

School leadership and management policy and the training of the school leader in English reforms through the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL).

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Abstract

The paper examines the English school leadership and management education policy that has been in a state of flux since the coalition government came into power in 2010. Sweeping changes have come with the rapid introduction of academisation, free schools, new standards for teachers, new performance management systems, new national curriculum for primary and secondary 2014, new assessments including General Certificate for Secondary Education and other Key Stage Four qualifications, new accountability regimes, and new funding models. School leadership has the second greatest influence on learning, with the first being the learning in the classroom. Two discourses of school leadership are introduced. The first is the heroic headteacher accountable for school success. The second is distributed school leadership where the success is distributed throughout the team. Headteachers need to be prepared for headship with planning for their continuing professional development. The argument is made that the National Professional Qualification for Headship prepares headteachers to be heroic and provides them with concrete experiences of leadership supported by mentors and/or coaches. Postgraduate research programmes then enable headteachers to conduct research to facilitate enquiries into their professional challenges, and critique and reflect upon the interplay between policy and their school contexts and community with a focus on moral purpose, deep democracy and working for universal access to equitable achievement. Tentative practical implications from the findings reveal that as headteachers pass through the NPQH and onto postgraduate research programmes, they may develop their humility, confidence and wisdom to become custodians of the field. Their knowledge, skills and experience may then position them as key to leadership capacity building in education systems with a commitment to continual Learning to Critically Analyse, and Reflect for Emancipation.

Introduction

This paper has four aims. The first is to examine school leadership and management policy in England. The second is to examine the training of the headteacher in English reforms through the National Professional Qualification for Headship published by the National College for Teaching and Leadership. The third is to examine alternative pathways to leadership preparation and development. The fourth is to consider the practical implications of the findings for England and other contexts. The methodology adopted is documentary analysis that draws on both quantitative data and qualitative data (Taysum and Iqbal, 2012) Therefore I am taking a mixed methods approach. The context is complex because school leadership and management policy in England has experienced significant changes since the coalition government came into power in 2010. Two discourses regarding school leadership are identified. The first is that of the heroic headteacher who is accountable for school processes, practices and outcomes. The second is that of a headteacher who through the right balance of humility and confidence can develop distributed leadership within systems. The preparation and the training of the school leader is identified as very important because Leithwood and Levin (2008) identify that

school leadership has the second greatest impact on school learning, with the first being the learning in the classroom. The English revised National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) published by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) and provided through appointed licensees, is a pathway to headteacher preparation. An alternative way to prepare or develop educational leadership is through postgraduate research programmes including Masters and Doctorates. The paper considers both forms of preparation/development for headship and makes tentative practical implications from the findings. To address the aims of the research four questions are asked. First what school leadership and management policy exists in England? Second what is the training of the headteacher in English reforms, through the National Professional Qualification for Headship published by the National College for Teaching and Leadership? Third what alternative pathways to leadership preparation and development exist? Finally, what are the practical implications of the findings for the preparation and development of school leadership in England and other contexts?

Methodology

Using Taysum and Iqbal (2012) approach I have collected and theorized educational policy, [literature, research, and grey literature](#) focusing on school leadership and management policy, the National Professional Qualification for Headship, and Postgraduate Research Programmes. When engaging with documentary analysis the extent to which education policy and its implications have been communicated to those implementing it and those affected by it needs to be revealed. Further it is important to understand how participation has been facilitated (Shields, 2007). To engage with full policy analysis therefore I take Taysum and Iqbal (2012) approach that seeks to understand *what* is happening regarding educational policy by analyzing quantitative data. I combine this approach with understanding *how* and *why* it is happening by drawing on qualitative data. Thus the documentary analysis takes a mixed methods approach.

