a result, many respondents regarded literacy as a critical skill and gave it high priority in their academies:

> "Fortunately I had two parents who were both very keen on reading so for me it was quite normal to be taken to the library form a very early age so I think that sparked off a lot of interest".

When identifying factors that influenced their career choice, few respondents were found to have grown up alongside family members with a career in the teaching profession. For those who did, they believed this did not explicitly influence their own career choice; their awareness of the profession enabled them to understand the role and see it as a potential career pathway that could be pursued, rather than one that they were expected to follow:

> "There are a lot of teachers in the family. My sister is a teacher. And since then a lot of cousins and nieces are also teachers. So whether that was partly to do with it? Well, it was up to me".

Many respondents defined one of their parents as being particularly influential in their career, mainly due to their drive, determination and the financial and emotional support they provided:

> "...my dad, he was my absolute role model. He wanted better for his kids than he had...my Dad was actually really bright but didn't ever get the opportunities; his dad died, he had to go to work from the age of fifteen...so Dad really valued education and wanted the best education for us and was really supportive...it wasn't the norm for people to go to university...I remember my Dad's friends giving him a lot of grief... "What's she gonna stay on the sixth form for, why are you paying for her to go to university? What a waste, she's a girl, she's just gonna get married and have kids" and this kind of thing" (1).

Many respondents described the concerns their parents harboured when they announced that they wished to apply for a place at university. Concerns focused on a number of aspects, including: the envisaged costs associated with attendance at university; the motivation and reasons for attending university; a parental lack of appreciation at the accolade of securing a university place:

> "I remember telling my Mum that I'd got this interview at university ...and I remember her saying to me, 'Well that's lovely dear. Will you need sandwiches for the train?' And that was the level of my Mum and Dad's understanding. They've always been hugely proud of my achievements. But that was her primary concern".

Schooling Influences

When asked to describe their school experiences, primary schooling appeared irrelevant to many respondents; many chose not to discuss it in any detail, simply recalling the school location and immediately describing in greater detail their secondary schooling. The respondents who did comment on primary schooling recalled mostly positive experiences:

> "I always remember Mr Biscuit...you always think things like that were really funny...I remember the Head Teacher...he used to tap me on the head and say 'just remember this, good things always come from little bottles' because of course I was quite small. So I've always remembered him...I remember the nature walks that we used to do...I loved it, I loved it and my parents both died this year and I always remember my Dad saying...we never had any trouble with you in school".

For the few respondents who encountered negative primary school experiences, these were of a significant nature and included their receipt of treatment that they believe would now be classed as, "physical abuse, strapping and telling off and all that kind of stuff". This was deemed to have been acceptable, at that time, as all students were treated similarly. For one respondent, primary school was succinctly described: "I hated my primary school with a

vengeance". No explanation was offered; the respondent chose to move on in their recollections to secondary experiences. It was evident that these negative experiences contributed to shaping the respondents' opinion regarding the importance of a child experiencing positive, formative education.

When recalling their secondary schooling, most respondents described positive experiences. Whilst some respondents glossed over their education as being something they, "just got on with", others spoke at length of their enjoyment of a wide range of academic and sporting opportunities. For many respondents a significant leadership role, for example as Head Boy or Sports Captain, was viewed as a major influence on their personal development. Many respondents described their relationships with staff in detail and it was evident that these encounters influenced how they behaved when they became teachers. However, many respondents encountered negative experiences at secondary school. A few respondents, predominantly attending mainstream comprehensive secondary schools, chose to truant school and cited reasons such as boredom and a lack of academic challenge:

> "I used to go to school and I enjoyed praise, I enjoyed the fact that I was one of the few clever kids in the school...but then...they're not teaching me anything new...bored....questioning mouth getting me in to trouble all the time. If you look back over my school reports, it's all about arrogance, attitude".

It every case they continued with their academic studies, teaching themselves at home and using the local libraries.

Many respondents who disliked secondary schooling surmised that this was due to their attendance at a specific school, in particular a single sex, grammar or boarding school. A few respondents viewed school as a frightening place, primarily due to the behaviours they witnessed:

> "I was scared. I found…it was…I was going to use the word austere, it's probably the wrong word, it was edgy – not edgy in a nice way, edgy in an aggressive way, it was…violence was the norm. Teachers didn't have control".

In their recollections, most respondents described their self-awareness of their working class background: "It's quite a badge of honour really, working class hero". Despite describing this positively, it was evident that many respondents felt out of place at school due to their class and felt that they were treated differently due to their social class.

Many respondents felt that they were a victim of poor teaching at some time in their schooling, outlining negative opinions of specific teachers. Whilst most respondents enjoyed learning, factors impacting detrimentally on their enjoyment of school included: encounters with specific teachers; type of school attended; subjects studied. Of note are the many respondents who commented on the eleven-plus examination. For the few who described their 'failure' in the exam, they evidently felt that this was a significant incident through which they let their parents down. This is discussed latterly within the 'significant experiences' category.

Most respondents recalled very positive sixth form experiences, including: studying subjects that they were passionate about; maturing and developing emotionally and academically; enjoying new opportunities and challenges. Not only were most respondents proud to admit that they were the first generation in their family to attend sixth form, most were also the first generation to attend university.

Influential people

Few respondents described supportive and caring primary school teachers, who they believe genuinely cared for them and their education, as a significant influence in their lives:

> "I think the most inspiring teacher I ever had was what would have been my year 6 teacher...it was her vocation to teach. She was single, she was quite elderly and she was fantastic".

Many respondents also recalled an influential secondary school teacher:

> "At secondary school, we all tell stories of being inspired, and my biology teacher, I loved to death and he inspired me so I knew I wanted to be a biology teacher".

The belief held by these teachers in the respondents' ability to succeed emerged strongly:

> "My chemistry teacher, she was influential. She was probably the best teacher I had at that school...she was interesting...she made me believe that I could do it".

A few respondents recalled an influential Head Teacher at secondary school. This was either as a result of inappropriate behaviour displayed by the respondent, leading them to encounter

the Head Teacher on a number of occasions, or due to a shared interest in a specific subject.

In both situations the encounters were significant:

> "The most influential person was my Head Teacher because he was an English specialist...he was just such an interesting person...he was so passionate about it. And he was passionate about the right of all young people....in people like myself who were first generation to attend university...he was just so inspirational, so encouraging and supportive and that's really what set me off on my path".

Many respondents recalled an influential sixth form teacher. In all cases these teachers taught a subject which the respondents were passionate about. Their shared interest, coupled with the increasing maturity of the respondent, contributed to the development of strong and supportive relationships which greatly influenced the respondents:

> "...you'd do anything to make him feel proud of what you'd done, he just had that natural charisma that made people wanna do their best...the standard was so high...he was very sparing in his praise, so you knew when you got it, you really got it, and he was very influential".

Similarly, many respondents recalled a significant university lecturer. It is evident that as the respondents progressed through education and matured as young people, the degree to which teachers and lecturers influenced their lives deepened:

> "I met a lecturer there who changed my life. He showed me what inspirational teaching looked like. He showed me what I could be and inspired me to be the best teacher I possibly could be".

Few respondents commented explicitly that their parents had been a significant influence. However, their influence was evident through the respondents' descriptions of their

upbringing, their recollections of the values their parents held and the sacrifices parents made to give them the best possible opportunities in their lives.

Many respondents, primarily men, commented that there was no particular person who had been significant in their lives; they simply could not think of any one person to mention.

Significant Experiences

The significant experiences occurring in the formative years of the respondents' lives were varied. Two respondents recalled specific incidents, both relating to parental behaviours and the circumstances of their upbringing. These were very extreme and involved intervention from specialist support agencies, such as social care, and parental misuse of alcohol and illegal substances. It was evident that these respondents believed their parents had good intentions, primarily to nurture, support and raise their offspring as best they could, but their descriptions of the resulting experiences were not positive:

> "I can recollect times before primary school of some truly awful scenarios. Yeah, a pretty grim home life, my Mother was violent when she was drunk, she'd go...disappear for days on end...I was in and out of care...my Dad's health was terrible and he just wasn't in a position to look after me".

These experiences resulted in the respondents either moving or being removed from the family environment or the death of a parent. These were evidently difficult and distressing times. It was noticeable that these respondents did not describe any feelings of resentment

towards their parents. The formative experiences appeared to be a motivating factor in the respondents' lives, driving them to follow an entirely different pathway:

> "My Mum didn't have an outlet...that scared me, which probably propelled me to do things. I knew I was as bright as she, and I watched her struggle without having anywhere to put it...I think it's one of the things that sort of killed her off in the end...you have those glimpses of things that make you want to do things differently".

Nevertheless, it was evident that the respondents' strength of character and determination drove them to move on in their personal and professional lives in a positive manner.

A few respondents did not pass the eleven-plus examination. Their choice of language focussed on their perceived 'failure' and the impact this had on their families. They believed they had let their families down, causing shame and embarrassment, repeatedly using the word 'failure' whenever they referred to the experience. As a result of this, their determination to be successful later on in life was explained and frequently referred to during the interviews. The successes they have achieved, through gaining promotions and ultimately securing their principalship, appear to have helped to redress the hurt and humiliation they felt during those formative years of academic study.

Many respondents truanted secondary school, preferring to teach themselves either at home or the local library, citing reasons such as: lack of challenge; boredom; poor quality of teaching; inappropriate curriculum material. They outlined their reasons for truanting, primarily because they could not see the purpose of being educated when they could access their education more effectively by themselves. In every case they chose to educate themselves and

went on to achieve highly in their examinations, subsequently believing that they made the correct choice to truant school. It was evident that they did not sense that this was significant to their school education or subsequent career pathway.

One respondent described an unplanned pregnancy at a young age, outlining it as a very positive experience and as such only briefly explaining the context, almost as if it were quite insignificant to her career pathway. Another respondent recalled a number of significant experiences in their formative years: the death of a parent; being sent to boarding school; the failure to get in to their preferred university. Each incident was briefly glossed over as their journey continued to be told in a very 'matter of fact' way.

Most respondents described a personal relationship breaking down whilst they were in the sixth form, all deemed to be significant at that point in their lives and aiding them as they matured and decided on their post-school pathway. Few experienced a significant incident at university. Where they did, the experiences tended to be more significant such as their own marital breakdown. For the other respondents, encounters with significant people at university fuelled their motivation to pursue a career in education.

Values underpinning ambition to teach

Most respondents chose to pursue a career in education from an early age, with a few recalling a significant primary school teacher who inspired them to follow in their footsteps.

These respondents felt their ambitions to teach were underpinned by their relationship, interactions and observations of these teachers at an impressionable time in their lives:

"I always wanted to teach from about five years old because of Miss C".

Similarly, interactions with a specific secondary school teacher also inspired many respondents to go into teaching:

"There was no other reason than this teacher who had inspired me".

Many respondents did not plan to embark on a teaching career at a young age, but selected the pathway whilst at university and, in a few cases, due to interactions with inspiring lecturers. Only one respondent embarked on a career in industry before re-training to enter the teaching profession. Few respondents fell in to teaching due to a lack of guidance or awareness of career opportunities:

"I fell into teaching...we battle in our schools with a lack of cultural and social capital that a lot of children have, and their ambitions being limited by their families. Well I guess mine was too...coming from a family of teachers I didn't consider anything else because I didn't know anybody who did anything else".

"Because, I think, I didn't know of any other job that women did. I was a typical girl, girls who like school and become teachers".

Many did not recall why they wanted to teach: it emerged for many respondents that it was to make up for a lack of opportunities in their own childhood, attempting to redress the balance and prevent future generation from missing out in life. Many respondents viewed their career

in education as a vocation; for most, it was the opportunity to make a difference to the lives of others that inspired them.

A few respondents described their parents' disappointment at their career choice. The period in time of university graduation coincided with the teacher strikes and as a result teaching was not viewed as a positive career pathway. Having achieved good degrees, they were encouraged by family to pursue another profession. None took this advice.

The Journey to Principalship

Introduction

This section details the responses relating to the accession years, the journey to principalship. This spans the period of time from university graduation through to the post immediately prior to their academy principalship. The section is structured by the categories emerging from the field research: characteristics of the schools they worked in; opportunities; impediments; influential people; significant experiences; values underpinning an ambition to lead.

Characteristics of schools they worked in

In identifying the types of school respondents worked in during their careers, few respondents worked in single sex, grammar or private schools. The respondents who had worked in these settings were over fifty years of age and held the posts at the start of their teaching career. The

one respondent who worked in a private school did so prior to undertaking formal teacher

training, commenting that he did not make a conscious decision to teach in that sector:

> "I only ever took a private post because it was there. It was probably August at the
> time and there weren't any jobs in the papers and I was keen to get started
> somewhere".

Few respondents worked in a City Technology College (CTC). Those who did recalled having

little understanding of the differences between CTCs and other secondary schools, though

CTCs were viewed suspiciously at that time by many in the profession:

> "...it always made me laugh that my PGCE tutor told me that would be the end of my
> career, because they were very contentious at the time..."you will never go anywhere
> else, you will never make anything of yourself and nobody will employ you". Clearly
> he was right [laughs]. I just ignored it, I just think that's a load of old twaddle, I'll just
> do what I want".

All respondents working in CTCs described positive experiences. The location of the CTCs in

deprived areas, with an agenda to raise aspirations and outcomes for children in a high-paced

manner, was described by respondents. These experiences evidently drew the respondents to

subsequently work in an academy; whilst they had not consciously made this decision, they

were attracted to the context of the academy and the fast pace of the improvement agenda.

Whilst few respondents experienced negative implications following their CTC appointment,

one respondent encountered a very turbulent journey when seeking a subsequent senior

leadership post:

> "At that stage I'd married and I'd got three children and I wanted to stay (in the area),
> but because the CTC was a pariah I never got anything, nothing. And in a fit of pique I
> picked up the TES and wrote eight letters of application all over the country and I got
> my Deputy Headship".

Only one respondent had previously worked in an academy; they had spent their entire, albeit short teaching career in academies and had not worked in any other educational establishment. However, on entering their first post they were unaware as to why academies had been set up.

During their teaching careers, all respondents worked in one or more schools defined as 'challenging', predominantly in terms of contextual factors, behavioural difficulties and poor academic outcomes. Many respondents worked in schools placed under special measures. All respondents taught students whom they described as disadvantaged and challenging. These students were predominantly from working class backgrounds, attending inner-city schools. A pattern emerged whereby the respondents tended to move from school to school, each with similar features: located in working class areas; populated by disadvantaged children with low aspirations; facing challenging circumstances. This pattern was not accidental:

> "I really kind of found my niche in terms of the types of schools I wanted to work in. And I suppose part of it as well is thinking back to my own upbringing, so I was thinking if I hadn't had the dad that I had, I wouldn't be doing this job because I would be doing what all the other girls on the estate did...so I suppose it's kind of putting a little bit back, understanding that schools can be such a big influence on a young person's life...so how can I provide some of that" (1).

Supportive, committed staff and children who were appreciative of the support, guidance and quality of education that they received were common features in the schools that most respondents worked in:

> "I think what I love about the school is that the students are very giving. They are all very, very needy, a very challenging place to work in. But they all show their appreciation. You can see that they like what the school does for them and actually a lot of them like their school".

Most respondents worked as teachers and senior leaders in multi-cultural schools. It was evident that many respondents had moved from schools with a predominantly white student population to those with a diverse cultural and ethnic mix:

> "It was quite a challenging school. The students were from proper working class backgrounds. Mainly white, not very much of an ethnic range...the next...couldn't be any more different...I think we had something like forty six different languages. Immigrants, asylum seekers...a huge ethnic diversity".

Their experiences in both white and ethnically diverse schools were reported positively. None of the respondents appeared to favour a particular cultural setting.

Many respondents experienced the process of merging schools, both as a member of staff in the closing school and as a member of staff in the school retaining their site and integrating the staff and students of a closing school. This notably provided opportunities for promotion whilst involvement in the change process was viewed as a valuable learning experience:

> "There were all kinds of issues; it was a huge learning curve about managing change and the guts and resilience that you need in that situation".

Many respondents commented that they had drawn upon these experiences when taking on their own principalship post.

Throughout every interview it was apparent that most respondents had each defined their own career pathway. Their body language, explanations and use of language demonstrated their

strength of character and determination to pursue the career of their choice, often leading to them disregarding the opinions of others and to seek their own opportunities.

Opportunities

Most respondents valued the opportunities available to them throughout their careers, enabling them to undertake a variety of roles with a wide range of responsibilities. Evidently all respondents had held a significant number of positions during their careers, commencing with the post of main scale teacher in their degree subject. Early promotion opportunities for respondents currently aged over forty-five tended to involve responsibility for a particular aspect of school life, such as managing the library or exams officer. For younger respondents, such roles were not available during their careers as they were held by administrative staff.

For most respondents, early middle-leadership opportunities included the roles of Second in Department, Head of Year and Key Stage Coordinator. Further leadership opportunities commenced with the role of Head of Department and, having secured such a position, many respondents went on to hold the post of Head of Faculty, leading a related group of departments. The progression to senior leadership found all respondents holding the post of Assistant Head Teacher, previously referred to as Senior Teacher. Promotion to Deputy Head Teacher followed and many respondents held this role in more than one school before actively seeking headship.

Promotions arose for a number of reasons. Where internal promotions were secured, most respondents reported that they did not actively seek a position of responsibility. The posts arose as a result of internal staffing changes and were only advertised internally. Most respondents then chose to apply or, as was the case for many respondents, were prompted to apply for the post by their Head of Department or Deputy Head Teacher.

Following initial promotions, most respondents went on to actively seek subsequent promotions in order to widen their experiences. Most cited their ambition, self-motivation and the need for a new challenge as their reason for seeking a position of greater responsibility:

> "I am ambitious, I do get bored very easily and this job came at about the right time".

Most respondents were promoted at a young age. Of interest, few respondents aspired to achieve a headship at the start of their career:

> "I never thought at that point that I wanted to be a Head Teacher. I thought I might want to be a Head of Department".

Many respondents aspired to headship from mid-career but most respondents actively sought headship once they were in post as Deputy Head Teacher. It was evident for all respondents that they channelled their career pathways, seeking and securing their own opportunities and promotions. Few cited instances where a position was offered to them: those who did experienced this very early on in their teaching career, or as a result of a school closure or merger:

"Then the school shut as part of the reorganisation, by which point I had a huge amount of experience but I'd not had the responsibility, and so the school was merged with two others and the Head Teacher of my school got the headship of the merged school and he asked me to go over as Head of Science".

Throughout their middle and senior leadership posts, most respondents secured their next promotion with ease and with many achieving success in their first application. This was more problematic for only a few respondents, some of whom applied for up to five Assistant or Deputy Head Teacher posts before they were successful.

Many respondents commented that they did not have a 'plan' to achieve headship. Each step up the ladder of responsibility was sought by them once they had undertaken a position, felt they had achieved all they could it in, become bored and then sought the next career advancement. For many respondents, seeing others in a role and believing that they too could undertake the role and be successful, led them to seek promotion.

Having secured a Deputy Head Teacher post, most respondents found themselves taking on the role of Acting Head Teacher, either at their school or through secondment to another local secondary school. Reasons cited for the opportunity arising included the Head Teacher leaving due to ill health, stress or following a period of poor leadership performance. All respondents valued the experience: "I learned a lot. And I learned some things not to do".

This opportunity led to most respondents securing their own headship in another school. For many respondents this was a relatively straight forward process as they had a strong sense of the type of school that they wished to lead. For few, they experienced a number of headship interviews before experiencing success:

> "I had known for ages that I wanted to be a Head. What I hadn't realised was that the difficulty of getting to be one lies in your personality has to exactly fit what the Governor's perception of what a Head is going to be. So whilst I knew that I could do the job and pretty much in a range of different schools, I hadn't banked on that happening...it took four or five interviews".

Most respondents held the post of Head Teacher prior to taking up the leadership of an academy, finding themselves in the process of looking for their second or third headship when the academy opportunity arose. However, and perhaps significantly, four female respondents, all between the ages of thirty-five to thirty-nine years, had not previously held a headship post.

For many respondents, the opportunity for academy leadership was brought to their attention, either by local authority staff, other senior leaders or recruitment agencies. In a few cases, the respondents were contacted and asked to apply for an academy principalship due to their successful leadership of another school or schools. In a few cases the respondent had previously applied for the principalship and had been unsuccessful: when the successful candidate took up the post and failed to perform as expected, they left and the post was re-advertised. The respondents were contacted and asked to reapply for the post, with subsequent success.

Other factors influencing the opportunities available include family and personal commitments. During their careers, many respondents returned to work in the geographical location of their childhood. For many respondents this relocation enabled them to be closer to family and friends. For a few respondents over the age of forty-five, they recalled that this was the norm of that period in time:

> "I had connections back home and I had got a girlfriend back home and therefore I'd got roots there and all my background I suppose from a working class family in a small town like that, you didn't…it was rare if people strayed far away from home even though they went, they came back again, you know, so that's following the tradition I suppose".

Few respondents relocated as a result of the developing career pathway of their spouses and those who did were female. However, it was evident that the families of most respondents followed them as they sought and secured managerial roles of increasing responsibility, in a few cases involving great upheaval as the family moved some distance to relocate.

Few respondents cited a continuing professional development (CPD) course as providing opportunities for further career development, but for those who did it evidently had a significant impact on their career pathway. The timing of the CPD was significant, taking place at a time in their career when they were facing uncertainty. The completion of CPD training outside of the school environment, alongside professionals whom they had never previously met, provided an opportunity for reflection, contemplation and started them on a new career pathway with renewed confidence and vigour:

> "And I had a fateful turning point in my life. I went on a course...at which I met a lady...and at the end she said, "You'll be a Deputy Head in eighteen months" and I

love her for it, but hate her for saying that because all of a sudden somebody suggested I could be and I'd never thought I ever could be".

Impediments

Most respondents outlined periods during their career when felt that they were not able to gain career progression within a particular school. Having held a number of posts with a range of responsibilities, they found a change of school was necessary in order to seek new challenges and secure promotion:

> "I became Exams Officer but I wasn't really getting the opportunities...I wanted to move to a school where I would have, I don't know, different challenges and promotion prospects".

In a few cases the respondents perceived that their Head Teacher had impeded their career development:

> "The Head when I was the Deputy...when I went there he'd said to me, I'm going to retire in three years so you'll be in a really strong position to be the Head here and then it came clear that he was never going to retire".

In this case the situation was not taken personally as the respondent felt that occurred due to changes in the school environment and context. In another case, the respondent felt it was personal when he approached his Head Teacher in an attempt to apply for an internal promotion:

> "I had the envelope in my pocket...but what he basically said to me was...I wouldn't waste your time because you don't quite fit into the ethos of what I'll be looking for. So it stayed in my pocket".

In a few cases the respondents reported that their career development had been blocked by a middle leader. This primarily occurred when they were denied the autonomy to take on leadership responsibilities and resulted in the respondents leaving their post:

> "The Head of Department...was telling me what to do, keeping it very narrow. Everything was tied down. He didn't want to make any changes. I couldn't work like that".

In many cases the schools within which the respondents were working changed in nature. This included: converting to academy status; merging with other schools; becoming part of a federation of schools; losing their post-16 provision. In these cases, all respondents felt that the change forced them to evaluate their career pathway and resulted in either the attainment of an internal promotion enabling them to remain at the school, or their departure from the school.

A few respondents changed job in order to move to be closer to their family. These respondents all had children at the time and were eager to be closer to them whilst they grew up. In all these cases, new posts were either at the same leadership scale or higher.

A few respondents chose to work outside of the school environment, predominantly in Local Authority roles. Most of these respondents reported positively of their experiences but did not remain in post for a long period of time. All respondents returned to the school setting within one to three years:

> "I missed the people. I missed company…I'd always worked with groups of children, with groups of teachers in schools. I went there and it was a very hierarchical system and it was like as an advisor you weren't supposed to have anything to do with children, you should only deal with head teachers and very stratified as an organisation and it didn't suit me at all".

In a few cases, the respondents cited pressure in school as causing them to move post. Pressure came from a number of sources. One respondent, bringing up a young family at the time, felt pressured by colleagues who committed vast amounts of time to their work. The respondent felt unable to commit such time and, believing that this would prevent internal promotions from being achieved, they chose to leave the school. Pressure was also perceived to come from a Local Authority. As this was deemed to be so significant, it is discussed in the 'Significant Experiences' category.

In a few cases a respondent left a Head Teacher post as they felt that their leadership was preventing the school from progressing. The respondents felt they were not performing in an influential manner within their school and as such it presented an appropriate time to pass the leadership of the school to new hands:

> "I honestly believed that the project was right and if I was blocking it I needed to go".

> "I spent a year showing people round, if I went on a course or a meeting for a day and came back, people didn't know I'd been away. So I was like a spare part really, the place was just working, the place was ticked over, the place was just driving itself really and driving it from the middle and they were getting on really well. They liked having me around, but that's all really."

A few respondents believe that their gender blocked their career development. These respondents were all female and these experiences occurred when they were seeking senior leadership positions:

> "I'd had a couple of interviews...you just know you're the woman making up the numbers, I could see straight away. They spent the whole interview saying, "And how will you feel when you're Head Master?"".

Most respondents chose to leave a post during their career as they believed they were ready to progress to the next step in their career pathway. Personal ambition was felt to be the critical factor for most of the respondents. Many reported that, at the time, they felt they had held the post for a reasonable length of time and as such it was time to seek promotion.

Influential people

Throughout the interviews it was evident that a number of people provided crucial support to the respondents during their leadership careers. Many respondents commented on the unrivalled support of their family and friends, enabling them to pursue their career pathway through the provision of support through enjoyable and challenging times. However, this support was somewhat expected:

> "I had a lot of support from my family over things but again their support is sometimes like unconditional because it's you they're supporting".

Many respondents valued the support of their peers, colleagues and middle leaders. This support was reported in a number of ways: as a newly qualified teacher, working alongside young and like minded colleagues who collectively created new and exciting opportunities in

the workplace; as part of a departmental team, sharing ideas and developing professional practice in a supportive network. It was evident that a range of people were inspiring to the respondents during their careers. A few respondents were inspired early on in their careers by other teachers:

> "What an inspirational teacher. He demonstrated to me that however good I thought I was, I was rubbish and I needed to learn again".

These teachers were departmental colleagues with whom they worked and whose practice they regularly observed. At this early point in their career, only one respondent recalled an inspiring Head of Department whilst many respondents were inspired by an Assistant or Deputy Head:

> "You know when you're starting and you're relatively young in your career, and you just think, 'I want to be like that, she's great'. She just was the kind of person who always saw the positives; she wanted everybody to do their best, in terms of students and teaching staff; she was just really intellectually involved in the job, it wasn't just a nine to five".

At the same time, most respondents cited one or more senior leaders from whom they received considerable support. Experiences were recalled where they worked with senior leaders and through observing their actions they learnt how they might behave when they themselves were Principals. Equally, they were able to identify how they would not behave. It was evident that respondents worked alongside colleagues who both inspired them and by whom they were uninspired. The inspiring leaders provided opportunities for the respondents, in a few cases through their realisation of the respondents' ability and as a result, offering promotion opportunities:

> "What the Head did, which was really good, was that he developed a really strong middle leadership team. So he brought myself as Head of English, the Head of Science and the Head of Maths together and said, "you are going to really drive the changes", and he gave us that support and confidence that we could do that, and we did".

When the respondents themselves held a Head of Department or Assistant Head post, most recall being inspired by one or more Head Teachers:

> "I had a very inspirational Head, absolutely brilliant, very young Head but very much one of those people who gave people their head, wasn't status conscious, wasn't bothered about where you were coming from in the organisation but would take ideas on board and didn't see that as a threat".

Equally, most respondents reported that they had worked with particularly uninspiring Head Teachers. This occurred when they themselves held a senior leadership post:

> "I don't think I've worked for anybody at a headship level who's inspired me at all...In London...he was a pratt...The Head that I worked for at B got struck off...and then the Head at D...was as effective as a chocolate fireguard and, you know, the school went into Special Measures".

Most of these respondents commented that they had learnt how 'not' to lead from these encounters and noted that they were valuable learning experiences.

A few respondents recalled instances of attending CPD training and experiencing chance encounters with other education professionals who particularly inspired them. These occasions occurred when the respondents were at a particularly difficult point in their career. Outlining the role of the course leader, one respondent recalled the impact that this encounter had on her:

> "She had a huge influence on my decisions. I talked to her about her life, about bringing up children, about the hostility of... she was a female Head in an all male authority at one point, you know? That idea of, "bugger the lot of you, I'm going to do what I know to be right," and she wasn't afraid to upset people. She said, "I don't need friends at work," and I thought, 'How liberating is that?' I thought a lot about that...that set me thinking about, 'Actually, there's a different way of doing this".

A few respondents noted that they had felt inspired by students that they had taught. These were primarily respondents who had outlined their career as a vocation and the importance they placed on relationships with students was evident throughout their interviews.

It was noticeable that few respondents could not recall a single professional who had inspired them during their career:

> "No. Do you know what? The number of times that I've been asked that question! I tell you, 'No".

Significant Experiences

Through the interviews a variety of scenarios emerged that resulted in a significant experience. There is no single, overarching category that defines these moments. Many female respondents recalled the period of time when they raised their own family. No male respondents commented on this as being significant. None of the female respondents spoke at length about their families or the inevitable break in their careers. They outlined a relatively swift return to the school environment whereby they secured a post, either equal to or greater than that they had previously held, and continued to simultaneously develop their career pathway and raise their families.

Many respondents cited the closure, merger or amalgamation of their school with another as a significant moment in their career. For most of these respondents the change provided an opportunity for promotion, which brought with it a range of positive and negative experiences:

> "It was a very hostile environment. I was ten years younger than most of them and the previous Head of Science didn't get the job. There were all kinds of issues; it was a huge learning curve about managing change and the guts and resilience that you need in that situation and you can only do so much unless you've got the support of the people who are in charge...lots of learning experiences there. Looking back, goodness me! I would have done so many things differently, but we got there in the end".

All respondents in this situation notably valued their experiences and the opportunity to develop leadership skills, which served them well in subsequent leadership positions.

A few respondents recalled working for a Head Teacher whom they defined as particularly difficult. In all these circumstances the respondent chose to leave their post:

> "He was an absolute bully...He didn't trust people. He didn't take people with him, couldn't look at you in the eyes. You know, criticised everybody. I remember reading...that his assemblies were as interesting as the tiles on the roof that he looked at while he was delivering them...he was a bully. He was quite an unpleasant guy...Yeah, I was unhappy".

Only one other respondent felt that they had been bullied, but in their case the bullying came from the local authority when they held a Head Teacher post:

> "At that point it then opened the floodgates really to quite serious bullying. I have to say...it was horrific, very distressing really because all sorts of things went on at that point where I thought, actually I can't work like this...I made the decision to leave. I didn't have another job to go to. I said I was going to leave twelve months on and then

was in a situation where I went into total panic, thinking oh god what am I going to do now".

This experience had a significant impact on the respondent's self esteem and confidence in their leadership ability. Fortunately, critical support was received through attendance at a CPD course which led to a successful outcome. A few other respondents also cited attendance at CPD courses as a defining moment in their career:

> "I actually went on the 'Head for the Future' course in...of course there were only five of us on the course and they were all women and it was almost like I think what I needed was to just to be able to unload all of this onto other people who weren't judging or weren't really saying anything about it and it was fantastic. The course wasn't very good but those three days away actually helped me to really focus and think through what I wanted to do next and I probably hadn't done that, which I should have done. I came back from it thinking, right, I'm going to do this now".

Many respondents were given a major promotion in their career which they felt acted as a turning point in their rise to school leadership:

> "...one of the neighbouring schools went into special measures and they phoned...and said, 'can your Deputy come and take care for half a term until the new people can start?' and he said, 'yeah, without question'. He gave me a huge opportunity, and that six of seven weeks - it sounds like nothing but oh my goodness! I tell you, the things I learned".

This is coupled with many respondents experiencing the sudden departure of the Head Teacher leading their school when they themselves held a senior leadership position. Whilst in all cases these incidents came as a surprise, the respondents capitalised on the opportunities. By undertaking an acting headship role they were each able to experience a

wide range of positive and negative leadership situations. When the headship came to an end, the experience prompted them all to apply for their own substantive headship post.

Many respondents were overlooked for headship and, for a few, the experience was significant. The process of analysing why they had been unsuccessful brought with it a temporary sense of uncertainty in their ability and questioning over their selection of school. This feeling was short lived in all cases as the robustness of the respondents led to them promptly applying for further posts to secure their next promotion.

Values underpinning ambition to lead

Following their initial, formative appointments in teaching many respondents felt that they did not aspire to be leaders in education at any level. Nonetheless, after their first experience of leadership most respondents went on to actively seek promotion during the continued development of their career. Their constant aspiration for increasing leadership responsibility was evident: their ambition, drive and determination to achieve success were evident in all respondents.

Whilst only a few were determined to achieve headship from the start of their careers, evidently their observations of other leaders led all respondents to believe that they too could achieve headship. Most respondents were ultimately inspired to seek headship when they themselves were Deputy Heads. This, as with all of their steps up the promotion ladder,

occurred because they observed their immediate line manager and realised that they too could do that job, albeit somewhat more effectively.

Most respondents commented on a sense of frustration, boredom or lack of challenge at some point in their career which led to them seeking a new challenge and a new role. Their high levels of self-motivation were not driven by a game plan to achieve headship. They were driven to experience the 'new': new schools; new positions; new encounters with other professionals; new opportunities; the unknown. Most respondents were promoted at a young age and chose to leave their posts at a time when it felt 'right', commonly at the end of a significant period of time or at the end of a cycle in that specific role. For most, their motivation for promotion was ultimately to increase their influence on and over others. They perceived this increase in power and impact as enabling them to make a difference in the lives of children, which all respondents valued very highly.

Most respondents relished the opportunity to take on an acting headship when they were a Deputy. Many found that headship opportunities appeared and were offered to them when they were a Deputy, primarily because they had displayed qualities of leadership that others recognised as critical and as such saw them as potentially effective school leaders. Their motivation and need for high levels of challenge continued for many respondents, leading to them leaving headship posts in order to secure a subsequent headship role.

Academy Principalship

Introduction

This section details the responses relating to current academy principalship posts. In order to set the scene, the section commences with the identification of the characteristics of an academy. The reminder of the section is structured by the categories emerging from the field research: rewards of leading an academy; challenges of leading an academy; influential people; significant experiences; values underpinning ambition to lead an academy.

Characteristics of an academy

The selection of academies for this research project included twenty schools classified as underperforming and subsequently converted to academies. All twenty academies had one or more sponsors and a new Principal had been appointed to lead the new academy. The researcher ensured the academies were located across England in a range of counties. The range and foci of the sponsors is outlined in the biographical information presented earlier in this chapter.

The interviews were conducted at each academy: it was evident that they had all been re-decorated and re-furbished. This 'face lift' was deemed by the respondents to be critical to change the perceptions of staff, students and the local community, almost 'washing away' the previous reputation of the predecessor school. The majority of the staff in each academy remained in post. It was necessary for some respondents to make redundancies, either due to budget deficits or where two schools had merged to form the new academy.

Every academy was located in an area of relative deprivation. This was evident from a number of sources, including the housing surrounding the academy and the academic profile of the students. Through the interviews, the respondents described their academies as situated in working class areas, commenting on tensions within the community relating to crime, high levels of unemployment and friction on the streets between young people. It was evident that the respondents saw overcoming the community tensions as a critical aspect of their role in ensuring the academy was successful. A need to raise aspirations both within the academy and the community as a whole was a common feature which was clearly described, with the phrase 'urban regeneration' repeated widely across the interviews. Respondents identified in a significant proportion of their students: a degree of apathy; a lack of motivation and self belief; resilience to accept and tackle challenges. This was believed to stem from their families and be apparent across the local community. The principalship was deemed to involve the leadership of the community and not solely of the academy students and staff.

Rewards of leading an academy

Every respondent spoke of embarking on their academy principalship with the opportunity to make a difference to the lives of their students. They saw their journey as a challenge, with most respondents commenting that the opportunity provided a fresh start for the predecessor school, its staff and students and the community as a whole.

A few respondents commented that the situation they found the predecessor school in simply could not get worse. As such, they were embarking on a journey of improvement and transformation:

> "In some respects I suppose taking on a challenging school is that you can't really get much worse, can you?".

Most respondents felt that the transformation to academy status was the only way to secure improvements for the lives of the young people living in their community:

> "We have much more freedom to develop things and be more radical with what we have chosen to do...we have definitely made changes that I wouldn't have done in an ordinary state school".

Many respondents spoke of the opportunities to collaborate with other schools and academies. The most favoured collaborations were those with feeder primary schools, further education and higher education establishments. No respondents spoke of the need or desire to collaborate with other secondary schools. Indeed, the respondents outlined that the Head Teachers of local secondary schools looked upon their transformation to academy status unfavourably and so were unwilling to work alongside them, viewing them as a threat to their own success.

Most respondents cited the fundamental reasons for moving to academy leadership as the ability to gain independence from local authority control and to benefit from what they perceived as autonomy and freedom. They believed that this offered them improved opportunities to transform and innovate, which was reported to have impacted favourably on aspects including: new building design; the personalisation and flexibility of their curriculum model; changes to the academy day; new staffing structures. Many respondents referred to the opportunity to change terms and conditions for staff:

"Staff have committed to doing ten additional days curriculum enrichment which is the equivalent of two hours a week if you work it out. So everybody does a club that's contractual and it gets rid of volunteers wearing themselves out…so it's creating that ethos…one of the fortunate things about changing the terms and conditions…we've been able to do things differently".

Most respondents spoke favourably of the advice and support provided by their sponsors and governing body. The involvement of a business, with highly qualified specialists covering fields of expertise that the respondent may not be confident with, was noted as a critical benefit:

"Our (sponsors) are amazing...two chancellors, Principals of colleges, finance directors...our finance governor is an international coach for a major banking firm and it's that level that you are working at which is just so different".

However in some cases the sponsors' lack of understanding of the nature of schools was noted by many respondents as a positive factor. The respondents felt valued and respected by the sponsors, fully involved in the direction and development of the academy as they worked alongside these professionals:

"I've got a Head Office that is packed full of people who are experts at what they do...they don't understand schools which is great because I'm the expert on that bit so we come together as experts in our field and I love that".

Most respondents believed that through their academy development they would improve relationships with the immediate community. For many respondents this drive for urban regeneration was born of a desire to change and develop the communities in which they once lived as children. For others, they were able to make comparisons between the communities

that they were brought up in and the community that they are now working in, resulting in their appreciation of the impact of the academy on the community.

Many respondents saw their academy leadership as an opportunity to prove people wrong and to change local perceptions. Of these, most respondents explained this through their desire to develop relationships across the academy and throughout the community, so raising the aspirations of both students and their families:

> "Straight away we were into tenant's associations, local community groups and working with them and saying, when we get the building, what do you want us to do for you? What can we help you with? So we have loads of intelligence from the local community about what they thought we should be helping".

Most respondents felt that the academy model allowed them the opportunity to accelerate change, more so than they could achieve in a comprehensive school. However, very few respondents reflected on the need to create sustainability in the structures they introduced or actions they carried out.

Ultimately, each and every respondent saw this as a unique opportunity to make a difference to the lives of the students and their families: "It's a dream job".

Challenges of leading an academy

Most respondents perceived that they were taking a risk as leaders of sponsored academies. Many described this risk as terrifying, commenting on the pressure they were under to transform the predecessor school into a highly successful academy. They outlined a sense of

personal accountability, with many describing a fear of losing their job if they were deemed to be unsuccessful. Many spoke of the lack of work-life balance, including a lack of quality time with family and the need to work long hours throughout term and holiday periods. However, no respondents noted that this devotion to their job was negative or detrimental to their wellbeing:

> "I can't imagine being anywhere else...it's just become like breathing in and out. I haven't taken one day off since I was appointed...it's hard but it's a good kind of hard".

Most respondents reported that they did not understand the benefit of academy status prior to securing their academy principalship. Many reflected that they did not understand the nature of academies, nor the difference between academies and mainstream comprehensive schools. Nevertheless, most reported that they had not agreed with the academy model and had no intention of working within an academy. They were of the opinion that this model of academy status was not right for all schools, but felt that the change to sponsored academy status was appropriate for their academy.

Many respondents commented that they were initially concerned by the choice of academy sponsors. In particular, sponsors from the local education authority, religious groups or consortia arrangements were viewed with caution. Despite their initial concerns, having taken up their principalship, most respondents were confident that their sponsors were effective and supportive.

Many respondents took up their leadership post prior to the new academy opening. Many referred to this period of time as a frustrating one due to their lack of control over the initial academy developments. Where they found themselves tasked with creating the structures for the academy, including aspects such as the staffing structure and curriculum design, many recalled their frustrations as they found it difficult to write accurate plans for staff and students in a context that they had never encountered before. Many commented that they re-wrote these initial plans once they commenced the post so as to reflect more closely the needs of the staff and students.

Similarly, respondents were not experienced in the procedures of building design. Their involvement in the architectural design process found many respondents struggling to appreciate the needs of the staff and students and the resultant impact on the building design. A few felt that their involvement in this process was extremely time consuming and as a result took them away from the core purpose of their role.

For many respondents, a sense of frustration was described as they awaited the completion of refurbishment and redecoration of current academy buildings, or the completion of new build projects. They were eager to dismiss any negative opinions and perceptions held by the staff, students and community regarding the predecessor school: these changes to facilities were seen to be critical in achieving this.

Many respondents commented on the changing definition of the term 'academy'. As the government changed the nature of an academy many respondents felt that this confused the general public's understanding of what it meant to lead, work and learn in an academy. The political dimension underpinning the academies' movement was seen by many respondents as challenging.

Influential People

As previously identified, many respondents highlighted the positive impact of their sponsors. They valued many attributes including their expertise, guidance, support and demands. They evidently felt that this critical relationship, whilst still in its infancy, had developed strongly and was beneficial for all working within the academy. However, a few respondents were frustrated by the interference from their sponsors once the academy had opened. These two respondents sensed a loss of autonomy. As very experienced leaders who previously held the role of head teacher, they voiced a preference to be, "left alone to get on with the job". A few respondents cited difficulties when working with non-educational professionals, primarily in the business sector, as they felt that they did not understand the true nature of schools.

After commencing their leadership role, many respondents experienced difficulties with staffing. This was not only in the recruitment of staff to key subject areas but also in the need to change their staffing model as it was not fit for purpose. A few commented on a lack of trust between academy staff and the Principal and few respondents spoke of difficult encounters with the Head Teacher of the predecessor school. Where this was evident, the

sense of emotional strain and professional challenge apparent during the interview was extremely strong: this is detailed in the 'Significant Experiences' category.

Many respondents experienced negativity from school leaders in local secondary schools. They attributed this to either a lack of understanding of the academy model or the behaviour of some academy Principals which had left them collectively with a bad reputation. This resulted from actions including a failure to follow the admissions code and the poaching of talented staff from other local schools by enticing them with inflated salaries.

Most respondents were overwhelming positive about the relationships developing between the academy and the community. They believed that relationships, not only with parents but with other significant groups within their communities, were critical to the success of the academy and ultimately the success of their students. Given the nature of the types of schools that were transformed to academies, it is of relevance that few respondents cited the behaviour of students as a challenge. The students are their core purpose and at all times they spoke about them with positivity and warmth.

Significant Experiences

Only two types of significant experience were recounted by the respondents: conflict with predecessor Head Teachers; difficulties in the inter regnum. The former issue was experienced by few respondents. In these cases the predecessor school's Head Teacher had applied for the academy principalship and been unsuccessful. The resulting handover phase

was described as tense and difficult: "She applied for the job, so I had her to deal with". The short handover period was "polite and cordial". The respondents were relieved when the predecessor Head Teacher left and felt that it helped their relationships with other staff to develop more quickly.