Existing policy for school leadership and management in England

The current professional challenges for leadership teams and governing bodies in England's schools are shaped by enormous policy and systems changes. These changes are a result of the move to academy status for several thousand schools and the opening of free schools (Farrar, 2012). There has also been a move from government to governance. Thus the education system is experiencing a general de-centering. The system has shifted the responsibility to meet education policy to individual schools. The schools still need to deliver on policies including the Children's Act (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2004), The Childcare Act (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2006), The Education Act (2011) and The Education Act 2005 with amendments from September 2012 (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2005). The Education Act 2005 with amendments from September 2012 is particularly important because

it sets out the new accountability framework. The new accountability framework in the Ofsted Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2013) is part of the system of education with a new National Curriculum 2014 (Department for Education, 2013a), new assessment and qualifications including General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and other Key Stage 4 (KS4) qualifications (Department for Education, 2013b) ¹, new performance management systems (Department for Education 2012a), [new](#) teacher standards (Department for Education, 2012b), and new funding models (Department for Education 2013c). The government hold the governing bodies to account through Ofsted who carry out monitoring inspections. James et al (2013) identify that each English state maintained school has a governing body that usually includes the headteacher, but does not have to, and members from other stakeholder groups including parents, staff, the local authority, the local community and if the school has a religious affiliation, foundation members. Governing bodies participate voluntarily with a membership of between seven and twenty ([James et al, 2013](#)). The governing bodies are responsible for meeting standards, appointing the headteacher, and have sub-committees responsible for curriculum, staffing, resources and finance. Ofsted (2013) inspect the governing body for curriculum, staffing, resources, finance, their impact on improving the quality of provision, facilitation of parental engagement, their knowledge of the school, and how they hold the headteacher to account (James et al, 2013).

Gunter et al (2013) argue that the role of principal is too big for one person, to be held accountable. After heavy investment into the notion of 'transformational leadership' compelling evidence identifies that such hero leadership needs problematizing (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992; Leithwood and Levin, 2005). Rather a school leader may be seen as mediating between the structures and agency of a school with an awareness of power and using the power to build capacity within the system to improve learning. On the other hand Leithwood and Levin (2005) argue that leadership practices are independent variables, and mediating variables are school conditions, class conditions, individual teachers and the professional community. There are different views regarding who is mediating, and what the mediating variables are, however, where there is provisional consensus is that distributed leadership is occurring. Oswald and Engelbrecht (2013, p.636) argue distributed leadership is an approach that requires a principle to balance confidence with humility. These characteristics, along with recognizing different team members' strengths and assigning tasks accordingly is very important for a principal. Principals therefore need to provide opportunities for participation to enable teachers' voices to be heard. Preparation for effective distributed leadership appears to focus on ethics, values and pedagogical relationships (Taysum, 2012). Day et al (2009) affirm this and identify that a key aspect in preparing educational leaders for effective distributed leadership is to recognize members of the team's readiness for responsibilities and

¹ [It is important to note that Ordinary level qualifications are offered \(CiE, 2013\) with international qualifications offering different pathways to qualification. It remains to be seen if some international qualifications are able to retain the modular approach, if students are limited to their first exam mark counting \(Gov.uk, 2013\), and how the qualifications markets develop and what qualifications employers value.](#)

accountabilities. Moreover, Day et al agree with Oswald and Engelbrecht that values are very important and principals need to develop leadership trust and trustworthiness for effective distributive leadership.

The literature suggests that working together, in trust, through distributive leadership is very important. Gunter et al (2013) suggest that leadership is an inclusive process. However, they argue that research about teacher leaders is usually reduced to hierarchical analyses of the lone leader causing effectiveness.

The Right Honorable Michael Gove MP Secretary of State for Education speaks of educational innovation with a new generation of heroes and heroines (Department for Education, 2013d). However, Harris (2005C) argues that educational leadership is being taken over by labels such as 'superhead' and newspaper headlines or strap lines of education 'heroes' with little empirical evidence to support them. The implications are that they are doing something super, and by definition being 'super human' is not sustainable. The Department for Education include the National College with leadership preparation programmes, including the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) on their website. Thus the National Professional Qualification for Headship is preparing headteachers as leaders for an educational system that the government is developing led by heroic headteachers.