The second issue resulted where respondents commenced their principalship in April 2010, in preparation for the academy opening in September. As the predecessor school was still being led by the predecessor head teacher, the respondent was not able to work in situ. Various offices were provided by the sponsors and local authority but the sense of frustration of the short lead up time and the lack of direct involvement with the academy staff was evident:

> "It was just manic and it was undoubtedly the worst period of my professional life because you're not in charge of anything...how can you write a development plan for a school that you don't know or staff you don't know? How can you work out a budget? How can you change the curriculum? So it was pretty rubbish really".

Evidently, once the respondents took up their principalship many chose to alter their plans to meet the emerging needs of the staff and students. Once they had commenced post, the feelings of frustration and a lack of control subsided and they settled into their posts quickly and with relative ease.

Values underpinning ambition to lead an academy

It was apparent in all twenty interviews that each respondent had a strong sense of their own underlying reasons and purpose for being a senior leader in an educational setting. Most spoke

of their role as a vocation, with every single respondent sensing the moral purpose of their role in providing opportunities to make a positive difference to the lives of the young people in their care.

In most cases, the respondents felt that this opportunity enabled them to compensate for opportunities or support that they believed were lacking or missing from their own upbringing. The role enabled most respondents to balance out the inequalities that they believe are evident, primarily as a result of poverty, social class and differing educational experiences of parents and guardians. Most respondents highlighted their comprehensive school ideals and values which they demonstrated strongly through the emotion in their words and the physical actions and body language that they displayed. Their collective drive and determination to support working class students were evident through most interviews.

Most of the respondents discussed their excitement at the opportunity to truly personalise the educational diet of the students in their academy. The flexibility of an academy setting was believed by most to allow for individualised learning programmes, truly meeting the needs of each and every student in their academy. This was believed by most to enable the previously mentioned inequalities to be reduced, providing an opportunity to raise the aspirations not only of the students but also of their parents and the community as a whole. Most respondents believed that this would overcome the previously experienced underachievement of students in the predecessor school, so improving their life chances as they emerged from compulsory schooling into the world of work.

Many spoke of an opportunity to engage parents in learning, through classes and courses as well as through their involvement in the activities undertaken by their children. Community development was valued by all and viewed by most to be enhanced where the support of parents could be harnessed, where they became truly involved in the life of the academy. Indeed, many spoke of the academy being at the heart of the community, for the community.

"The academy 'is' the community".

It was notable that few respondents focused on their role as an opportunity to develop leaders, either in their students or staff. Similarly, none spoke of the desire to create an academy that they would be confident in sending their own children to. The term sustainability was rarely used in the interviews.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the key findings emerging from the twenty interviews conducted with Principals of sponsored academies. The findings relate to research questions two, three and four:

2. Why did the Principals apply for the role of Principal in a sponsored academy?
3. What are the most significant influences in the journey to academy principalship?
4. Why have these influences been so significant?

The findings have been structured in three sections: the formative years, from birth to the end of schooling; the journey through their working lives, leading up to their current role; their

academy principalship. Within these three areas, significant categories emerged. This chapter

has identified and described these categories, referring where appropriate to interview data

evidence. These findings are outlined diagrammatically on the following pages: the formative

years in Figure Five (p.163); the journey to principalship in Figure Six (p.164); academy

principalship in Figure Seven (p.165). These are discussed in detail in the subsequent

'Discussion' chapter.

CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES

Significant Experiences

Influential People

Values underpinning ambition to teach

Schooling Influences

Family Influences
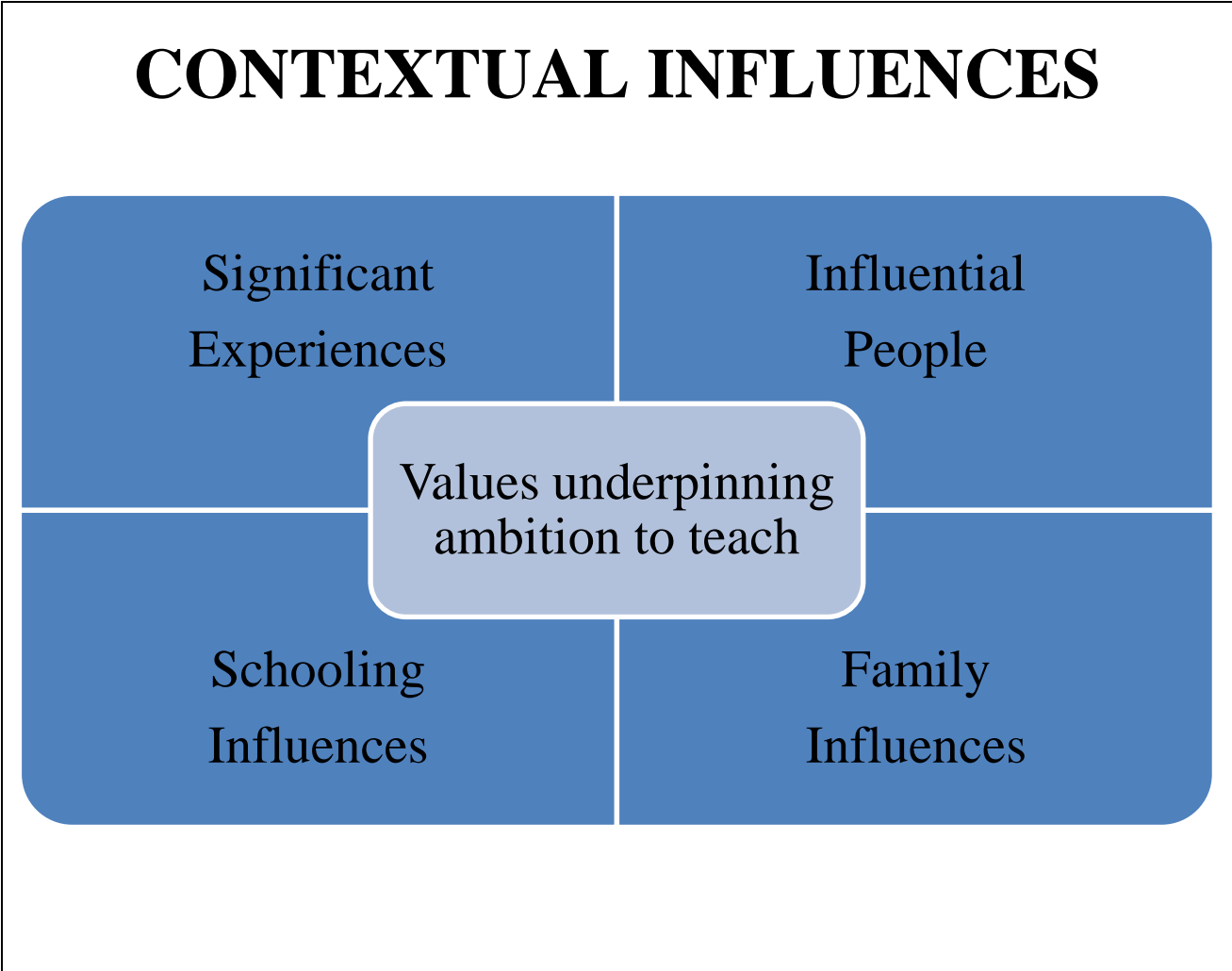
Figure Five: Findings - The Formative Years.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOLS THEY WORKED IN

Significant Experiences

Influential People

Values underpinning ambition to lead

Opportunities

Impediments
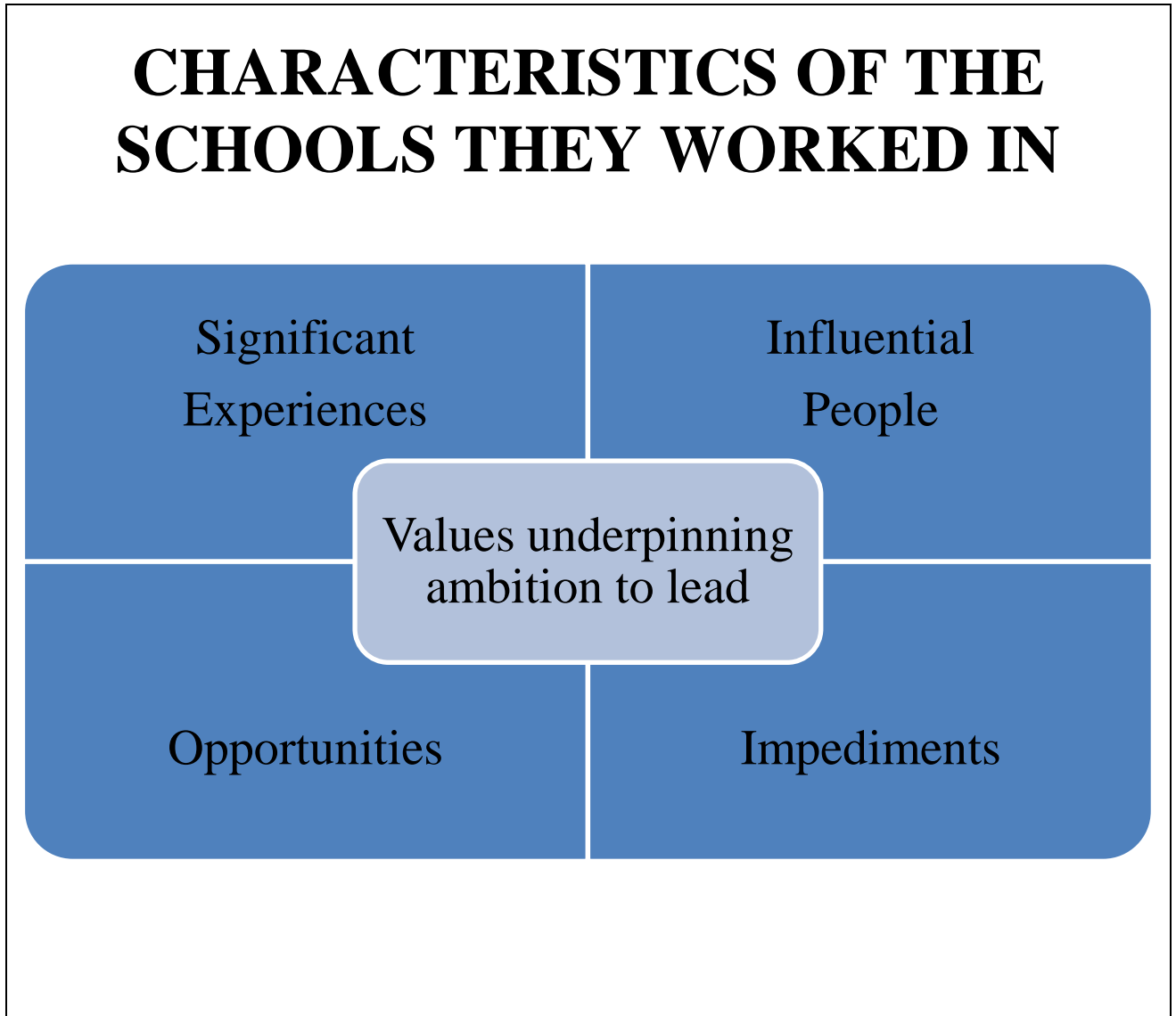
Figure Six: Findings - The Journey to Principalship.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ACADEMY

Significant Experiences

Influential People

Values underpinning ambition to lead an academy

Rewards of leading an academy

Challenges of leading an academy
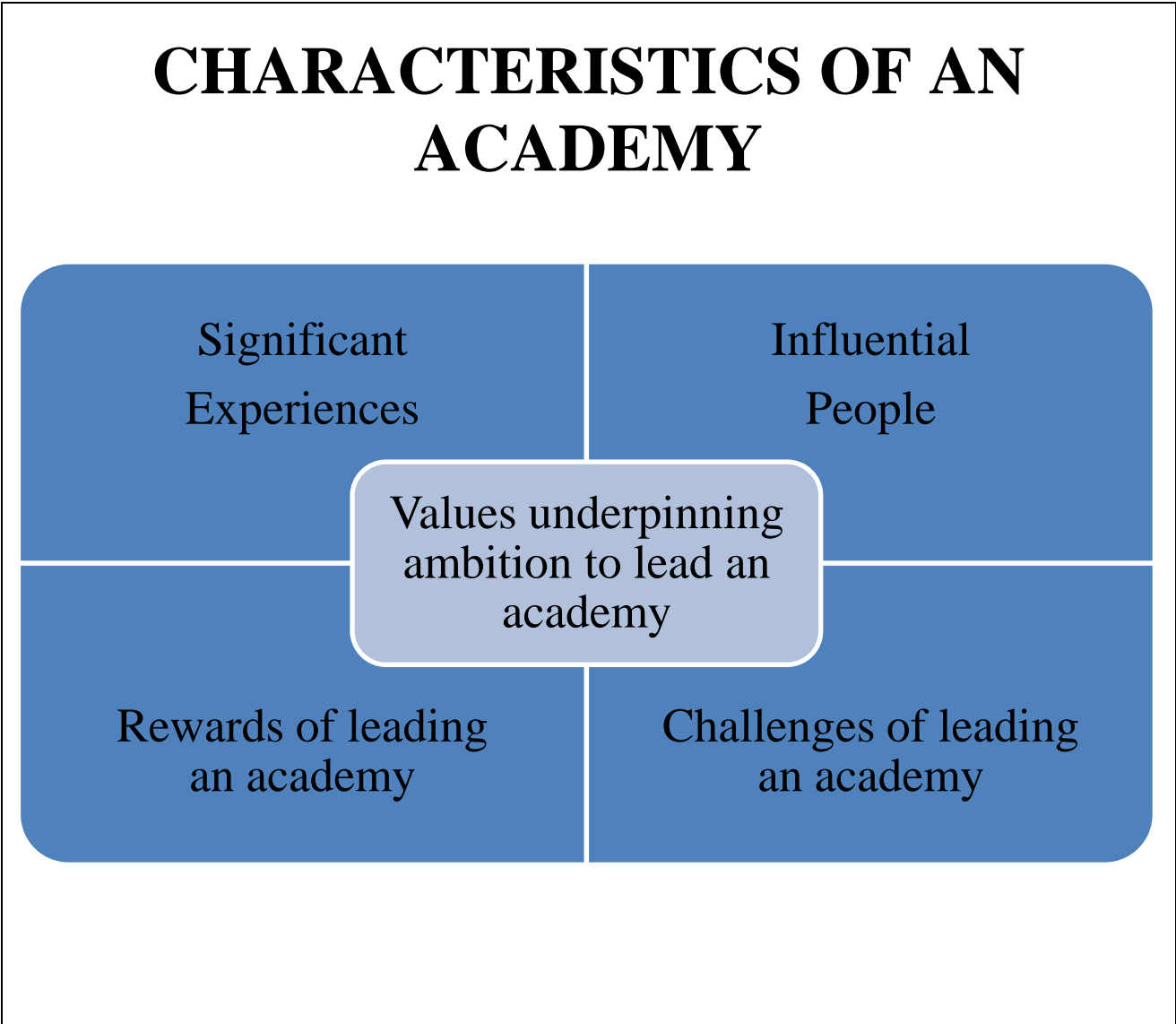
Figure Seven: Findings - Academy Principalship.

Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings

Table of Contents

Introduction

This research project has focused upon the life and career journeys of twenty Principals of sponsored academies. The previous chapter, 'Presentation of Empirical Work', outlined the findings that emerged from the field research relating to three of the four primary research questions:

2. Why did the Principals apply for the role of Principal in a sponsored academy?

3. What are the most significant influences in the journey to academy principalship?

4. Why have these influences been so significant?

The findings were structured in three phases, relating to specific periods of time: the formative years, from birth to the end of schooling; the journey through their working lives, leading up to their current role; their academy principalship. Research question two was addressed through the findings emerging from questions posed in the latter, 'academy principalship' phase. Research questions three and four were addressed through the questions relating to all three phases.

Following the formal interviews, the data analysis process resulted in the emergence of five categories within each phase. These are detailed in Chapter Four. This culminated in the production of three diagrams, one for each period of time, representing the emerging categories and key findings. These three diagrams represent the steps towards the development of an emerging theoretical framework and display a common pattern. The

foundation is a contextual framework from which is derived a layer of four influencing categories. These two layers support the final capstone which represents the core value derived from the nurturing experiences. This is shown in Figure Eight, below.
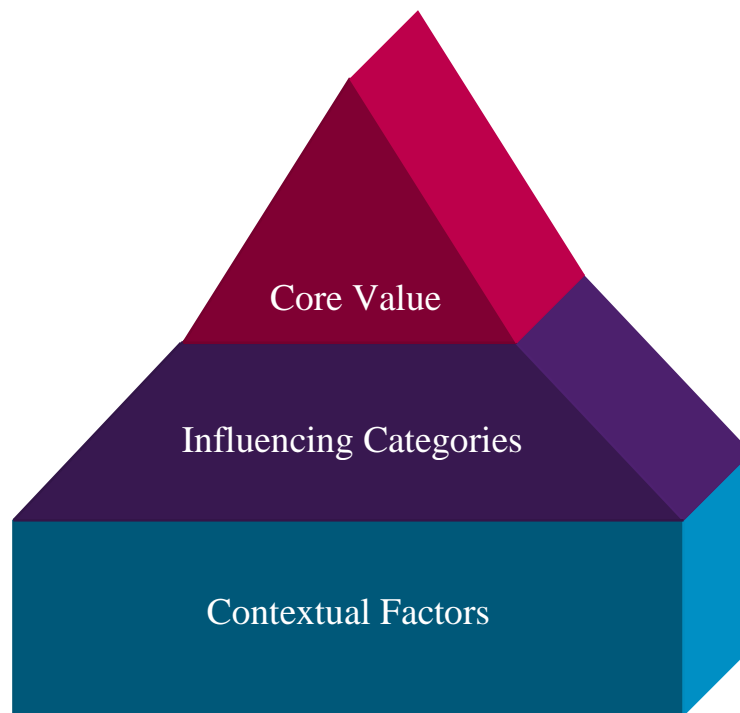
Figure Eight: Generic diagram representing the building blocks of a leader's core values.

This chapter commences with a detailed explanation of Figures Five, Six and Seven. In order to assist the reader the diagrams are reprinted subsequently as Figures Nine, Ten and Eleven (p.170, p.171 & p.173). The emerging theoretical framework is represented diagrammatically in Figure Twelve and accompanied by a detailed explanation. This emerging theoretical framework provides the structure for the remainder of this chapter, a discussion of the key findings and resulting implications.

Emerging Categories and Key Findings

The Formative Years

CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES

Significant Experiences	Influential People
Values underpinning ambition to teach	
Schooling Influences	Family Influences
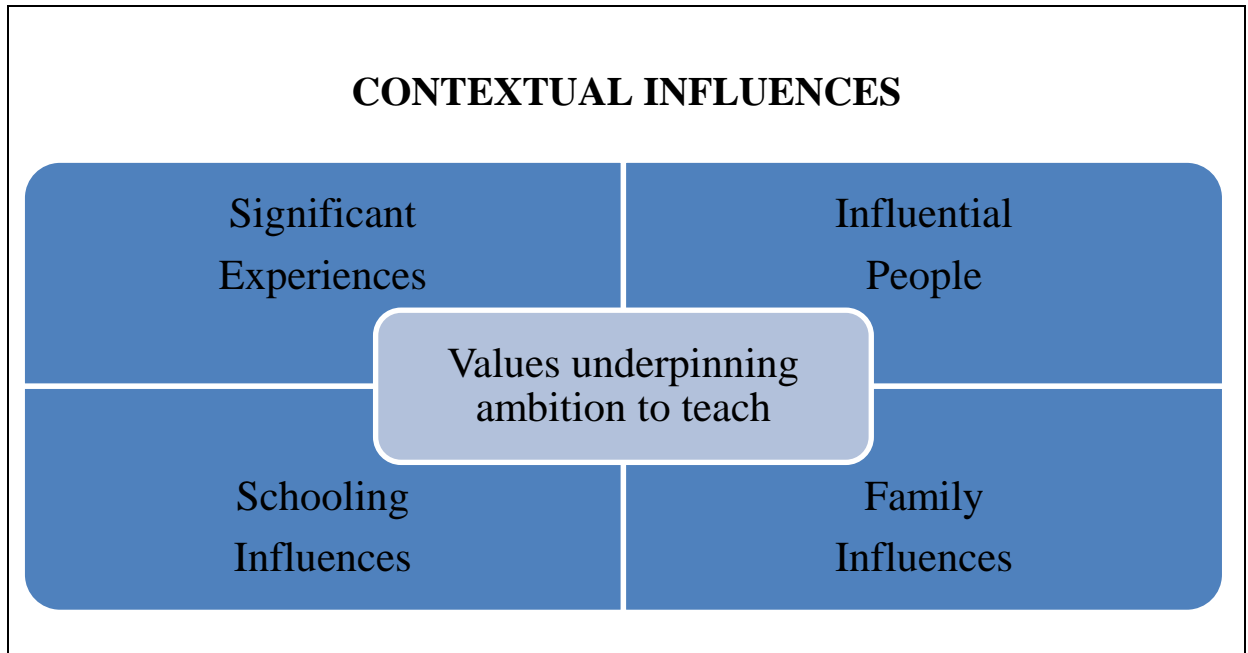
Figure Nine: Reprinted from Chapter Four (p.163).

Figure Nine represents the findings that emerged in relation to the formative years of the respondents' lives. The surrounding 'contextual influences' include aspects such as location and nature of upbringing. The contextual factors underpin the five emerging categories. Four key categories have been identified, coloured dark blue: family influences; schooling influences; influential people; significant experiences. These identify the significant influences on the formative years of the respondents. At the heart of these categories lie the personal values that have developed and emerged during these formative years. These core values are central to the respondents' ambition to enter the teaching profession.

The researcher has been careful to ensure that the choice of terminology for each category accurately reflects the responses emerging from the interviews. The term 'influence' suggests that the family and schooling experiences, different and unique to each respondent's context, played a significant role in affecting the journey that they followed. Their experiences within the family and school environments also contribute to the findings of the categories, 'significant experiences' and 'influential people'.

The Journey to Principalship

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOLS THEY WORKED IN

Significant Experiences	Influential People
Values underpinning ambition to lead	
Opportunities	Impediments
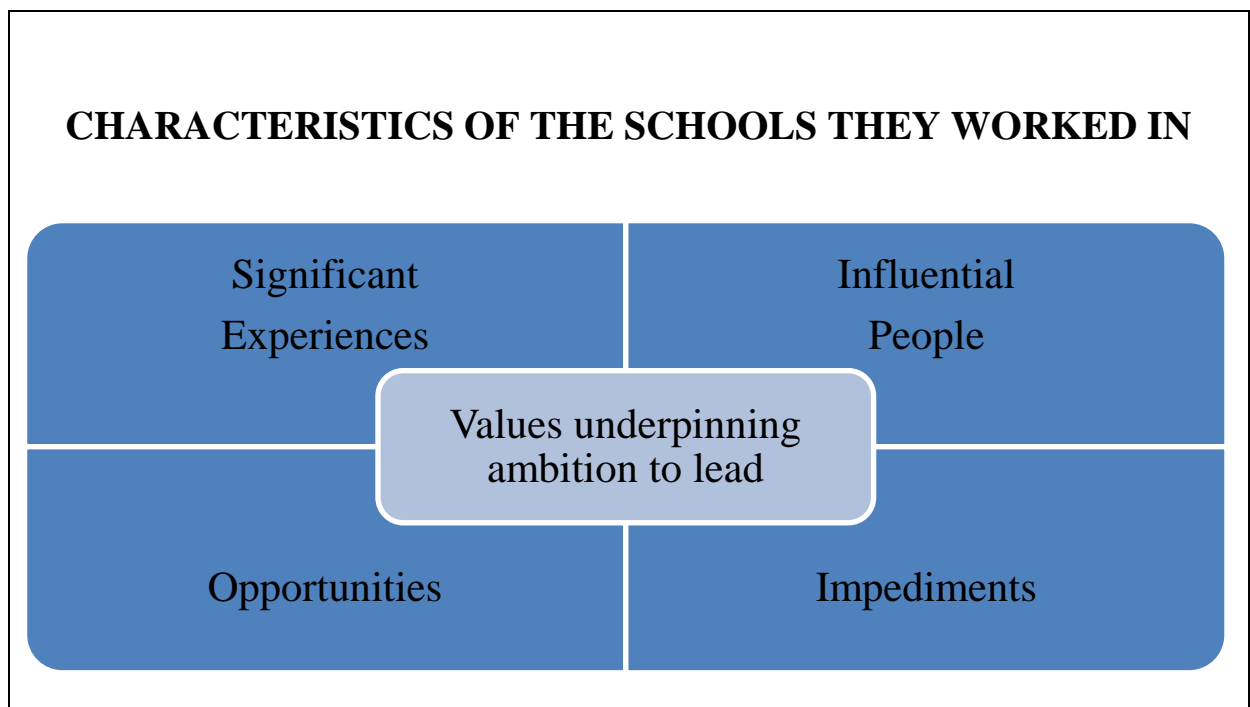
Figure Ten: Reprinted from Chapter Four (p.164).

Figure Ten represents the findings that emerged in relation to the journey to principalship. Here the contextual influences emerge as the characteristics of the schools within which they

have worked and, in some cases, led. The context is critical and underpins the five emerging

categories. Four key categories are identified, shaded dark blue: opportunities; impediments;

influential people; significant experiences. At the heart of these categories lie the personal

values that have emerged and developed, driving the respondents' ambition to become school

leaders.

The specific language selected to describe these categories changed during the course of

writing up this research project. Initially the terms 'blockers' and 'barriers' were adopted to

demonstrate the difficulties encountered by respondents during their career journeys.

However, this gave the impression that these difficulties were insurmountable and in some

way halted progress or development. It was evident that this was not the case, leading to the

selection of the term 'impediments'. This describes an obstacle, a hindrance to their progress,

which they were able to overcome.

The term 'critical support' was initially adopted to define people or practices that supported

their career advancement. It became apparent that the respondents' career journeys were not

driven by external forces in the way this term implies. Therefore, the term 'opportunities' was

adopted. This reflects that the destination of their career pathway was self-determined through

their engagement in opportunities that they actively sought or stumbled upon.

The term 'critical incidents' was initially adopted to define specific events that greatly

impacted upon their career journeys. However, the significance of the encounters emerging

through the interviews did not lend themselves to the adoption of this term by that narrow definition. Therefore, the term 'significant experiences' was deemed more appropriate. Similarly, the term 'critical people' was altered to 'influential people'. This demonstrates that the input of individuals was influential but was not so 'critical' in nature that the respondents would have been disadvantaged without it.

Academy Principalship

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ACADEMY

Significant Experiences	Influential People
Rewards of leading an academy	Challenges of leading an academy

Values underpinning ambition to teach
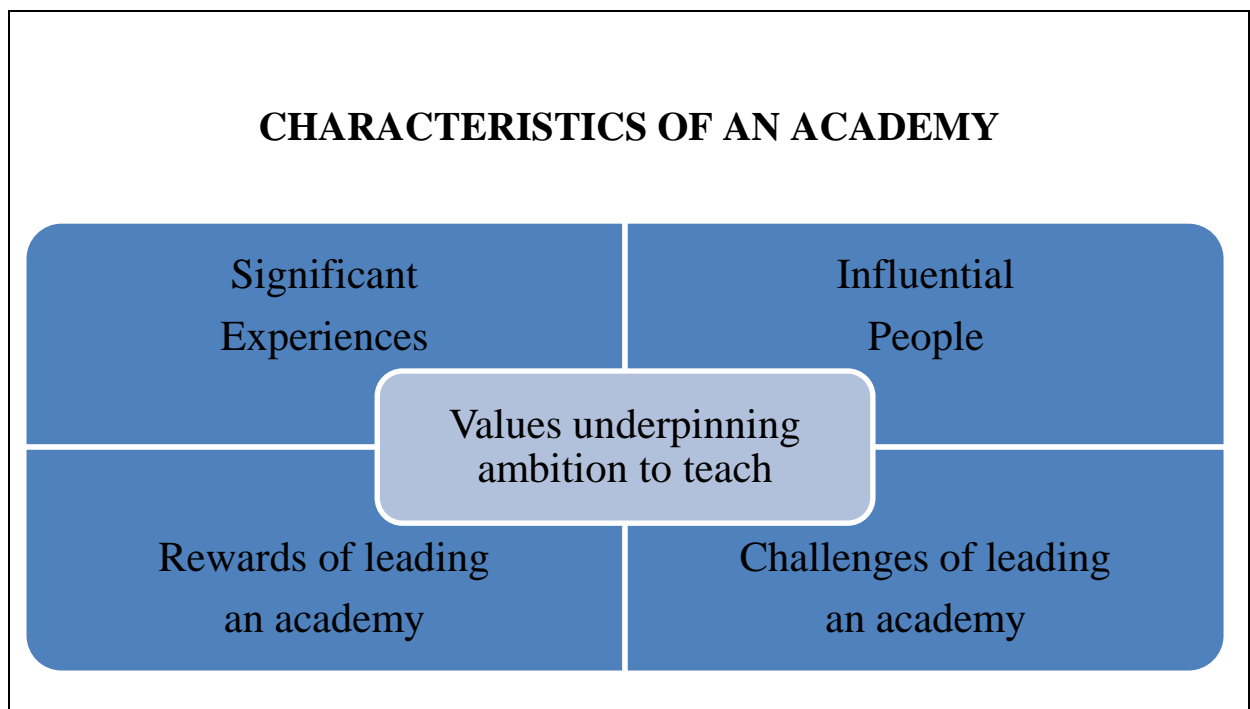
Figure Eleven: Reprinted from Chapter Four (p.165).

Figure Eleven summarises the findings that emerged in relation to the academy principalship. Here the contextual influences emerge as the characteristics of the academies they are leading; these are critical and underpin the five emerging categories. Four key categories are

identified, shaded dark blue: rewards of leading an academy; challenges of leading an academy; influential people; significant experiences. Here the personal values that emerge crystallise their ambition to become leaders of sponsored academies.

Once more, the selected terminology is critical in the definition of each category. The selection of the terms 'influential people' and 'significant experiences' have been explained previously. The terms 'challenges' and 'rewards' were developed from the categories in the previous phase and outline the positive and negative factors influencing the respondents in their pursuit of an academy principalship.

The researcher is fully aware that the findings that emerged from the interviews do not sit solely within any one category. Indeed, they may well sit within a number of categories. For example, a 'significant experience' may also involve an 'influential person' and result in a situation that is defined as a 'challenge' to leading an academy. The researcher encourages the reader to view these categories as fluid or interweaving. With an awareness of contextual factors, the researcher believes that the identified categories incorporate the research findings and impacted upon the development of the values, personal qualities and ambition which are located at the heart of the each diagram.

Emerging Theoretical Framework

The three aforementioned diagrams reflect the life and career journeys experienced by the academy principals involved in this research project. They represent the separation of their lives into periods of time, namely: the formative years; the journey towards principalship; their current position as principal of a sponsored academy. The researcher has defined categories which lie within each of these periods of time and described the experiences and influences impacting upon their journeys. However, the researcher believes that it is feasible to create a single model which encapsulates the entire career journey from birth through to academy principalship. This is seen diagrammatically in Figure Twelve (p.176).

Figure Twelve should be interpreted from left to right. At the start of the model, on the left hand side, the influences of family and schooling have been identified as significant factors contributing to the pathway of the life and career journey. They lead into the main body of the model, which is surrounded by a cylindrical arrow. The cylindrical arrow represents the journey from the formative years towards academy principalship. The arrow is surrounded by a double line, representing the contextual factors that influence the experiences and journey travelled.

Within the cylinder of contextual factors, five fluid strands can be viewed. The four external strands represent the categories identified as having a significant influence on the respondents' journeys: significant experiences; influential people; impediments and challenges; opportunities and rewards. These four strands should be seen as permeable,

Schooling

Significant Experiences

Opportunities and Rewards

Values, Qualities and Ambition

Influential People

Impediments and Challenges

Academy Principalship

Family
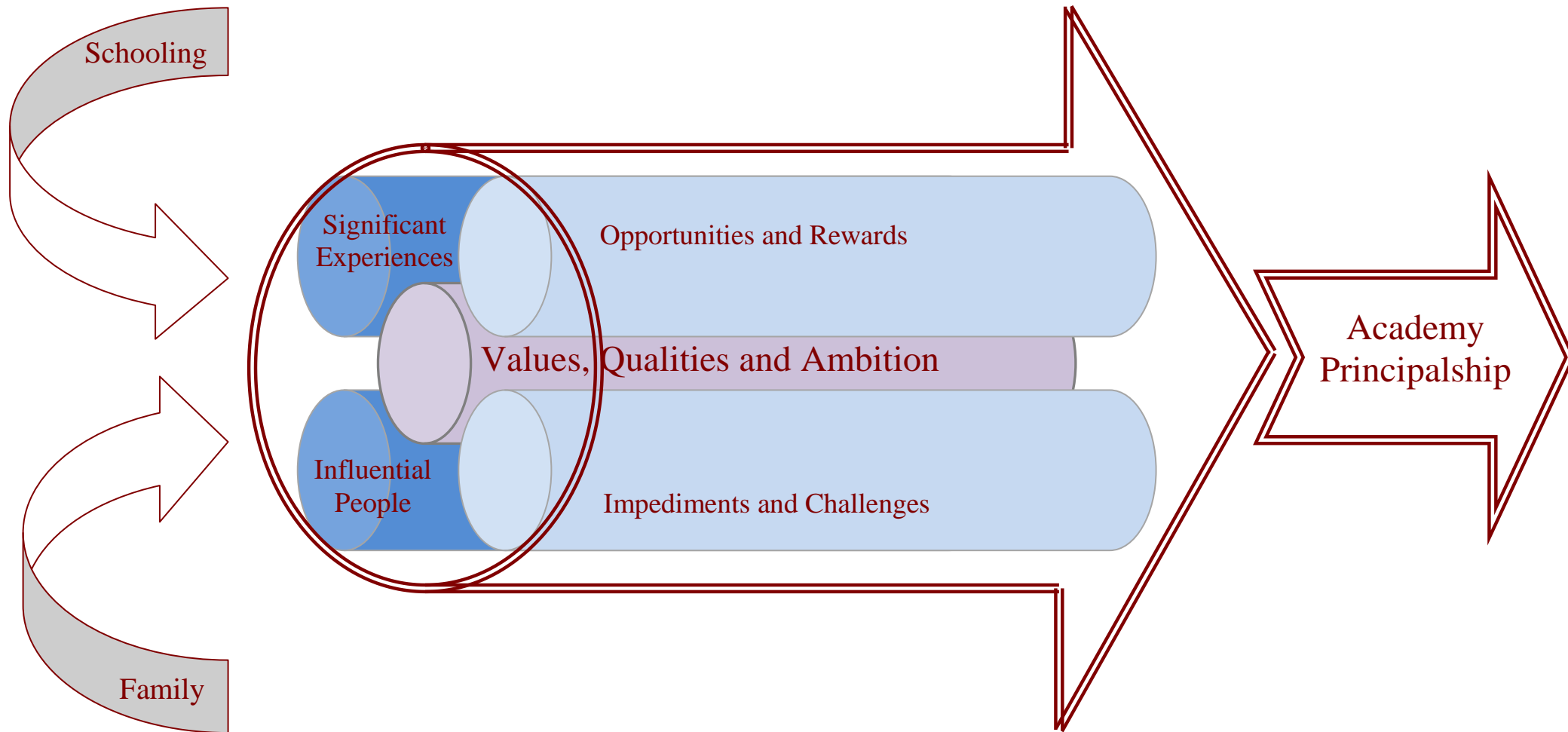
Figure Eleven: The Journey to Academy Principalship.

enabling experiences and encounters throughout the life and career journey to be located across a number of categories.

At the heart of the all the influences lies the values, personal qualities and ambition of the respondents. The formative experiences of family and schooling contribute significantly to the initial formation of values and personal qualities. Within the journey, the experiences and encounters occurring between the four strands contribute to the development and crystallisation of these values and personal qualities. This strand is located at the heart of the diagram as it is viewed by the researcher to be at the centre of every thought, decision and action undertaken by the Principals during their journey.

Outside the cylindrical arrow, at the top of the model, periods of time have been identified: the formative years; the journey to principalship; academy principalship. These 'sections' of the life and career journey are not defined by a specific transition. The respondents move between them at their own speed as they follow their own unique journey.

On the right hand side of the model the role of academy Principal can be viewed. This achievement is placed once more within a double-layered arrow, signifying the importance of the contextual factors and their significant influence on the respondents' current and subsequent career destinations. The choice of an arrow to surround this role demonstrates that the journey will not end here. The career pathway will develop towards an unknown role, following their academy principalship post.

The researcher believes that Figure Twelve provides the first step towards understanding the life and career journeys experienced by our current sponsored academy Principals. The researcher is not so bold as to assert that this model reflects the life and career journeys of all academy Principals, given the relatively small sample size, the specific context within which they work and the ever changing nature of academies. However, the researcher does believe that it is a true reflection of the journeys recounted by the respondents in this research project.

The following section of this chapter discusses in detail each element of this theoretical framework, relating the research findings to the academic literature previously identified and discussed in Chapter Two. This commences with an exploration of biographical and contextual factors. A discussion of the formative influences of 'family' and 'schooling' follow. The subsequent sections of this chapter explore the categories identified at the heart of the emerging theoretical framework, commencing with 'significant experiences' and 'influential people'. Due to the complexity of the findings, the two categories titled, 'impediments and challenges' and 'opportunities and rewards' are discussed concurrently. Finally, the critically underpinning elements of ambition, values and personal qualities are discussed.

Biographical and Contextual Factors

With regards to the biographical factors of the twenty respondents, location of birth and upbringing included a number of different counties in the United Kingdom (UK) and two overseas countries. Half of the respondents were born in the North West or the Midlands counties. The researcher was unable to identify literature outlining the impact of place of birth

on leadership, nor did the respondents refer to it, therefore it is not possible to comment on the impact of this on their career journey. This may be an aspect worthy for subsequent research.

Nine of the ten respondents located in these two regions regarded themselves as from working class backgrounds. Indeed, a total of sixteen respondents described their family backgrounds and upbringing as working class, supporting the findings of Rayner and Ribbins (1999). Social class cannot be solely attributed to place of birth, as these respondents were located across a range of areas in the UK. The attribution of class is also not solely related to year of birth, given the wide range of ages of respondents. Nonetheless, the repeated association made by the respondents with the term 'working class' is significant. The researcher believes that this defined how they viewed themselves, affected how they behaved and underpinned their value systems. It is believed to be significant to the findings of this research project and as such will be discussed at relevant opportunities in subsequent sections of this chapter.

As seen in Table Three (p.112) the respondents span a range of ages. Of significance are four female respondents, aged between thirty-five and thirty-nine, who began their first school leadership role within a sponsored academy. Where appropriate, the journeys of these particular women will be discussed latterly in this chapter as the researcher believes they may represent a new generation of educational leaders.

The remaining respondents are relatively evenly spread across the age bands although a relatively large proportion reside in the older categories and close to retirement age. This supports the findings relating to the acknowledged leadership crisis (NCSL, 2010a) and confirms the need to prepare our future academy leaders effectively to take on these principalship roles.

Within the academy context, specific observations emerged relating to the sponsors. Whilst half of the academies have one or two sponsors, over a quarter have four or more sponsors. This occurred as a result of collaboration between businesses, further education and higher education establishments. Given the intentions of the academies programme (Blunkett, 2000) one may have expected to see a large proportion of sponsors from business and church backgrounds. Evidently, educational establishments provided the majority of the sponsors. This may begin to address concerns voiced regarding the lack of educational experience of those orchestrating the delivery of education to future generations (Beckett, 2007; Chitty, 2008).

It is also of significance that many local education authorities sponsored academies. As one factor attributed to academies is their degree of autonomy (DCSF, 2009), notably through a lack of control exercised over them by the local authority, one may not have expected to observe the considerable degree of involvement of Local Authorities. However, this does address the identified challenge facing academies, namely the attrition of their relationship with local authorities (NC, 2011) and demonstrates the intention of the academies programme to develop this relationship further (PwC, 2007).

The Formative Years

Family Influences

Respondents acknowledged the significance of their upbringing on their life and career journeys, mirroring the early socialisation agencies defined by Gronn (1999) and the research findings of Pascal and Ribbins (1998) and Inman (2011). Most respondents were born to families living in working class contexts in relatively deprived circumstances. This was referred to positively with the over-riding notion that life, however challenging, was accepted at face value. Families made the best of every opportunity afforded to them. Most parents, described as hard working, motivated and ambitious people, created warm, caring and supportive homes. Respondents were evidently proud of their parents and the struggles they overcame to provide for their children. Parents placed high value on education and in most cases this appeared to have evolved as a result of their own lack of education. The notion of parental self-sacrifice emerged. This was evidenced through financial commitment to education and the devotion of personal time to promote the importance of academic studies, particularly literacy. Respondents were visibly saddened that parents missed out on educational opportunities and spoke with gratitude for the sacrifices they had made.

As a result of these formative experiences, respondents spoke of placing high value on education. This supports the findings of Gottfried et al (2011) who identified the importance of the family in encouraging learning, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Respondents also outlined the positive impact of their parents' constant, unwavering belief in their abilities, supporting the findings of Pascal & Ribbins (1998) and Parker (2002).

However, a few respondents outlined circumstances of a significantly more troubled and challenging upbringing. Their stories described scenarios steeped in abandonment and loneliness, left somewhat alone to forge their journey through the formative years. This does not support the findings of Parker (2002) and West-Burnham (2009) which identified the need for school leaders to experience a secure childhood.

Nevertheless, the language used by respondents to describe such circumstances was not negative or inflammatory, neither did it lay blame. They described the details of their upbringing in a matter of fact way with the emphasis placed on the positive outcomes and the resulting values and skills they developed. As such, it is evident that the respondents, irrespective of their upbringings, promote a positive outlook.

Schooling Influences

Although recollections of primary school experiences were limited, those described were generally positive. Whilst it was not explicitly stated, the language adopted confirms that respondents appeared to enjoy learning for learning sake, supporting the findings of Gottfried et al (2011). Respondents placed high value on teacher-student relationships in these early years, speaking warmly of specific teachers as they recalled names, attitudes, values and their experiences as students in their classes. Respondents did not recall significant peers or close friends during this period of time, a reference group identified by Gronn (1999) as being significant during formative leadership development.

Where primary school recollections were negative, feelings of oppression and fear, experiences of corporal punishment and a distinct lack of effective teacher-student relationships were cited. Such experiences mirror those described by Rayner and Ribbins (1999). These experiences were fleetingly described by a few respondents, perhaps not wishing to dwell on unhappy times. For those who chose to speak at length, the impact of these experiences was noted through their explicit description of situations occurring many years previously. The researcher believes that this demonstrates the considerable impact these experiences had upon their personal and emotional development and ultimately on the value they place on positive primary school experiences.

At secondary school, where positive experiences were recalled, most respondents had attended mainstream comprehensive schools. They attributed these positive experiences to their relationships with significant teachers, experiencing what they described as 'excellent' teaching and through the study of subjects they enjoyed and valued. The impacts of these formative encounters evidently remained with them throughout their adult lives as, many years later, they were able to refer to specific teachers whom they regarded highly and on whom they described modelling elements of their own teaching practice.

However, a small cohort of female respondents predominantly attending mainstream schools chose to truant school, attributing their non-attendance to a perceived lack of challenge and uninspiring teaching. This mirrors the findings of Rayner and Ribbins (1999), albeit that their research identifies this is a common factor for male respondents. These respondents removed themselves from secondary school environment and directed their own learning experiences,

sourcing relevant materials and securing access to formal examinations. This demonstrates their awareness of self and personal determination to succeed by following a pathway of their own creation.

Other negative secondary experiences related to the type of school attended. Grammar, single sex and boarding schools were reported to lack effective student-teacher relationships. As respondents encountered experiences of poor quality teaching, this was identified as contributing to the development of negative views regarding teachers and school.