The English education reforms since the Coalition government in 2010 have built on the previous Conservative government's strategy of decentralization with the Local Management of Schools (Education Act, 1993). The Coalition government's strategy was one of converting outstanding comprehensive schools into independent schools called academies, and starting free schools. Taysum (2013a, p.8) affirms this and states:

Academisation began with schools that had been identified as 'outstanding' by Ofsted. It is not clear what these schools had to gain from becoming academies in terms of raising standards. Further, Gunter (2010) identifies that 73% of state schools achieved the required target of GCSE or equivalent A* to C whilst 49% of academies achieved the required target of GCSE or equivalent A* to C grades. The strategy to convert state schools to academies is therefore not based on improving performance. A significant incentive for academising is financial. Bristol Politics (2011) identify that schools in budget deficit had the incentive of an additional £400,000 per annum if they academised. In the short term, public spending on schools increased with the academisation agenda. The financial incentive for schools to academise was significant. However, consideration needs to be given to why the government wished schools to academise if the long term goal of neo-liberalism is to reduce public spending, not increase it. Arguably, academising schools is a process of the state affirming neo-liberalism by facilitating neo-liberal practices through the individualization of academies that shifts government of schools to governance of schools. Each academy school has an individual seven-year contract with the Secretary of State that is

not held to comprehensive schools' legislation, and with little accountability to parliament (Pring, 2012). Thus academising is a 'strategy of separatism'.

Comprehensive education for all is similar to that of Finland's education system (Ministry of Education Finland, 2009) with the aims of high-level achievement combined with low variance between schools and a strategy of inclusion. Finland are among the leaders in the PISA league tables, and their approach is interesting to understand to inform choice regarding possible policy borrowing from Finnish strategies for education systems. What is clear is that the Finnish system includes all staff, and teachers, the opposite of a strategy of segregation. The members of staff are empowered to develop their own schemes of work and set their own *criterion-referenced tests*, based on a curriculum framework that is not prescribed. Criterion-referenced means that the assessments are mapped to standards and test the quality of the work, they are not norm-referenced which is where a percentage of the cohort pass with a grade A, a percentage pass with a grade B, a percentage pass with a grade C and a percentage fail (James, 2013). This is the opposite to what is happening in England where a 'strategy of segregation' is operating through the individualizing strategies of education processes as academies are isolated from their networks, and practices operationalized by market forces and the commodification of education (Masaaki, 2012). Ofsted make positivist yes or no judgements about schools' outcomes and do not provide progressive developmental advice on practices and processes, as Local Education Authorities and the Schools Council had once done when developing a 'Plowden identity' prior to 1976 (Masaaki, 2012; Taysum, 2013a). Thus headteachers are operating in an environment where strategies of segregation are affirmed by Ofsted.

| The Chief Inspector of Ofsted Sir Michael Wilshaw stated 'It's up to every school to fight for its corner' (Rustin, 2011) which is an isolating strategy. However, the White Paper (Department for Education, 2010) states Academies will work with schools that are under-performing (Taysum, 2012). These two extreme positions appear to be irreconcilable where they argue for progressivism, collaboration and networking whilst setting schools against each other. Headteachers need to be prepared to operate within this context, and those preparing them need to understand the knowledge, skills, and expertise the headteachers will require to operate effectively. Further Bush (2013) argues that leadership does make a difference to school and student outcomes, and Leithwood et al (2008) recognize that classroom teaching has the largest influence on student learning but school leadership has the second largest influence. Therefore leaders need to develop systems that enable high quality learning to take place.

Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) argue that if a system is not performing well leadership needs to work together to bring people together. Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) provide an example of a headteacher Grange who was courageous, had a vision and inspired others using his creativity. He included everyone and deployed distributed leadership. No one style of leadership was 'performed' rather Grange deployed a fusion of, and evolution of, different

styles that emerged when the whole community was working together. Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) continue that this form of leadership was often counterintuitive, meaning that the leaders often did the opposite to the 'norm' or what was expected. Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) provide an example of counterintuitive leadership with the Finnish education system where the amount of time in the classroom was reduced, along with the amount of homework. The teachers have more time to think and reflect upon the learning that has occurred in the classroom, and use formative assessment to build on the learning. The students have more time to relax and enjoy their lives, enabling their learning to fuse, evolve and emerge. The result is probably a de-stressed classroom (Traxson, 1999).

Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) identifies another example of counterintuitive leadership from a headteacher, Bell who welcomed children and staff into the school. Bell took time to get to know the people and made each person aware that they were very important and valued. What Bell and Grange both share is they turned their schools round from not performing, to very high performing schools. The issue is what kind of training is required to develop such leadership?