However, the impact of social class evidently contributed to unhappiness at school. Despite proudly acknowledging their working class roots, many respondents described feeling different and out of place. Respondents spoke of a desire to re-dress the balance when they themselves were leaders, supporting students from similar backgrounds by providing an inclusive setting for all students to access educational opportunities. The desire to make a difference to the lives of others is discussed latterly in this chapter.

Whilst only a few respondents were affected by failure at the eleven-plus examination, the damaged to their confidence and impact on subsequent educational experiences was considerable. This supports the findings of Rayner and Ribbins (1999). The greatest regret cited was the belief they let their parents down. This evidently fuelled their determination to achieve highly and overcome the disappointments of this experience.

Positive sixth form experiences resulted predominantly from increasingly developed relationships with staff, somewhat expected given the small class sizes and their maturity, interest and increased levels of autonomy. However, the impact of these student-teacher relationships was deemed to be significant as respondents embarked on their own career pathway.

Conclusion

The process of leader formation identified by Gronn (1999:35) has been reproduced in Figure Thirteen (p.187). This research project supports the importance placed by Gronn on the significant influence of the socialisation agencies of family and schooling on leader formation. However, in the case of family influences this research project identifies the importance of parents but no recollections of the influences of other significant family members.

Gronn (1999) identifies the importance of reference groups. The researcher found that peers, friends and consciousness shaping media were not cited as important reference groups from the stories of the respondents. The researcher can attribute the influences of teachers to the reference group identified by Gronn (1999) as 'mentors'. Teachers played a significant role throughout the formative years, contributing to the shaping of early experiences and the development of personal and educational values.

With regards to the generation of self (Gronn, 1999), the impact of social class and the context of family upbringing were considerable. These formative experiences contributed to the respondents' approach to life as a journey of learning experiences. Each led their own journey, learning with and from their parents and teachers as they navigated their way through their formative years. They worked hard to identify and secure the best opportunities, defining their own pathway and realising the better life that their parents had worked hard to help them to achieve (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997). As a result of these experiences, respondents developed a strong sense of self, style and outlook. These will be discussed latterly in the 'Values, Qualities and Ambition' section of this chapter.

Stage 1: Formation

An individual candidate's passage through

Socialisation agency   FAMILY   SCHOOL

and contact with

Reference Groups   PEERS   FRIENDS   MENTORS   CONSCIOUSNESS

SHAPING MEDIA

generates a conception of

SELF

and lays the basis of a

STYLE   and   OUTLOOK

LEADERSHIP CHARACTER
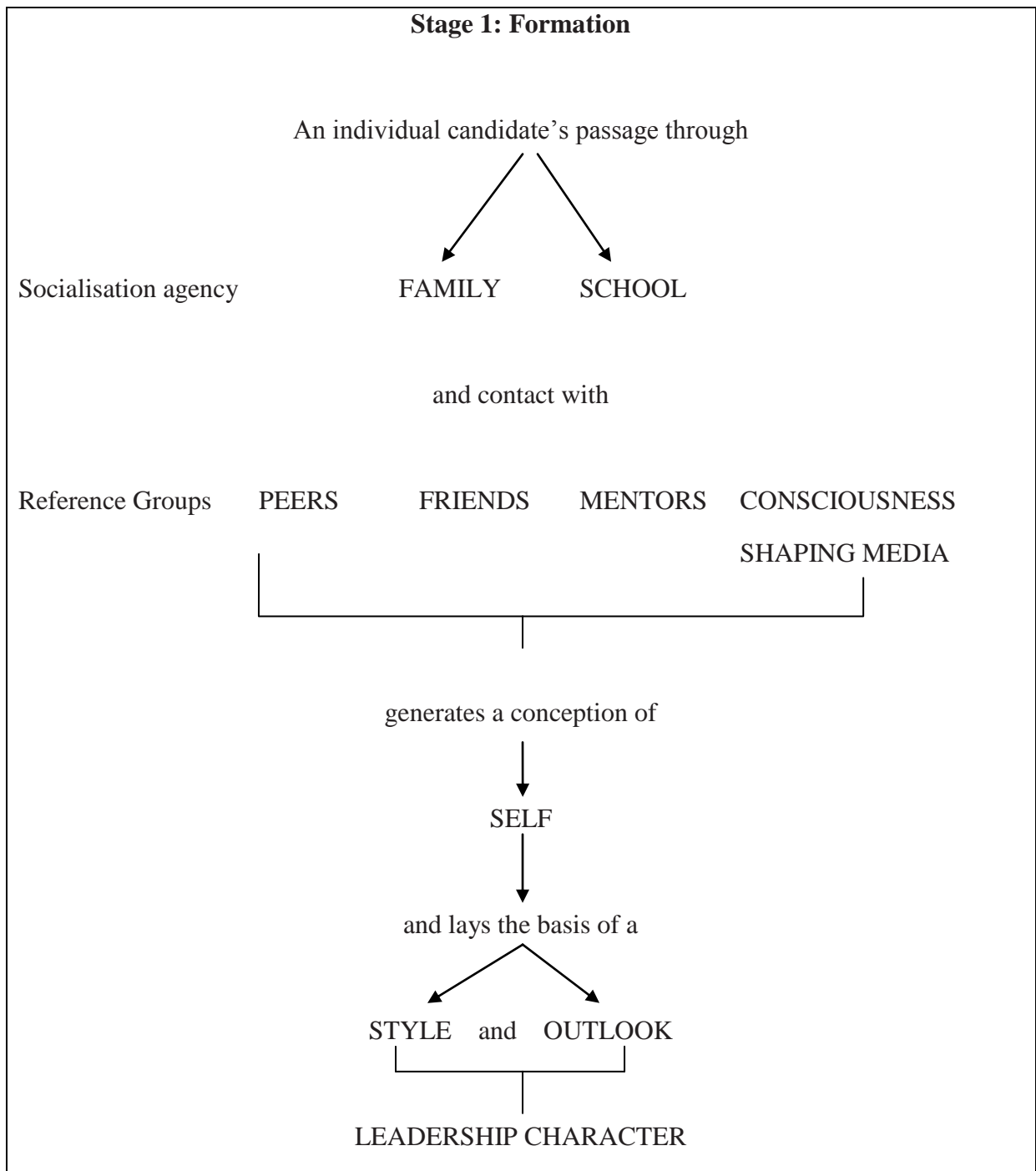
Figure Thirteen: The process of leader formation (Gronn, 1999:35).

The Life and Career Journey

Influential People

A number of people were identified as influencing the respondents' lives. Their degree of influence, and the qualities they held that respondents identified and valued, changed during the course of the respondents' journeys.

In the formative years, influential people included parents, primary school teachers and secondary school teachers. These findings conflict with those identified by Rayner and Ribbins (1999) who found that few respondents recalled a significant teacher. Within the primary setting a few influential teachers were identified, predominantly due to their actions resulting in respondents' feeling safe, secure and nurtured. Indeed, a special bond was described with feelings of admiration for a teacher. Within the secondary setting, most respondents identified teachers who were valued for inspiring teaching, passion, engagement and enthusiasm. Where respondents struggled academically or displayed inappropriate behaviours, such teachers provided unwavering support and devotion. They demonstrated a steadfast belief in the respondents and their ability to overcome such difficulties and succeed. Such qualities were highly admired, with respondents believing that they too held these qualities as practising teachers.

The degree of influence of teachers within Sixth Form and University settings was evidently more pronounced. As a result of the pursuit of subjects of choice, respondents met teachers and lecturers with passion for their subject. Words describing these mentors were emotive and

powerful with claims that these encounters significantly changed the respondents' lives. Names, places and the timing of such encounters were recalled, with displayed body language giving a sense of warmth and enthusiasm. Through their encounters with outstanding teachers the respondents began to appreciate that the subject they loved to study could also be the start of a career pathway.

At this point, the researcher draws the readers' attention to the impact of Gronn's historical context (Gronn, 1999). At the time of attendance at university, tuition was free for all respondents and significant support was provided by the government for students by the way of a financial grant. Today, the financial burden of university attendance is firmly placed on the student. Given that the respondents were predominantly from working class backgrounds and required the financial support offered, the researcher believes that this may have implications for future generations of school leaders. This may be an avenue worthy of further research.

As previously outlined, respondents identified the importance of their parents with the tendency for one parent in particular to be cited as a significant influence. This influence manifested itself through their support, commitment, self-sacrifice and unwavering belief in the ability of their child. The respondents acknowledged that this was, to some degree, to be expected within the boundaries of the role of a parent. However, they were evidently overwhelmed during the interviews by the depth of feelings and emotions emerging when they discussed the impact of this parent on their formative years. The researcher has identified

that the role of the parents were predominantly significant during these formative years and not in subsequent phases, supporting the findings of Gronn (1999).

During their career journeys, influential people were located predominantly within the schools where respondents worked and at all hierarchical levels of the organisation, supporting the findings of West-Burnham (2009). During early teaching roles, respondents were influenced by colleagues whom they held in high regard for their abilities to teach and inspire. Respondents were driven to be equally as inspiring and influential. Encounters with Heads of Department were both positive and negative, some demonstrating effective leadership and with whom they engaged in new initiatives, so influencing their career pathways. Other departmental leaders were influential in a negative manner, acting as impediments to the respondents' career advancement. This is discussed latterly.

Most respondents recalled a senior leader who was particularly influential during their early teaching career, supporting the findings of Parker (2002). Respondents were inspired by their commitment, passion and demonstration of effective leadership. Respondents recalled these qualities and skills and felt that they positively influenced their own ambition for leadership. However, these senior leaders did not direct nor orchestrate the respondents' careers. The respondents sought and secured their own promotional opportunities, but valued their encounters with these leaders and their contribution to shaping their leadership character.

As respondents' career pathways progressed they secured promotions with greater degrees of responsibility and were significantly influenced by those senior to them. The degree to which this influence was positive evidently lessened. Senior leaders, namely Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers, were either very inspiring or very uninspiring role models, a notion identified by Sieber (2011). Inspiring leaders promoted many attributes including care for students and staff, attention to detail, high standards and an unwavering belief in those with whom they worked, led and taught. The respondents clearly identified in these leaders the values that they shared and held in high regard. They placed high value on the opportunities to learn from these leaders, supporting the findings of West-Burnham (2009).

Respondents' descriptions of uninspiring leaders were scathing. Feelings of frustration resulting from inadequate leadership were aired. Fundamentally, the respondents did not support these values, attitudes or approaches to leadership. Respondents indicated that this was not how they wished to conduct their own leadership practices. Although respondents viewed this as a creative experience, the researcher wonders if this was simply a benefit of hindsight. It is notable that in such circumstances the respondents did not remain in post for a long period of time. A promotion to a new post in a different setting was swiftly secured.

A few respondents placed high value on the impact of CPD, supporting the findings of West-Burnham (2009). Although this impacted on a small number of respondents, the researcher believes it to be worthy of comment. At the time where CPD was significant, respondents were facing challenges, resulting in a loss of confidence in leadership ability and doubt as to whether they could continue to pursue their leadership journey. Those running and attending

the CPD courses were deemed to be highly influential, providing a fresh perspective and an unbiased view on their circumstances. This led to the emergence of a renewed sense of confidence, ultimately propelling the respondents to continue on their leadership journey. The impact of these interactions cannot be underestimated.

Despite West-Burnham's (2009) identification of the importance of interactions with students on the leadership journey, only a few respondents cited this as an influential factor. The researcher believes that respondents appeared focused on recalling professionals, with whom they had worked, therefore possibly overlooking the impact of students. Respondents spoke with passion, care and high regard for their students. The moral imperative of their leadership role was explained through their determination to provide the best opportunities for their students. Indeed, they discussed the importance of every action they undertook in relation to the impact it would have on their students, frequently commenting that their intention was to 'make a difference' to their lives. Therefore, the researcher believes students can be cited as influential on the career journeys.

Within the academies' domain, the sponsors (DCSF, 2009) and the community (NAO, 2010) have been cited as holding some power of influence. Here, the influences of sponsors on the respondents were significant. Despite literary citations negatively reporting their involvement (Needham & Gleeson, 2006), respondents viewed these roles positively and valued the relationship highly, supporting the findings of PwC (2005). The sponsors' knowledge, contribution to shaping the academy vision and unique outlook due to their different experiences were elements deemed to be valuable. However, in a few cases and where

respondents were experienced school leaders, they were frustrated by 'interference' from sponsors once the academy was open. This demonstrated the respondents' continued pursuit for autonomy, greater control and influence, motivating factors acknowledged by Sieber (2011).

During their principalship, respondents cited leaders of other schools as influential colleagues. Frustration was experienced where these leaders were perceived to have a lack of understanding of the nature and purpose of sponsored academies. Interactions resulted in both impediments and opportunities, the impact of which will be discussed latterly in this chapter.

The community is evidently influential on the success of the academy. Respondents cited both positive and negative influences. Initial reactions to the new academies were predominantly negative, supporting the findings of PwC (2008). Propaganda was not a tactic selected by respondents, preferring to actively engage the community and work transparently, engage in open and honest communication to help the community appreciate the intention of the academy. Respondents cited the need for concrete actions and outcomes to physically demonstrate the positive impact of the academy. Although this research was conducted during the initial, opening phases of new sponsored academies, the responses of the communities were cited by respondents to be increasingly supportive and growing in appreciation that the academy has their children at the heart of all it does. At the time of writing the academies will be receiving their first sets of formal examination results. The respondents will undoubtedly hope that they demonstrate the turnaround in achievement that they have been promoting

since they began their leadership posts, and that have been witnessed in academies open for considerably greater lengths of time (Machin & Vernoit, 2010).

Significant Experiences

Many respondents did not recall a significant experience during their formative years. Those recalled, varied in nature and differed in the degree to which they affected the respondents. Significant, negative experiences included the death of a parent. In two of the three instances that this occurred, the home-life scenario was evidently challenging and the behaviours of the parent prior to their death significantly affected the respondent. The respondents chose not to use dramatic prose, lay blame nor discuss in detail the impacts of these experiences on their emotions, health and life journey. Instead, they outlined the experience and identified the subsequent positive outcomes and learning points. This demonstrated their belief that all experiences result in positive outcomes.

Other experiences were recalled by the respondents but deemed to be less significant. During the Sixth Form, the breakdown of personal relationships was recalled by most respondents. This was viewed to be the norm for people of that age and so was dismissed by many. However, a few female respondents felt that these encounters were more significant as they signified the start of their increasing independence and autonomy, attributes deemed to be critical in effective leaders (NC, 2010). The pursuit of independence was also displayed by those truanting school to embark on their own educational pathway.

Albeit for only a few respondents, failure in a significant examination was evidently distressing. Feelings of disappointment at their performance were overwhelmed by devastation at parental disappointment. Nonetheless, irrespective of the positive or negative impact of each experience, they were all recalled in a matter of fact manner and followed by the learning point and subsequent actions taken.

During the career journeys, experiences varied. Seven respondents raised a family. Details were not provided, nor deemed to be necessary. Many respondents were overlooked for a headship post, speaking briefly of their disappointment. However, they cited contextual factors for this failure and outlined the positive actions that followed and led to the successful appointment to another post. Respondents perceived that these experiences served them well.

The closure or amalgamation of a school or the departure of the Head Teacher were significant for nearly half the respondents at a time when they held a significant leadership post. The respondents took full advantage of the resulting leadership opportunities and on reflection valued this experience highly (Barber, Whelan & Clark, 2010). As previously mentioned, the impact of attendance on CPD was critical for a few respondents at significant points in their leadership careers, supporting the findings of Barber, Whelan and Clark (2010). These experiences provided an opportunity for reflection, enabled respondents to consider their subsequent career steps and continue with renewed confidence. In describing these opportunities, respondents demonstrated once more their personal drive to develop their career pathway. This will be discussed latterly in this chapter.

Prior to embarking on their academy principalship, significant experiences had been encountered by many of the respondents. A perceived lack of lead-in time was deemed to be a limiting factor, with respondents struggling to juggle previous leadership roles with the need to devote extensive periods of time to the production of academy documentation. Writing plans for contexts they knew little of was evidently challenging and frustrating. Given the need to re-write plans within the first term of opening, the nature of lead-in time prior to taking up an academy principalship may require further attention. In particularly, the intention to appoint a Principal in phase five of the academy development (DCSF, 2006) may require reconsideration.

Once in post, the sole cause of conflict involved the predecessor school Head Teacher. These situations were deemed to challenge the new Principal, caused personal distress and were cited as the cause of unrest amongst academy staff. As a result of the perceived impact of these experiences, the researcher identifies the role of a predecessor Head following school conversion to sponsored academy status as an area for further consideration.

'Impediments and Challenges' with 'Opportunities and Rewards'

Through listening to the respondents' journeys, the researcher identified that where an impediment or challenge arose, an opportunity or reward was identified and secured. Therefore, for the purpose of this discussion chapter these two sections shall be discussed simultaneously. Perhaps it is the nature of these types of leaders to pragmatically seek the positive from all learning experiences.

During the formative years, a sense of impediment or challenge was rarely evident. Certainly, within their home lives the families of the respondents struggled at times due to aspects such as financial constraints, but such challenges were not referred to in a negative manner. Respondents viewed these as positive learning opportunities, forming the core of their character, their values. Opportunities were evidently provided by parents, noted through numerous references to sacrifices made by parents to ensure their child attended school and was able to study at further and higher education establishments. Whilst such opportunities were made feasible by parental actions, the curiosity, determination and persistence of the respondents were key attributes in driving their pursuit of a career in education. This supports the findings of Gottfried et al (2011).

However, in early leadership roles a number of impediments emerged. These gave rise to frustration, predominantly as a result of developments and improvements occurring at a slow pace, a perceived lack of autonomy and observation of a line manager they deemed to be performing ineffectively. These impediments support the findings of researchers including Rayner and Ribbins (1999) and West-Burnham (2009). Further frustration arose where career developments were impeded by a line manager. Such challenges were overcome through the pursuit of a promotion, where respondents' swiftly identified and secured the next step in their career pathway.

Evidently, respondents pursued the career pathway of their choice. Whilst identifying leadership development opportunities, they cited the supportive actions of senior leaders who, whilst observing their performance, identified in them the necessary skills, ability and

potential to undertake the next leadership role. The acknowledgment of this "credible performance routine" (Gronn, 1999:37) by a senior leader reinforced the respondent's personal opinion that they were ready for the next step in their career journey.

Opportunities to undertake a number of leadership positions at different levels of responsibility were vital in the respondents' career development. Rapid promotion, at a relatively young age, was commonly experienced and as such supports the findings of Parker (2002). Respondents' actively sought their next leadership post in order to strategically widen their experiences, aiding their development through the ranks of responsibility (Barrett-Baxendale & Burton, 2009) as they pursued a career journey. The wide range of responsibilities enabled valuable learning opportunities to access informal professional development, a key aspect noted by Barber, Whelan and Clark (2010). Indeed, respondents commented on the value of observing effective leaders, but equally learnt a great deal from those ineffective in their roles, as identified by West-Burnham (2009).

The findings of NCSL (2009) and Sieber (2011) were recognised as most respondents did not realise that they could become Head Teachers until they themselves were Deputy Head Teachers. The opportunity to undertake the role of Acting or "Apprentice" Head Teacher was noted to provide critical learning experiences, as highlighted by Barber, Whelan and Clark (2010). Appreciating the transient nature of this role, respondents immersed themselves in the learning opportunity, using the experience to test out and hone their leadership methods and skills. Whilst this gave confidence in their preparedness to undertake the formal role of Head Teacher, the inevitable return to their Deputy headship resulted in frustration and a lack of

autonomy, the latter being an element that they valued highly (NC, 2010). Hence respondents swiftly sought to secure their own headship position.

As opportunities for academy principalship arose, a considerable number of respondents were approached and informed of the position. This was attributed to their demonstration of effective school leadership over a considerable period of time. This would appear to support the findings of PwC (2008). However, the research findings identified a cohort of young, female leaders with no previous experience of principalship in any setting. The researcher believes that this may be a significant for subsequent research, particularly as a result of the leadership crisis (Phillips, 2008) and difficulty in recruiting Head Teachers (Becket, 2007; Rogers and Migniuolo, 2007; Wilby, 2009).

Despite the relatively short leadership tenure, respondents were able to identify a significant number of rewards resulting from academy leadership. Overwhelmingly, the opportunity to work autonomously was heralded, taking a previously underperforming school and working from a blank canvas indicated a fresh start for the students and staff. Respondents valued the opportunity to work with sponsors, tackling the negative perceptions surrounding the predecessor school. Fast pace transformation was a cause of excitement, the impact of which already evident through the raft of actions and initiatives described by respondents. The opportunity to be truly innovative through curriculum design, creating a model suitable for students in each specific context, was rewarding for staff and supported the engagement of students in learning opportunities. As such, opportunities to develop and embed new, emerging technologies were valued highly.

Overwhelmingly, respondents spoke with passion of the opportunity to make a difference to the lives of their students. They evidently believed the academy model is the only solution to improve the life chances of students and the community as a whole, turning around low aspirations to demonstrate what can truly be achieved. With regards to their context, respondents were proud to undertake their leadership challenge in an area of deprivation; the opportunity was identified as a rich reward in their career journey. As one respondent stated, "This is quite simply the best job in the world". These aforementioned rewards and opportunities evidently support the findings of a number of publications including PwC (2008), NAO (2010) and NC (2011).

Nevertheless, the perceived risks (Howson, 2010), considerable pressures (PwC, 2006; Beckett, 2008) and high turnover of academy Principals (Becket, 2007) have raised concerns over the challenge, risks and pressures placed on academy leaders. Despite an eagerness to report positively of academy experiences, respondents cited a range of challenges already experienced. The previously mentioned difficulties that occurred prior to tenure were cited, alongside difficulties recruiting staff, with specific reference to those suitably skilled to work in the challenging academy environment. This challenge has previously been noted by PwC (2008) and NC (2011). Levels of personal accountability were perceived to be considerably heightened (Barber, Whelan & Clark, 2010). Their personal desire and the accountability needed to achieve rapid improvements in results (NC, 2011) were noted as inevitable, but considerable, challenges. The words 'risky' and 'terrifying' were used by most respondents to describe their feelings towards their academy principalship. Their vulnerability and the pressure they found themselves under was appreciated by the interviewer when feelings of fear were outlined regarding the risk of redundancy as a result of underachievement of

students or their inability to deliver rapid improvements (NC, 2011). Indeed, many respondents believed that this would be their final school leadership post as a result of the commitment of time, energy and emotional strain.

Many respondents spoke of the challenge of political dimensions associated with academy leadership. Whilst valuing opportunities to collaborate with leaders of neighbouring schools (NC, 2011), frustrations arose relating to the negative preconceptions of some school leaders. Despite many respondents acknowledging that they themselves did not understand the nature of academies prior to commencing their posts, they were frustrated by their colleagues' lack of understanding of the nature and purpose of an academy. Equally, as the nature of academies evolves, concerns were shared that this situation could only worsen. This appeared to fuel their determination to overcome the negative stereotype, perceived to have been caused by the leadership actions of a small number of incumbent academy principals. Respondents evidently believe that they will impact positively on neighbouring schools and the outcomes for their students, as has been identified thorough research conducted by Machin & Vernoit (2011).

Ambition, Values and Qualities

Whilst just over half the respondents claimed that they always knew they wanted to enter the teaching profession, very few harboured the desire to hold a position of leadership. Only two commenced their careers with the intention of becoming a Head Teacher, supporting the findings of Sieber (2011). Indeed, most respondents cited that they did not seek leadership positions until they observed those directly above them and how they conducted their role.

Ambition to teach was rarely influenced by family members. Most respondents recalled the influence of a significant teacher, as identified by Rayner and Ribbins (1999), demonstrating the significant role played by the teaching profession on the career pathways of our future leaders. The respondents have a sensitive awareness of their state of preparedness for the next challenge, not only with regards to their personal career development but also for the best interests of the school and those with whom they work (Macaulay, 2008).

The respondents have strong working class roots (Rayner & Ribbins, 1999). They place high importance on the value of parental support and the critical impact it has upon a child's development. They have comprehensive ideals and are inclusive in their nature. They seek to redress the balance, compensating in some way for students whose childhood may have seen them disadvantaged in some way, perhaps due to a lack of family support, opportunity or financial support. They have a strong moral purpose, a quality noted by Day (2003) and the NCSL (2009), and are driven by an imperative to make a difference in the lives of children with whom they work.

The respondents are highly motivated. The opportunities they have encountered and secured throughout their career journey are predominantly a result of their own motivation and determination to develop and to be successful. They are motivated to secure the highest possible outcomes, both academic and personal, not only for students but also on behalf of their parents. They recognise the untapped potential of the students, staff and community, attributes noted by Flintham (2010) and are driven to overcome low aspirations and apathy by demonstrating their belief in the ability of those whom they lead. They place high value on

community, seeking not only to improve the life chances of those attending the academy but those living and working within their community (NC, 2010). In order to overcome underachievement they are committed to creating education pathways that suit the needs of their students. They do not adopt a one-size fits all model.

The respondents have a strong desire to be in control and hold the power to realise their own vision of education through the development of their own academy (NCSL, 2010b). Respondents demonstrated their enjoyment and awareness of the influence they would and could have on others (Cranston, 2007; Sieber, 2011). Their desire for rapid improvement in all aspects of the academy is evident. Their harnessing of the autonomy and freedom that academy status allowed and their longing for innovation in pedagogy, curriculum, building design and technology was evident throughout most interviews (Ball, 2007; Woods, Woods & Gunter, 2007). As such, their ability and desire to be a risk-taker (Barber, Whelan & Clark, 2010) was not only evident but much needed given the settings in which they work and lead and the aspirations they have for the achievement of their academy.

Respondents are self-aware and fully understand their values and vision for education, a critical factor noted by Day (2003). They are competitive and determined to do the right thing for their academy and for all those working within and alongside it, challenging the beliefs of others where they feel appropriate (Barber, Whelan & Clark, 2010). They predominantly have an understated demeanour, a quiet manner and a calm approach, demonstrating humility and patience. However, at times they can appear arrogant, predominantly when their emotions are stirred through conversation about topics about which they feel passionately. Their

determination and arrogance can be viewed positively, given that it is fuelled by their desire to ensure equal access to high quality education. Equally, this could be viewed negatively by some if the focus of their determination is not valued as highly by the observer.

During their career journeys, respondents were keen to learn from other people at all levels of the organisation and in both formal and informal arenas. Their ability to collaborate effectively with others aided the progression of their careers. Acknowledging that they personally do not hold all the answers they have appreciated that their career journey has not been a solitary one, as noted by Macaulay (2008) and Flintham (2010). They have experienced the benefits of promotion in relation to ability and regardless of age. They demonstrated that they are independent workers who value the opportunity to use their own initiative, apparently born from frustrations experienced earlier in their careers when they were unable to initiate change.

Most respondents have a point to prove. This may be to prove to themselves that they can succeed in this challenge, predominantly due to a sense of underachievement or failure in an early part of their lives. For a few, their motivation to achieve is born of a fear of failure (Gronn, 1999). Ultimately, they wish to prove to the students, staff and local community that they can be proud of their academy and that they would deliver the highest quality of academic, personal and social education.

A striking quality emerging was the sense that the respondents become easily bored. Their apparent need for challenge in their working careers and lives was evident (Parker, 2002) and as such, their inability to separate work and their personal lives was clear. Indeed, most respondents spoke of their emotional and physical commitment and love for their job, and identified that it defined them and was an integral part of not only their lives but them as people. Whilst this commitment to the moral purpose of their work can be viewed positively, one wonders whether the results of boredom could be construed in negative outcomes, particularly given that the respondents did not outline the need for sustainability in the models that they created.

Conclusion

When the researcher embarked on the exploration of career journeys experienced by academy Principals, the process of leader accession identified by Gronn (1999) was identified as the underpinning theoretical framework. The researcher also took into account the range of literature outlined in Chapter Two. To assist the reader, the diagrammatical representation of this process has been reprinted in Figure Fourteen (p.207) (Gronn, 1999:37).

During this section of Chapter Five the researcher has noted where the research findings emerging from this project support those of previously identified literature. It is evident that the respondents have demonstrated, by the nature of their stories, explanations and use of language, that they display the qualities highlighted by Gronn (1999). They have demonstrated a strong internal self-belief, an awareness of their personal efficacy and positive self-esteem. Through their early career journeys they evidently demonstrated leadership

ability and potential to colleagues. Through the development of leadership skills they have demonstrated a credible performance routine and developed a positive reputation for their leadership ability. As a result they have each been successful in gaining a series of leadership posts, leading them towards the mastery of leadership and resulting in their success at gaining the post of academy Principal. The findings of this research project uncover the same elements identified by Gronn (1999) and these are the important steps taken and qualities held.

However, this research project has identified that the career journey followed by respondents has been supported by a number of key influences, resulting in the emergence of the categories: significant influences; influential people; opportunities and rewards; impediments and challenges. This section of Chapter Five has outlined the details of these four categories and their contribution to the development of the ambition, core values and personal qualities demonstrated by each respondent.

Stage 2: Accession

An aspirant leader's internalised

SELF-BELIEF

entails a sense of

Domain of   PERSONAL EFFICACY and SELF-ESTEEM
inner work

which finds expression in

Domain of   A SELF   A CREDIBLE
public   or   PERFORMANCE
perception   REPUTED SELF   ROUTINE

and equips that aspirant leader to negotiate successfully

SUCCESSION

SELECTION

INDUCTION

towards

ROLE MASTERY

Figure Fourteen: The process of leader accession (Gronn, 1999:37), reprinted from Chapter

Two (p.64).

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

Table of Contents

Introduction

This research project focused on sponsored academies, opening after 1ˢᵗ January 2010, and explored the life and career journeys experienced by twenty Principals. In conclusion this chapter commences with a discussion of the four research questions originally presented in Chapter One. Each research question is addressed by the identification of relevant findings that emerged from this research project and their relation to the theoretical framework postulated by Gronn (1999). The contribution of this thesis to a generation of new knowledge is outlined and culminates in the reproduction of an emerging theoretical framework, reprinted in Figure Fifteen on page two hundred and five. Finally, aspects emerging from this project, which may benefit from further research, are identified.

Research Questions

The research questions that underpinned this thesis are:

1. How have academies emerged?
2. Why did the Principals apply for the role of Principal in a sponsored academy?
3. What are the most significant influences in the journey to academy principalship?
4. Why have these influences been so significant?

Research Question One

This question sought to provide a theoretical grounding for this research project, detailing the emergence of the academies programme. This research question was addressed fully in

Chapter Two, the Review of Literature, through the comprehensive explanation of the academies' programme. The researcher began by identifying the development and review of the CTC programme which contributed to the creation of the sponsored academies' programme and led to the opening of the first three pathfinder academies in 2002. The researcher explored the key components of sponsored academies and the impact of the programme was acknowledged through the presentation of a range of academic literature, media publications and the findings of early evaluative studies delivered through PwC. The major changes subsequently impacting upon sponsored academies were detailed, including the election of the Coalition government in May 2010, the further development of sponsored academies and the introduction of converter academies within the primary, secondary and special school sectors. The key findings of highly anticipated evaluative studies, published from 2010, were detailed. Finally, Chapter Two acknowledged the ever changing nature of the academies' programme.

The researcher believes that this first section of the literature review chapter fully addressed research question one, providing the reader with a secure foundation of knowledge from which to set the scene for the remaining three research questions.

Research Question Two

The intention of this research question was to explore the reasons behind the application for the post of Principal of a sponsored academy. It became apparent that many respondents did not fully understand the detail of the academy model prior to applying for their post. Indeed, they did not apply for the post as a result of the sponsored academy status. Most respondents

did not agree initially with the academy model and perceived academy status to be of no benefit. Their desire to work in the academy setting was born from their appreciation of the deprived and disadvantaged community within which it was located. Having explored the academy model and relating it to the context of the predecessor school, the respondents believed sponsored academy status was beneficial. Despite many respondents being actively identified and requested to apply for their principalship, the fundamental factors underpinning their motivation to secure the principalship post were driven by their core values. These values, initiated from formative experiences then developed and enhanced during career pathways, demonstrated that these leaders harnessed a moral purpose. Their drive and determination centred on the opportunity to make a difference to the lives of young people, their families and the communities within which they operate. The location of academies in areas of deprivation is significant to these respondents due to their association of such settings with elements of their own formative experiences. The respondents wished to ensure that the students in their academies were supported, nurtured and challenged to make the best of the educational opportunities afforded to them. The respondents felt fortunate to have encountered positive educational opportunities during their childhood and placed high importance on the value of education. Here lay their opportunity to realise such chances for the students in their care.

The sponsored academy model was seen as a method of providing a fresh start to overcome negative views held regarding the predecessor school. The model allowed for a degree of autonomy, flexibility and freedom from traditional methods of education, with the opportunity to utilise a range of innovative educational methods and tools to overcome low aspiration and improve academic performance. The notion of accelerating change was critical.

Time was viewed to be precious with respondents wishing to make a difference to the lives of every child in their academy, as quickly as possible. Whilst respondents rarely referred to the financial gains of sponsored academy status, they did acknowledge the benefits it provided for students by enabling the transformation and innovation of educational delivery. The actual type of sponsor and the values they held were not reported to have significantly affected the decision to apply for the academy principalship. The sponsors were highly valued for their support, advice and challenge. The sponsored academy model was viewed, by many, to be the only way to achieve their vision of education.

This research project identified that the reasons for securing academy principalship focused on the opportunity to make a positive difference to the lives of children who were perceived to have missed out on the opportunity to be successful in education. The community context of disadvantage and deprivation was a significant motivating factor. The role was viewed as challenging, pressured, indeed somewhat risky, given the personal level of accountability. Nevertheless, the opportunity to improve life chances through sponsored academy principalship was seen as 'rich reward'.

Research Questions Three and Four

The intention of these two questions was to explore the life and career journey that respondents had encountered from birth through to their academy principalship. The researcher appreciated that such journeys would be rich, complex and diverse experiences but sought to explore and identify the significant, critical factors that were commonly encountered by the respondents.

The formative years of the respondents' journeys identified working class backgrounds, the significant role of parents and the high value placed on education. Parental sacrifice enabled respondents to pursue education through primary school, secondary school and beyond. The significant influences of teachers heightened a passion for learning. Academic study to degree level was afforded somewhat by financial government support, but the desire and motivation to achieve this level of study was born of the values held by the respondents, developed and enhanced through formative experiences. Formative experiences, both in education and in other aspects of life, brought success but equally provided challenge as well as significant personal difficulties. Irrespective, these hurdles were viewed positively. Nothing was insurmountable; such challenges or impediments were successfully navigated to pursue opportunities and secure the ultimate goal.

The career pathway navigated to academy principalship was varied by the nature of roles and responsibilities. The desire to seek school leadership was not at the forefront of the respondents' ambition as probationary teachers. They were motivated to be successful in their role, learning with and from those whom they respected and valued. Promotion was rapidly achieved through their demonstration of ability and potential. Once a role had been mastered, the learning opportunities secured, respondents were eager to seek the next leadership challenge. As they progressed, their skills developed through a range of opportunities, including the observations of effective and ineffective leaders. They developed their sense of self, driven by their desire to make a difference to the lives of others. Ultimately, the determination to realise their own vision ensured that they succeeded in securing the principalship of a sponsored academy.

The Formative Years → The Journey to Principalship → Academy Principalship →

Schooling

Significant Experiences

Opportunities and Rewards

Values, Qualities and Ambition

Influential People

Impediments and Challenges

Family

Academy Principalship
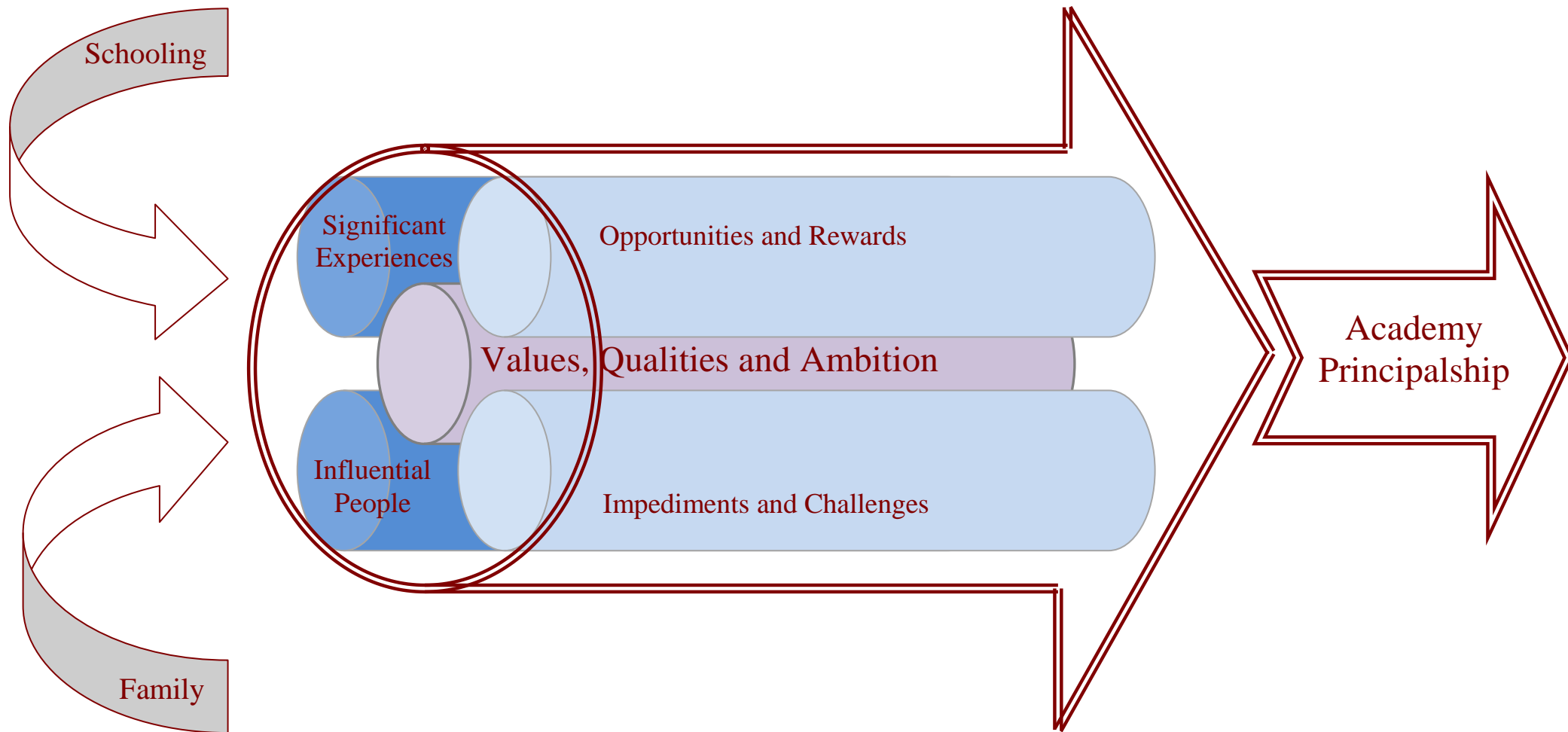
Figure Eleven: The Journey to Academy Principalship.

The emergent findings from this research project can be viewed in Figure Fifteen (p.214). This model, reprinted from Chapter Five (p.176), identifies the importance of contextual factors, the environment within which they experienced their formative years. The awareness of context has remained with the respondents throughout their careers, impacting upon the types of schools within which they have worked and led. Factors significantly influencing the career journey have been found to centre upon four key categories: significant experiences; influential people; impediments and challenges; opportunities and rewards. These fluid categories accommodate the range of experiences that have impacted upon their journey to academy principalship. In combination with the contextual factors, these elements combine to influence the core values held by respondents. These values drive the respondents to academy principalship in order to secure the best possible outcomes for students, staff and the wider community.

Recommendations for Further Research

This small scale research project has explored the critical factors influential on the lives and career journeys of twenty Principals of sponsored academies. The resulting model identified in Figure Fifteen (p.214) is intended to demonstrate these key influences and it is hoped that this is of interest and relevance to a range of audiences, including aspirant academy Principals, educational leadership bodies and academic researchers and theorists.

The researcher acknowledges that the relatively small sample size does not allow for generalisability across the sponsored academy domain. As a result, an opportunity to repeat this research project with a larger cohort would be valuable. However, the academy model is

ever changing with developments to the key characteristics of sponsored academies and the introduction of converter academies. The researcher perceives this to be potentially problematic and affecting the transfer of research findings from one academy context to another. Clearly, further research in the academies domain requires a detailed contextual analysis in order to aid this transferability of research findings.

An area of potential interest for subsequent research may include the cohort of female respondents who are embarking on their first school leadership post within an academy. These respondents experienced rapid promotion and opportunities for further research may seek to discover if their journeys and circumstances are being experienced by others.

The respondents all attended university at a time when this level of education was heavily subsidised and supported by the government. It was apparent that due to their social class, for most respondents this financial support was critical. The funding of university education has changed dramatically, with significant financial implications for students, which may detrimentally affect the take up of places by academically motivated students from working class backgrounds. As the respondents came from working class backgrounds this may be an area worthy of further study, so that this source of exceptional leaders is not lost.

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Appendix One

Interview Request Letter

Dear (Name of Principal),

I hope that this letter finds you well following a restful summer break and I congratulate you on your recent appointment. I appreciate the extensive work load that you are embarking on at the start of a new term and at your new academy, however I would be most grateful if you would take a few moments to read this letter.

I am a Deputy Head at an academy in Bolton and I am carrying out a research project with The University of Birmingham. The focus of my thesis for my Doctorate in Education is *Leaders and Leadership in Education.* I would very much like your assistance in completing my thesis by agreeing to be interviewed as part of my field research.

My research seeks to explore the journey to academy principalship: what have been the most influential factors in the transition to academy principalship and what attracted incumbent principals to take up their post? Following an analysis of the fifty-three academies due to open in September 2010, I have noted that only twenty-three principals meet the necessary criteria to be involved in this research project: and you are one of those few. The criteria for selection are that they have not previously held the post of an academy principal, and that they were not the head teacher of one of the former schools. As you can imagine I am eager to secure the involvement of all twenty-three principals in order to validate my research.

I have chosen to use a semi-structured interview and intend to interview each principal on just one occasion: the date and time of the interview will be made by mutual convenience and held at a location of your choice. It is intended that the interview will last for no longer than one hour. The interview will be recorded using a digital recorder and some field notes may be taken. Complete confidentiality and anonymity can be assured; the information collected will only be utilised within the ethical confines of my doctoral studies. In order to meet a gruelling schedule for completion, I intend to conduct all interviews by January 2011.

I would be absolutely delighted if you are happy to be interviewed for my research project. I appreciate that you have an extremely busy schedule and as such I will be flexible and accommodating in order to secure your involvement. I have enclosed a consent form; if you feel able to take part in this research, please do return it to me in the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope. In addition I will be emailing this letter and accompanying documentation to your personal assistant and would be delighted to receive any correspondence from you by email.

If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me either by email at (email address) or by telephone on (telephone number) so that we can discuss your involvement in my project in more detail.

I am most grateful for your time and support and I look forward to hearing from you soon. I wish you every success for the forthcoming term.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs R. Mackenzie-Batterbury

Appendix Two

Interview Consent Form

Interview Consent Form

Interviewer: Rona Mackenzie-Batterbury

Interviewee:

Date of Interview:

Location:

Purpose of Interview:

This semi-structured interview is part of a research project for the award of Doctorate of Education at The University of Birmingham.

Confidentiality:

Research ethics will be observed at all times in the analysis and use to which the data may be put. The data from the interview will only be available to the staff tutoring on the Doctorate of Education programme at the University of Birmingham and, possibly, to the External Examiner for my thesis. Excerpts from the interview may be included as part of the final thesis, but your name will be excluded, and any identifying characteristics will be removed. The interview may also be used as part of written papers or books, but without your name and excluding any identifying characteristics, and subject to research ethics.

Acknowledgment:

Please sign this form to show that we have agreed its content.

Signed (Interviewee): _____

Signed (Interviewer): _____

Date: _____

Following receipt of this form, the researcher will contact you to finalise the interview details. Please provide below a suitable email address for contact:

Email address: _____

Appendix Three

Presentation of Findings: Tabulated Grids

The Formative Years: Family Influences

Principal	Mum educated	Dad educated	Parents left school early	Parents described as 'intelligent'	Parents described as 'ambitious'	Parents valued education	Teachers in family	Influential parent	Significant experience
1		█	█	█	█	█			
2	Higher Ed	Higher Ed		█	█	█	█		
3			█			█			
4	█	█		█	█	█		Mum	█ Father died.
5	█		Dad		Mum	█		Mum	
6									
7	█	█		█		█		Dad	
8			█	█	█	█			
9			Dad		Dad	Dad		Dad	
10	█	█					█		
11			█	Dad	█	█		Both	
12		BA / MA		█	█	█		Dad	
13			█	█		█		Both	
14			█	█	█	█		Dad	
15			█						
16			█	█		█			█ Difficult upbringing. Mum died.
17			█						█ Difficult upbringing. Mum alcoholic & died.
18	█		Dad	█	█	█		Mum	
19	█	█				█			
20			█			█			
Total	7	7	14	14	11	16	4	9	3

237

The Formative Years: Schooling Influences

Principal	Primary school positive	Primary school negative	Secondary school positive	Secondary school negative	Truanted secondary school	Single sex secondary school	Secondary grammar school	Boarding school	Recalls failing the 11+	"naturally intelligent"	Sig exp. at secondary School	Sixth form positive	Sixth form negative	Sixth form grammar school	Sig exp. in sixth form	First generation to sixth form	First generation to university	Sig exp. at university	Victim of "poor teaching"	Negative view of teachers	Resents parent - lost educ.	Felt a failure in education	Out of place - class	Aware of class	Enjoyed learning	Detailed recall of education	Little recall of education	Bored at school	Leadership opp at school	Family moved during school	Let parents down - failed
1				X	X	X				X						X	X		X	X			X								
2			X			X						X															X				
3				X				X									X		X												
4	X			X		X				X					X						X	X				X			X	X	
5			X					X		X		X			X																X
6		X	X																									X			
7			X				X										X		X											X	
8			X									X	X		X										X						
9			X								X	X	X											X							
10			X							X		X	X				X							X				X	X		
11			X	X							X	X	X					X							X						
12	X		X				X		X			X												X	X	X			X		X
13	X									X						X	X							X	X				X	X	
14		X	X				X										X							X	X		X				
15		X																						X	X					X	
16				X	X						X		X		X		X								X	X		X			
17	X											X				X	X	X							X	X					
18	X		X				X				X		X			X	X								X					X	
19	X		X			X						X			X	X											X				
20																X	X					X				X					
T	7	3	13	7	4	4	8	2	2	6	9	14	6	3	8	13	15	5	10	6	3	6	7	11	15	13	6	4	5	7	2

238

The Formative Years: Influential People

Principal	Primary school teacher	Secondary school teacher	Secondary school Head	Parent	No-one	Sixth Form Teacher	University Lecturer	Husband
1					X		X	
2					X			
3			X		X			
4		X	X	X		X	X	
5		X		X				
6					X			
7				X	X			
8	X	X						
9		X		X		X		
10		X				X		
11		X		X		X		
12				X				
13	X		X	X		X		
14				X	X			
15		X						
16							X	X
17	X	X				X	X	
18		X		X		X	X	
19	X	X				X		
20						X	X	
Total	4	10	3	9	6	10	6	1

The Formative Years: Significant Experiences

Principal	Young, unplanned pregnancy	Significant relationship break up	Failed 11+	Failed to get to university of choice	Sent to boarding school	Truanted secondary school	Family breakdown	At secondary school	At sixth form	At university	None
1						X			X	X	
2											X
3											X
4				X	X				X		
5			X					X	X		
6	X	X				X		X			
7											X
8									X		
9											X
10		X						X	X		
11	X					X					
12			X					X	X		
13		X									
14											X
15											X
16						X	X	X	X	X	
17							X		X	X	
18								X		X	
19									X		
20		X							X		
Total	2	4	2	1	1	4	2	7	11	4	6

240

The Formative Years: Values underpinning ambition to teach

Principal	Always wanted to teach	Didn't plan to teach	Always wanted to be a Head	Wanted to " make a difference"	Parents were disappointed at career choice
1	▓			▓	
2		▓			▓
3		▓			
4		▓			
5	▓			▓	
6		▓			
7	▓				
8	▓				
9	▓			▓	
10	▓				
11		▓		▓	
12		▓	▓		▓
13	▓			▓	
14	▓			▓	
15	▓				
16		▓			
17		▓			
18	▓		▓		
19		▓		▓	▓
20	▓			▓	
Total	11	9	2	8	3

The Journey to Principalship: Characteristics of schools they worked in

Principal	Challenging circumstances / special measures	Disadvantaged children	Working class	Challenging children	Supportive staff	Low aspirations of children/families	CTC	Deficit budget	Inner city	High crime rates	Multi-cultural	Appreciative children	Fresh Start School	Private School	Overseas	Grammar School	Single Sex School	Merged Schools	Academy
1	X	X	X	X		X			X		X							X	
2	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X				X	X			
3	X	X	X	X		X			X		X			X					
4	X	X	X	X													X	X	
5	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X						X	
6	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X						X	
7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X							
8	X	X	X	X					X		X								
9	X	X	X	X		X			X		X		X						
10	X	X		X		X						X							
11	X	X	X	X		X			X		X	X							
12	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X	X							
13	X	X	X	X					X		X	X							
14	X	X	X	X		X			X		X	X						X	
15	X	X	X	X		X			X		X	X			X				
16	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X							X
17	X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X							
18	X	X	X	X		X			X		X	X						X	
19	X	X	X		X				X		X					X	X		
20	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X							
Total	20	20	19	19	13	16	3	1	19	3	19	14	1	1	2	2	2	6	1

242

The Journey to Principalship: Influential People

Principal	Head	Assistant / Deputy Head	No-one	Teacher / Colleague	Students they taught	SENCO	People on CPD	Uninspired by Head	Union	LA Consultants	Friends and family	Peers / Colleagues	Middle Leaders	Senior Leaders	Consultants and SIPs	Other leaders - learn from their mistakes
1	▓						▓		▓	▓	▓	▓				
2	▓						▓					▓		▓	▓	
3			▓					▓			▓			▓		▓
4	2			2										▓		
5	▓													▓		▓
6	2						▓				▓	▓		▓		▓
7	2	▓		▓							▓			▓		
8	▓	▓										▓	▓	▓		
9	▓				▓			▓								▓
10	▓	▓											▓	▓		
11	2				▓			▓			▓			▓		
12	▓	▓		▓				▓					▓		▓	▓
13	2	2			▓	▓		▓					▓	▓		▓
14	1		▓					▓								
15	3													▓		
16	▓										▓				▓	
17	▓		▓					▓								
18	▓	▓	▓					▓					▓	▓		▓
19	▓							▓								▓
20	▓	▓						▓					▓	▓		▓
Total	19	7	4	3	3	1	3	11	1	1	5	5	6	13	3	10

The Journey to Principalship: Significant Experiences

Principal	Recipient of Bullying	Left a job without another to go to	Met a significant person on CPD	Given major promotion	Difficult Head	School closed or amalgamated with another	Overlooked for headship which has significant impact on them	Had kids / family	Head left suddenly	None
1	X	X	X			X				
2			X				X			
3									X	
4						X				
5						X				
6			X	X		X	X	X		
7										X
8										X
9						X		X	X	
10							X	X		
11	X				X			X		
12				X			X	X	X	
13				X		X		X		
14						X			X	
15								X		
16				X						
17									X	
18					X	X	X		X	
19				X						
20						X				
Total	2	1	3	5	2	9	5	7	6	2

The Journey to Principalship: Impediments

Principal	Needed to return to school environment from LA post	Moved to be with family	Job affected by family commitments	Their leadership prevented school development /not influential	Wasn't getting the opportunities to develop	Pressure in school	Pressures from LA	Overlooked for promotion due to gender	Ambition drove them to next	Length of time in post	Head blocked development	Middle Manager blocked autonomy / development	Ready for the next job	Prevented from progressing due to line manager
1	X	X	X		X		X						X	
2			X	X	X					X			X	X
3					X				X	X	X		X	X
4					X				X				X	
5		X	X										X	
6		X			X	X	X						X	
7									X			X	X	
8		X	X		X				X				X	
9			X		X								X	
10	X		X		X				X			X	X	X
11			X		X	X			X	X	X		X	
12			X						X		X	X	X	X
13		X	X		X			X	X	X			X	
14			X	X	X				X					X
15	X		X						X				X	
16									X	X			X	
17			X			X				X			X	
18												X	X	X
19									X	X			X	
20					X				X				X	X
Total	3	5	13	2	13	5	2	2	15	8	4	4	19	7

245

The Journey to Principalship: Opportunities

Principal	Variety of job roles	CPD	Early Promotion	Acting Head when Dep	End of cycle in post	Returned to roots to teach	Headship appeared / offered when Deputy	Applied for Headship - nothing to lose	Needed a challenge	Moved job widen experience	Left Headship for new Headship challenge	Contacted / asked to apply for Academy headship	Got promoted at a young age	Actively sought promotion during early career	Moved job due to inspiring Head	Always aspired to Headship	Aspired to Head from mid career	Aspired to be a Head when became a Deputy	No ambition for leadership role when career began	Did not have a 'game plan' to achieve headship	School merged / closed / lost Sixth Form
1	■		■			■		■	■	■								■	■	■	
2	■	■	■	■			■		■		■							■	■	■	
3	■			■					■	■	■	■	■	■				■			■
4	■		■								■			■			■	■			
5	■		■			■												■		■	■
6	■	■	■			■			■	■								■		■	■
7	■					■			■				■	■	■					■	
8	■			■								■	■	■			■				
9	■			■																■	
10	■			■				■					■	■				■			
11	■			■								■						■			■
12				■					■			■				■		■			
13	■				■	■										■	■				■
14			■	■					■		■		■					■			
15	■		■	■			■						■	■				■			
16			■	■				■					■					■		■	
17	■		■	■		■	■			■	■	■						■			
18	■		■						■			■	■	■				■	■		
19	■	■			■			■			■			■			■			■	
20	■			■	■	■		■						■				■		■	
Total	17	4	10	12	9	9	5	9	18	14	9	8	13	13	2	4	5	15	8	10	8

The Journey to Principalship: Values underpinning ambition to lead

Principal	Moved to a job because of an inspiring Head	Low boredom threshold	Believed they could do the job better themselves	Wanted to be a Head when they became Deputy	No ambition for leadership role	Needed a challenge	Self motivation	Frustration	Increase in power / impact / make a difference	Aspire to be as good as people they were led by	Ambitious
1		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
2		X		X	X	X	X	X	X		
3			X	X		X	X	X	X		X
4		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
5			X	X	X		X	X			
6		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X
7	X		X	X	X	X	X				
8			X			X	X		X		X
9				X		X	X		X		X
10	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X
11		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
12			X			X	X	X	X		X
13		X	X			X	X	X	X		X
14				X		X	X		X		X
15		X		X		X	X		X	X	X
16		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X
17				X			X	X	X		
18			X	X		X	X		X		X
19		X				X	X	X	X		X
20		X				X	X	X	X		X
Total	2	11	13	15	8	18	20	13	18	4	16

247

Academy Principalship: Influential People

Principal	Collaboration with other schools/ academies	Support of sponsors	Relationship with community	Conflict with predecessor head	No trust between staff and Principal	Initially didn't like the sponsor(s)	Having to work with non educationalists	Negative responses from others who don't understand academy model	Loss of autonomy / too much interference from sponsors	Staffing structure issues
1	X	X	X	X		X	X			
2	X	X	X	X						
3		X	X			X				
4		X	X							
5	X		X		X			X		X
6		X								
7		X	X				X	X		
8	X	X						X	X	
9		X			X			X	X	X
10				X						
11		X	X	X	X	X				
12		X								
13	X	X	X			X		X		
14		X			X		X			X
15	X	X						X		
16		X	X							
17		X						X		X
18		X	X					X		
19		X								
20	X	X	X					X		X
Total	7	18	13	4	4	5	3	9	2	5

Academy Principalship: Significant Experiences

Principal	Lack of lead up time prior to starting role	Conflict with predecessor head	Hard to write plans for staff/school you don't know
1	■		■
2	■	■	■
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8	■		
9	■		■
10		■	
11			
12			
13	■		
14			■
15			
16			■
17			
18	■		
19	■		■
20			■
Total	7	2	7

Academy Principalship: Challenges of leading an academy

Principal	Risky / terrifying	Pressure / work-life balance	Lack of lead up time prior to starting role	Hard to write plans for staff/school you don't know	Planning for and awaiting the new build / no new build	Staffing structure issues	No trust between staff and Principal	Lack of control in lead up period before role commenced	Saw no benefits of academy status	Didn't initially agree with academy model	Government have changed the nature of an academy	Potential to lose your job if it goes wrong	Political dimension	Accountability	Academy status is not right for every school	Need for fast paced, transformational change	Behaviour of students	Didn't really understand nature of academies	Planning for and awaiting the new build / no new build	Need to alter academy plans once in post
1	■	■	■					■		■		■						■		■
2	■		■	■				■												■
3									■	■	■		■		■					
4	■	■							■			■			■					
5					■	■	■		■	■	■		■		■				■	
6	■	■			■				■			■							■	
7	■				■				■				■	■				■		■
8	■		■					■	■									■		■
9		■		■		■	■		■		■							■		■
10	■								■					■		■	■	■		
11	■						■		■									■		
12		■																		
13	■								■						■					
14	■		■	■	■										■				■	
15	■														■					
16	■			■					■	■			■							■
17	■					■			■	■										
18	■	■	■		■							■					■	■	■	
19			■	■														■		■
20			■	■														■		■
Total	15	8	7	7	6	5	4	3	14	15	6	5	8	9	14	2	2	9	6	9

250

Academy Principalship: Rewards of leading an academy

Principal	Fresh start	Autonomy / freedom to design academy	School can't get worse	Transformation / innovation	Changing terms and conditions	Curriculum design freedom / personalisation	Opportunity to make a difference	Challenge	Independence	Raising aspirations	Accelerating change	Creating sustainability	Developing relationships	Innovation / Transformation	No other way to improve the life chances of those children	To prove people wrong	Collaboration with other schools/ academies
1	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓		▓	▓		▓	▓	▓		▓
2		▓		▓		▓	▓	▓		▓			▓	▓		▓	▓
3						▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓			▓		
4	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓			▓	▓			
5		▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓		▓	▓		▓			▓	▓
6	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓			▓	▓			
7	▓	▓		▓		▓	▓	▓		▓			▓	▓			
8				▓		▓	▓	▓		▓			▓	▓			▓
9		▓				▓	▓	▓		▓	▓		▓	▓	▓		
10		▓		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓			▓		▓		▓		
11	▓	▓		▓			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓	▓	
12		▓		▓		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓	▓		▓	
13	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓		▓
14		▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓		▓			▓				
15		▓				▓	▓	▓		▓				▓			▓
16	▓	▓				▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓		
17	▓			▓		▓	▓	▓		▓	▓						
18	▓	▓		▓		▓	▓	▓		▓			▓		▓	▓	
19	▓	▓	▓			▓	▓	▓		▓	▓		▓		▓		
20	▓					▓	▓	▓		▓	▓					▓	▓
Total	11	17	4	16	10	17	20	20	11	19	19	2	15	17	13	8	7

Academy Principalship: Values underpinning ambition to lead an academy

Principal	Vocation / moral purpose	Make a positive difference to children's lives	Compensate for missing support during upbringing / balance inequality?	Personalise/ individualise learning	Develop leaders	Raise aspiration / overcome underachievement	Inclusion	Put something back to the community	Engage parents in learning	Create a school I would send my children to	Improve life chances	Promote comprehensive ideals	Support working class students
1	▓	▓	▓			▓	▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓
2	▓	▓		▓		▓	▓	▓			▓	▓	▓
3	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓			▓		
4	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓		▓		▓	▓	▓	▓
5	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓		▓		▓	▓	▓	▓
6	▓	▓	▓			▓		▓	▓		▓	▓	▓
7	▓	▓	▓			▓		▓			▓	▓	▓
8	▓	▓				▓					▓	▓	▓
9	▓	▓	▓			▓		▓	▓		▓	▓	▓
10	▓	▓									▓		▓
11	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓	▓				▓	▓	▓
12	▓	▓		▓		▓					▓		▓
13	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓		▓	▓		▓	▓	▓
14	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓		▓	▓		▓	▓	▓
15	▓	▓		▓		▓		▓	▓		▓	▓	▓
16	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓			▓	▓	▓
17	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓			▓	▓	▓
18	▓	▓	▓			▓	▓	▓			▓	▓	▓
19	▓	▓				▓	▓	▓			▓		
20	▓	▓				▓	▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓
Total	20	20	13	12	2	19	13	14	7	2	20	16	16

Emerging Personal Qualities

Principal	Self motivated	Driven / focused	Point to prove	In control / power	Competitive	Arrogant	Make a difference	Influence others	Use one's own initiative	innovation	Emotional and physical commitment to the job	independent	Autonomy / freedom in leadership	Drive rapid improvement	See the potential	Bored easily – needs a challenge	No work-life separation	Risk taker	Gives autonomy to others	Driven by fear of failure	Understated demeanour
1	■	■		■			■			■			■		■	■		■	■		■
2	■	■	■				■	■		■	■	■		■	■	■		■		■	■
3	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■		■		■	■	■	■	■		■		
4	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■		■	■	■	■	■	■			
5	■	■	■	■			■			■			■		■			■	■		■
6	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■			■	■	■	■		■	■		
7	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■				■	■	■	■					■
8	■	■		■	■		■	■	■	■			■	■	■	■		■			■
9	■	■		■		■	■	■	■	■		■		■	■			■	■		■
10	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			■	■	■	■		■	■		■			■
11	■	■		■	■		■	■			■		■	■	■	■		■	■		
12	■	■	■	■	■		■		■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■
13	■	■		■	■		■			■		■	■		■	■		■	■		■
14	■	■		■			■	■			■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■		■
15	■	■		■			■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
16	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
17	■	■	■	■	■		■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
18	■	■	■		■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
19	■	■			■	■	■	■		■		■	■	■	■		■	■	■		
20	■	■					■			■	■		■	■		■	■	■			■
Total	20	20	11	20	13	10	20	15	10	16	13	10	16	15	19	18	11	16	15	4	13

253

Appendix Four

Interview Transcript Example

<center>**Interview Transcript Example**</center>

I: = **Interviewer**

R: = Respondent

I: **I wonder if you could tell me when and where you were born and maybe a little bit about your family background and childhood?**

R: Born in G and lived there all of my life. The eldest of four children, so I've got a sister and then I've got two brothers and always wanted to be a teacher – and I was very much influenced by my dad, he was my absolute role model. He wanted better for his kids than he had, you know, very working class, big family he came from. His father died when he was very young and my dad was actually really bright but didn't ever get the opportunities; his Dad died, he had to go to work from the age of fifteen and he was the kind of male figure in the family and he was determined that we were gonna have better than that.

I: **Right.**

R: So me being the eldest, I was the first one going through, so Dad really valued education and wanted the best education for us and was really supportive and especially at times when, you know, we lived in a very, kind of, working class council estate and it wasn't the norm for people to go onto further education and go to university and I was the first in my family to go to university.

I: **I see.**

R: I remember my dad's friends giving him a lot of grief about, you know, "What's she gonna stay on the sixth form for, why are you paying for her to go to university? What

<center>255</center>

a waste, she's a girl, she's just gonna get married and have kids," and this kind of thing, so very much my Dad was an influential figure. Went to university and trained to be a teacher. Always wanted to do it and I don't know why. I just remember being at school thinking, 'I'd love to do this job.' And trained and loved it, loved my training, and then came back home and began working.

I: **So what recollections do you have of primary and secondary school?**

R: I had really, really good relationships with teachers and teachers were influential in my life. There were always significant teachers that I can remember that encouraged me and that I obviously looked up to. I remember, I was gonna be an English teacher because I loved English and I had a particularly influential teacher, and then when I did A-level I decided I would do what was home economics then, because it was a subject I really enjoyed and again, I had a really fantastic teacher who inspired me. And when I did my A-levels I decided, actually I'd like to teach Home Economics –

I: **Really?**

R: - and again it was, there were only three of us in the group and it was a fantastic experience and it was a fantastic opportunity, you know, to really uncover a subject and it was very scientific and there were lots of things I really enjoyed about it. The small group helped us really develop relationships and I remember we had two teachers for that particular subject and I really looked up to them and they did inspire me and one of them particularly I thought, 'I'd like to be like you.'

I: **I can imagine.**

R: So when I went to university I decided I would teach that and then again, in teaching practices, I always had really good relationships with the mentors that I had. I wanted to get fully involved in the life of the school, so every school I went to I always did

voluntary work there and, you know, we had a Wednesday afternoon when it was sport or whatever, but I always went in to schools and I taught and I got involved in extra curricular activities and then, you know, with one of the staff, she ran a youth club at night and I used to go there with her as well. There's just something about being with young people that I love; it just energises me so much, it's so rewarding. So I did take every opportunity to be part of whatever I could get. I can remember soaking it in, I loved it. Then when I qualified I decided I would apply anywhere for a job. I was getting married and the person I was getting married to, he could be quite flexible, but I actually got a job in S which is obviously not far from where I lived anyway, so I came back up to the north east and I always remember as a new teacher, the first time I got paid I was saying, "Wow, I actually get paid for this." It was like, oooh!

I: **Doing something that you love?**

R: It was so amazing. And it was, and it still is, an amazing job. I got a temporary one year contract at a school and then I moved to another school after that and I was there for about five years. I had my first child and then I had my second baby, and three months after I went back after having him a job was advertised for an Advisory Teacher. And it was at the time when the new national curriculum orders for Design and Technology were coming out, so it was gonna be different, it was gonna be new. And it was the opportunity to work in schools right across the county to influence the development of Design and Technology and I thought it would be fantastic to go into different schools and work with different staff and different students. So I was successful in that post, so I did that for a year and, it was a one year secondment and I then, on the back of that, got a promotion as a Head of Food Technology in another

school. A very, very challenging school in a very challenging area and I absolutely loved it. And what I realised very quickly is, you only have to do a tiny amount for a student and the reward and what you get back is a thousand fold. I really, kind of, found my niche in terms of the types of schools I wanted to work in. And I suppose part of it as well is thinking back about my own upbringing, so I was thinking, 'If I hadn't have had the dad that I had, I wouldn't be doing this job because I would be doing what all of the other girls on my estate did and all of the other girls in my family did.' So I suppose it's, kind of, putting a little bit back, understanding that schools can be such a big influence on a young person's life and for a lot of our kids they don't have that influence in their families, so how can I provide some of that? So I took up this post in a really challenging school and was promoted a couple of times whilst I was there. The schools I've been in I've always stayed for, what I think is a reasonable amount of time, so I was there, the first school I think five or six years, and then at the second school I was there for eight years.

(The school bell rings, signifying a changeover of lessons. The interview is paused for five minutes whilst the respondent completes a corridor duty. The interview then continues).

R: Sorry, where were we?

I: **You were just explaining the length of time you had stayed in a job. So, were there people within each school that helped you secure these opportunities or did you seek them yourself?**

R: No because…well, when I left one school and went into the seconded post that was something I looked for myself but when I got into my second school I started off as a Head of Food and Textiles area and then took on Health Education Co-ordinator as a whole school initiative but then I was appointed as the Head of Sound Technology so I had quite a big team because it included ICT and Art and Resistant Materials and so we were about fifteen staff in the team and the Head Teacher, well he was very influential and I really respected him and I liked a lot of what he did and how he did it and I learnt a lot from him and he knew that I was really, really keen to develop and so he gave me loads of opportunities and he would…there would be times when he would invite me to attend SLT meetings. They might be looking at something particularly in that and I might have done something linked to that in my faculty so he would invite me to perhaps come along and look at how that might be developed on a whole school basis.

I: **He opened some doors for you?**

R: Yeah in a way and there was a Deputy who I worked with in that school as well and it was quite something. We set up a peer support system and it involved training students as well. I got really involved with that and there were lots of opportunities to be involved in working with kids in different ways. So I took those opportunities and I'd been there for eight years, and had a couple of promotions within that time, and was really ready for senior leadership.

I: **I see.**

R: There weren't any opportunities in that school for that and a job was advertised which really appealed to me because it was an Assistant Principal's post and it was the first

'Fresh Start' school in the country so it was, I suppose, the earliest form of academy and it was a school in a really, really difficult area of inner city N, one of the toughest areas, and I applied for the post and what I liked about it was it was bits of what I was doing already so I'd built up quite a big vocational programme in the faculty and this was an opportunity to look at vocational education across the school.

I: **Right.**

R: It was also looking at special needs and pastoral and because of the work I'd done with peer support and then got involved in the pastoral system, I just felt it was the best of all worlds really. So I was successful in getting that post and I was there for two years and after a year and a half the Head left. There was a… it was something that was quite a big thing. She had a no exclusion policy and it wasn't a no exclusion policy. The kids weren't allowed in the school but she just wasn't excluding them. It was all done unofficially and kids couldn't access the kind of support they needed without being excluded so we had kids who weren't attending anything and the behaviour in the school got worse and worse and there were some significant incidents. The staff were getting more and more disheartened and she went off. She was away… she was out for a week and we were hearing rumours she was on an interview and when she came back the following day, you know, I said to her "I hear you've been at interview". Oh yes, I've heard that rumour she said, rubbish. This was a Friday and then on the Saturday my Dad phoned me and said have you seen the front of the local newspaper, it was your Head's been appointed to a post in N. So on the Monday when we went back into school the staff were really, really angry and the Leadership Team were angry and she gave us some story about she couldn't have told us because she had to see the Governors and all of this and there was a real swell of feeling amongst

the main staff body against her and her PA came up to my office. This was about the Wednesday and said I think she's gone because she always had this little cottage made of clay which a child had made her in a previous school and she took it to every job she said and this was gone.

I: Gosh.

R: And that was like a sign she had gone. So the Local Authority phoned us and said she was on gardening leave but she wasn't coming back and what was awful was she had this piece of pottery on her desk and it was made by a student in the school and it was a hand and it had two balls in it and she always said, 'this is where I've got people'. She was an interesting case. You learn a lot about how not to be a Head from some people. The staff, and it wasn't a massive staff, ceremoniously went into her room and got it, took it outside and smashed it on the pavement. It was kind of a, you know, she's gone and we're wiping her out and some of the experiences in that school that I had were just unbelievable. I mean things…I could write a book about some of the experiences. I've read the book about The Ridings and it pales into insignificance when I think of some of the issues that I dealt with. It was a massive learning experience and that's how I saw it. It was hard at times and there were times when you were thinking God, what am I doing this for? But I loved it, I enjoyed it, but I was ready to leave because we'd had HMI in, they'd given quite a glowing report. She left a couple of months later and all of a sudden Ofsted came in and the school wasn't good and I suppose it politically at the time, first Fresh Start school, HMI needed to give it a bit of a boost but the reality was it wasn't working. The Local Authority made the decision the school would close and I got a job as a Deputy in a school in N.

Again, very similar area and I'd started to do NPQH as well at that time and I'd only been at this job…it was just under a year when the Head said she was going to retire.

I: Right.

R: So I applied for the post and I got it and I was Head there for eight years.

I: If you look back now across those formative years of your career, were there any particular people or experiences that stand out?

R: I think particular people, the Head at the school where I was the Head of Food Technology. I think that head for me, was pretty significant and influential in what I did and for all the right reasons. The Head in the next school was significant for all the wrong reasons. And I suppose that the things that stand out are all to do with kids. Students who come back and see me and say, 'Because of you I'm doing this,' or, 'I'm doing that,' and that's fantastic to see, and I suppose in my last school, well the feedback from the staff as well, and I still get staff saying, 'Oh it's not the same place,' and again it's about making positive differences. It is all about making a difference, yeah. And that's why it's so important for me and that's what it is about, and just getting kids to understand that I'm in it for the right reasons because I do want to improve their life chances. I get there eventually, but with some of these kids it's going to be a hard slog. It is. Yeah.

I: And so, you must have been quite young when you started your headship.

R: Yeah. I got that job when I was…I think it was thirty-nine when I got my first headship. I just loved the school and I loved the job and there was a lot to do there but I really felt that there was a lot of capacity to develop and to move forward. I wasn't particularly looking for a job and I got a phone call from the management company

who were dealing with this academy to say, you know, had I seen this academy post and would I be interested in applying and they sent me all the stuff. I've always visited this part of the world weekends. I've spent a lot of weekends down here on a regular basis. Half-term holidays staying in hotels down here and so I came to look at the school. I thought the new building was fantastic, there was just so much potential here, untapped potential and I felt this was somewhere where I could really make a difference and for the first time ever there was a personal reason for wanting to come here in terms of being able to live in this area as well because I couldn't commute from where I lived.

I: **No.**

R: Not for any length of time anyway. So I decided to apply for the post and everything just felt right and I've always known I'll be happy in a post, my gut reaction from the first has told me that it's the right job. I certainly would never have imagined I would have been working in an academy.

I: **Right. So your move here, it wasn't because… it was because someone sent you the details, not because you looked for an academy principalship?**

R: Yeah. I didn't look for an academy and I think at that time I was going through a phase where my own school was under some scrutiny around National Challenge and floor targets and so on and there was talk about academies. Not from the Local Authority but there was a lot of pressure from the Office of the Schools Commission to look at academy status in the area and my school would have been the obvious one. So I always felt [laughter] I was quite anti-academy and I don't really think I understood what academies were. I think, like a lot of people, had misconceptions

about what academies were but I think I'd had a bad experience of academies because the one surrounding the area where I lived and worked were very insular schools, very stand alone, didn't take part in partnerships with the Local Authority or other schools. I think I saw them as a bit stand-alone and naturally I'm a collaborative person and I like working in partnership and so it just didn't feel like it was the right move for me but one of the things that really attracted me to this post was the sponsor, X University, because again I felt they were in it for the right reasons and although they weren't going to offer a huge financial incentive to the school, what they could offer in terms of expertise and raising aspiration and so on was going to be worth its weight in gold thinking about this area and what it needed. So I was delighted to have been appointed.

I: **And I hear that the recruitment process for academy principals is very tough?**

R: It was. Yeah, it was a hard process but I think it…I was interviewed in October of last year and obviously appointed and then I had to give two terms' notice and my Governors were sad that I was going and hadn't advertised my post. I think…they kept saying well you might change your mind and so they released me for a day a week so I took up post for a day a week, that was the theory, in January of this year but, of course, there was still a lot of things to do in my other school so it was kind of a seven day week trying to do all the things you need to do and producing all the copious amounts of documentation that need to be produced for an academy. Then I took up post full time on the 19th of April. But on 21st April I then had to launch the staffing structure to staff and it was very obvious from that that at least twenty people were going to lose their jobs. That was kind of the second day of my post. A lot of them were support staff because the school was drastically overstaffed. The staffing

complement was one hundred and ten percent of the budget so staff had to go. I had to manage that process whilst trying to enthuse people about this thing that they didn't want so it was quite a difficult term in lots of ways and very demanding on time because I was still producing the documents that had to be produced, the copious policies and statements about this and statements about that but trying to spend as much time…I actually based myself in here. So I had a room at the university but I actually spent all my time here because I wanted to get to know people and I wanted people to know about me, who I was, what I was about, what my values were because I was dealing with a very difficult process and people didn't know me and they didn't seem that they had a lot of trust in Senior Leadership from previous experience. I wanted to get to know people and so it ended up that I was spending all day really just interacting with people and trying to get things set up and then all night and weekend doing the documents and what was also very difficult was we had some… there were some senior members of staff here who were leaving but they were going to make life as difficult for everybody as they could and whenever I tried to meet with the Senior Leadership Team they insisted on being there although they knew they weren't going to be here in September. Then they were undermining what I was doing and what I was saying was getting twisted and told in a different way out there so I made the decision I wouldn't put lots of things out there for people to look at because it was just becoming very difficult. So that was hard.

I: **I can imagine.**

R: Not having a lot of time to really...the summer holiday...it was crazy. I mean I took a week off and I needed that but that was it. Then I had some residential periods with the

Leadership Team then. I think the difficulty for us as well is we started in September with seventeen vacant posts.

I: **Really.**

R: Because we had a delay in signing the Funding Agreement, because there's a community library on site and that was also the school library but the school could only use it, because of safeguarding issues, if it was closed to the community. So it was for an hour a day when it was lunchtime and it was on a Wednesday when the library was closed. Well, that was totally inadequate and the Local Authority is one of our co-sponsors but there was a lot of difficulty in trying to come to an arrangement which suited everybody. So because we didn't get the Funding Agreement signed until Easter I couldn't launch the staffing structure until then so we had to go through the TUPE process, the thirty-day consultation, which meant that we were too late for resignation dates so in September we advertised the vacant posts and we've appointed to all but one or two of them.

I: **That's excellent news!**

R: One week I did thirty interviews. It was just so… just trying to get them all done as quickly as we could so I'm currently…the lack of capacity here is difficult at the moment. My Deputy Principal was doing one day a week before half term, he's now doing two days a week and he doesn't start full time until January. I have eight Directors of Learning but, of the eight, I only have two in post and one of them goes on maternity leave next week. I've also got two other vacant posts in Maths so I'll have three supply staff in Maths.

I: **Which isn't the way you would have wanted to start.**

R: Awful. Then a couple of support staff posts but quite significant posts so I've got my Estates Manager post. We advertised for that, we appointed someone and then five weeks' later she rang and said she'd got another job and she's not coming so we need to go back out to that. So I've got my Financial Director and then I've not got an Estates Manager. I've got my Systems Manager in post and then I've got a Business Manager who does the day to day finance and manages all the support staff but last week she was taken into hospital with an infection and they've had to amputate her leg and it was really touch and go as to whether or not she would even survive. And she's fantastic. She is an absolute rock and she's a mainstay of the school so not only personally was that a massive thing for everybody but also in terms of structures and the people that she line manages.

I: **You just must feel that everything keeps moving.**

R: It does, it does. I think that's why we've had some particularly difficult times with young people because also added to this there wasn't anybody in the school who was capable of doing the timetable. The person who does the timetable was leaving, a member of the leadership team. Timetables were never that good quality anyway so I was given the name of an external consultant who could do our timetable. It was probably going to be the worst timetable you've ever seen in your life and he gave it to me on the Wednesday before we broke up for the summer and I tried to get hold of him…and I said I needed to speak to him on the Wednesday, couldn't get in touch with him, he left a message on my voicemail saying he'd gone to see Shrek. You can imagine I was really impressed [laughter] and then he told me he was emigrating on the Monday. So I was left with a timetable which was absolutely shocking so year eleven had English three times in one day. It was just shocking so I've had to pay an

267

additional consultant to rewrite the timetable. He put staff, where I had capacity in staffing, he'd put them into just teach anything and I told him we had vacant posts and we were going to be filling those posts for September. Yes, but you haven't got those staff in place. Well it doesn't matter, I will have. Well, no, you've got an Art teacher whose got eight lessons free so he can teach two lessons of Maths, two lessons of Science, three lessons of this and that was how the timetable was put together. So not only have we had all of this and the vacant posts we actually started the new timetable last week. Also last week we had a fire. Where the electricity comes into the building, there was a big fire and so we had to close last Wednesday because we had no electricity until ten to five and it's such a massive job they've put a patch on it but it's going to take them a week to do what they need to do. So it's been really hard to settle students. You know, they come back after half-term, there's a fire, there's a new timetable... so they haven't had this day timetable before.

I: **It's like a new start.**

R: Our ties didn't arrive so we only got the ties last week so, of course, now trying to establish uniform, the ties. It's just like…one thing after another.

I: **So you talked about your preconceptions of academies. Do you think firstly that your opinion of academies was based on the first wave of academies?**

R: I think it was based on the ones that I knew in the area where I live. They were a particular consortium of academies and they have a particular way of operating and I remember we sent some students to visit one of them to look at the build, because we were going through a 'Building Schools for the Future' at the school I was at and the staff were asking about various things and they were talking about the behaviour for

learning and the Head said the girls are not allowed to have a fringe so they have to have their hair pinned up, back, and when a member of staff said but why's that the head said, "No child will speak to me through a fringe". That just about set the scene and it was that kind of regime, they were excluding students because the parents were parking on double yellow lines dropping their kids off and it was that that I'd had experience of and I was thinking I don't want to be part of that but again that demonstrates the influence of sponsors because that came from the sponsors. I suppose that was what my view of academies was.

I: **And what differences have you found since you've been here compared to your previous headship?**

R: I think one of the differences that I don't like is I don't feel I have some of the same autonomy that I had in my previous role. I don't know whether that's because of some of the people that I'm working with but I always feel that if I make a decision which I think is an appropriate decision for a Head to make, there's too much interference…from the sponsors. I just feel like it's another layer which, and it may be because of some of the personalities, and it isn't all of them, but I do feel sometimes that…and I think sometimes it's because they're so desperate to get it right and their reputation and I have been told that their reputation lies on this academy. So I think they're just desperate to get it right and I don't think anybody's deliberately trying to undermine me or trying to take over.

I: **That's interesting. Do you think that if you hadn't been a head before you would have noticed that?**

R: No, not at all. Not at all. I think it's because I've been a Head before that I've felt a greater autonomy. That's interesting isn't it because academies are meant to be more autonomous? The other thing I've seen a big change in, in my previous Local Authority we worked really closely together as a group of heads with the Local Authority. Everything was very collaborative. A lot of the funding that came from the Local Authority was given to the Heads to decide how they were going to spend it and I was seconded for a day a week for a number of years to lead on things within the Local Authority on behalf of schools and the Heads. Coming here it was very obvious that the Heads in this authority were very suspicious of academies and what it was going to mean to them. I've also found, and it's interesting, the Local Authority are co-sponsors, but I've also found some Local Authority officers very, very difficult because it's obviously their perception of academies and the Local Authority haven't really got a clear idea of how academies are different and what their responsibilities are and what our responsibilities are. I think we're just going through that storming and forming stage and I do make a point of attending all of the Head Teacher partnership meetings and signing up to the partnership and the collaborative and I think…there was a meeting last week where we were talking about the fair access protocols and everybody taking their responsibility in admitting students and one Head was spitting out his dummy and saying well I know the school down the road doesn't do it so I'm not signing up to this. There was a lot of robust discussion and debate and I said at one point, it is disappointing because as the Head of an academy I probably have got more opportunity to opt out. I don't have to be part of your behaviour partnership and I've got an opportunity to opt out but I'm not because I fundamentally believe that we're all in it for the kids in this Local Authority, not just in our individual

school. It was interesting that one of the Heads actually made the comment that he thought I was a good role model for academy Heads because their perception was academy Heads didn't want to work with…and again it was their experiences of academies and what they'd heard.

I: **Do you think…because the sponsors are all different and the academies' principals are different and each setting is different, that there is a generic academy principal?**

R: There isn't. No. But people don't know that. It is interesting because the students, there's been from the majority of students a very positive reaction to the academy and we've very quickly brought things in. We're working with a company and we've planned a whole year's programme with H.U. They've been working here every week with groups of students and we've got a huge partnership going with the primary schools, with the further education sponsors, with the university and it really will be a big national event when we go live with this partnership and what we're doing and how we're doing it. It's really had a huge impact on the students and I had a student, a Year Eleven student, who actually was talking to me this morning and saying "I just can't believe we've never had anything like this, this is just changing my life and I'm so sad I'm in Year Eleven" and I think what the academy's done for this school is brilliant and that's what most of the students think but we've got a hard call because there have always been big issues in the school. Last year there were one and a half thousand sessions of fixed term exclusion, eight permanent exclusions and attendance was 89% and there were two and a half thousand sessions of children just being sent home to 'cool off' so there were lots of kids who weren't in this building last year and there were lots of kids who are coming here and they're very powerful in this building

and if they say don't do something, other students won't do it, whether a member of staff, including me, is standing there or not and so some of the kids feel they've got to take the academy on and so we're trying to break down those barriers as well.

I: **And that's borne from the predecessor school?**

R: It is. Yeah and from when the three schools went into one. What also is an added ingredient is that the person who was Acting Head last year is here on my SLT as a Vice Principal and she was interviewed for the Principal's post and didn't get it. We interviewed her for the Deputy Principal's post and she wasn't successful and then I created a Vice Principal post, knowing that she'd need to be appointed to one of those posts but giving her, I suppose, a launch pad to go into headship so that's been an interesting.

I: **Has it been difficult?**

R: It has been hard, it has. It's taken a lot of time and a lot of very honest and open and frank discussions to start really unpicking it and it is hard because I still feel like I can't trust that person. Which is crucial. It is, which is why my Deputy Principal is so crucial which is why it's so difficult not having him until January.

I: **So it must feel nice that each half term is like another fresh start with the next pieces of the jigsaw puzzle coming in.**

R: Yeah and I suppose the next challenge is when we have in January seventeen new staff arriving. That's the next challenge with young people because it brings more change and new relationships. The people I've appointed are absolutely fantastic and people want to work here and I love that and I think that the staff are one-hundred percent on board. I couldn't ask for more. It was a really difficult day yesterday, very, very

difficult. Some really dangerous behaviour going on here and because the school is so open it all happens in the public arena and when you've got eight hundred and fifty kids crammed in those balconies looking for a fight and it's pretty significant and I wouldn't have been surprised if I'd had some big union deputation talking about unsafe behaviour and so on. We had an SLT meeting last night and then I did a huge email to staff acknowledging it had been a horrendous day. That was really important and then outlining what action we'd taken and then talking about, you know, sometimes things get worse before they get better, where we are and we've talked about all those reasons. I got some emails back from staff saying we're behind you, yeah, well done, I know it's difficult, so and so. So many staff have said to me today, "are you alright?" They've really bought into the vision and conversations I have with staff is that we know where we want to be. We just want to be there. It's frustrating being where we are when we want to be there and we can see it, we can touch it.

I: **But this transparency that you describe and the level of communication, where has that come from?**

R: Me, I guess.

I: **And has it always been you?**

R: Yeah. I think that's what's been difficult throughout this process because it's like, it was like going back to where I was eight years' ago or nine years' ago. Going to a new school where there wasn't a lot of trust in SLT, there wasn't a lot of transparency, staff thought SLT had a hidden agenda, weaknesses weren't tackled. Coming here people at my other school were saying, "Oh they'll soon get to know you and they'll soon get to trust you and you'll get them on side" and whatever and it just didn't feel like that

when you were going through all that and you wanted to say, "Look this is me, trust me, I wouldn't do anything and I will always be honest with you". I think first training day back, you know, I just laid out my stall. This is who I am, this is what I'm about, I'll always be honest with you. If I like something, if I recognise something, I'll tell you. If I don't, we'll have a conversation about it. I think the staff are beginning to appreciate that and beginning to see and there's never been any kind of programme of monitoring here before so for the first time at Easter they did lesson observations. That's the first time there's been a programme of lesson observation and even then it wasn't appropriate, they didn't get proper feedback and nothing happened as a result of them.

I: **So you're moving things forward and probably very quickly as well.**

R: Very quickly. What I keep doing is I keep going back to them and just refreshing the vision and refreshing well this is where we are at. So it's just, you just keep bringing them back. When you're down there you just keep bringing them back up again.

I: **I know that is a difficult question. How long do you think you will remain in post here?**

R: It's a long term thing for me. I don't want to just come in and fiddle around with it and go but as long as I feel I'm making a difference I'll stay. I don't know what I want to do after this. I can't imagine myself going into another headship. At this moment in time I can't imagine that and I think when you're relatively young when you get a headship it is that kind of, you know, what comes next and because of the way I work and because I am absolutely passionate about what I do, it takes out of me and I don't know if physically, emotionally I want to put myself through this again because it has

been a really, really tough time so far. It's going to continue to be tough for a while longer and so what I want to do is give this as much as I can but in terms of where I want to go next, I don't know.