Training available for the headteacher in England

The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) is currently published by the National College for Teaching and Leadership and provided through 28 licensees that include outstanding schools as identified by Ofsted (Bush, 2013). The licensees also include Teaching School Networks including outstanding educational institutions from different sectors and phases (Camteach, 2013), Teaching School Alliances for example Carnegieleaders and Leeds Metropolitan University (Carnegieleaders, 2013), [and](#) partnerships between Higher Education Institutions and schools. An example of this is the Institute of Education in London that has partnerships with both primary and secondary schools of some 200 from mainstream, urban, rural, academies, grammar schools, [and](#) special schools, covering all London boroughs, Bedfordshire, Essex, East and West Sussex, Norfolk, Kent, Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, and Hertfordshire (Institute of Education, 2013). There is little research on teaching schools and Dr Sue Robinson is exploring teaching schools and holding a BELMAS event to explore this [on March 11th 2014](#).

Bush (2013) identifies three stages of the qualification for headship. The first stage was introduced in April 2004 at a similar time to the Children's Act 2004 (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2004), when those applying for their first headship had to register for the National Professional Qualification for Headship. From April 2009 all headteachers taking on their first appointment needed the National Professional Qualification for Headship. From April 2012 with policies of autonomy or a 'strategy of segregation', the Headteachers no longer need the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers to become a headteacher (Bush, 2013). However the National Professional Qualification for Headship is still required by 80% of governing bodies (Institute of Education, 2013). The current National Professional Qualification for Headship is a revised version. The revisions came in response

to criticism of the National Professional Qualification for Headship which are described by Bush (2013, p.458) as:

- being below the intellectual level required for such an important and complex role (Brundrett, 2000; Brundrett et al, 2006; Bush, 1998; 1999; 2006);
- being 'too basic' or 'too easy' to obtain (Bush, 2006; Bush et al, 2007);
- being too reliant on a competency system (Brundrett, 2000)
- having weak links with masters level school leadership programmes (Bush, 1998);
- being based on a normative, and standardized, model of leadership (Brundrett et al, 2000)

The revised version attempts to meet these criticisms whilst at the same time offering opportunities for partnership between schools and universities to develop alternative pathways to headship that tie in with postgraduate research programmes. The National Professional Qualification for Headship provides 60 [Credit, Accumulation, and Transfer Scheme \(CAT\)](#) points at Masters level and enables access to Postgraduate Certificates (worth 60 credits, or 60 UK CAT points), Postgraduate Diplomas (worth 120 credits, or 120 UK CAT points, and full Masters programmes (worth 180 credits) (Bush, 2013). It is important to note that the maximum amount of CAT points different Universities in the UK are prepared to credit for a Masters degree varies from 60 CAT points to 120 CAT points. This has significance for other schemes such as the Bologna process, which is reaching beyond its European borders, and other Credit Transfer Schemes such as the European Transfer Scheme (ECT) and a new common transfer scheme for 2013-2014, which includes Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, China, Japan, and Korea (ICEF Monitoring, 2013).

Quality Through Leadership (2013) present the objective of the National Professional Qualification for Headship is to develop headteachers so that they can:

1. deliver educational excellence: have the ability to lead in a self-improving system and deliver high quality outcomes for pupils and students;
2. provide strategic leadership: have the ability to lead and manage successfully in a highly autonomous and highly accountable system;
3. ensure high quality operational management: have the ability to deliver the leadership and management responsibilities of the role (including effective use of resources and management of staff) and ensure a 'fit for purpose' organization (p.1).

To deliver on the objective, the revised National Professional Qualification for Headship has three phases, the first is being identified as a candidate for headship within the next 18 months (Quality Through Leadership, 2013). A report 'National Professional Qualification of Headteachers Gateway Stage One, Intake One Lessons Learned' identifies that 1544 people applied for the

National Professional Qualification for Headship with 1273 deemed ready for the second developmental phase (Quality Through Leadership, 2013)².

The second is the development phase that includes an induction and the completion of core and elective modules. The modules include three essential modules; 'Leading and improving teaching', 'Leading an effective school', and 'Succeeding in headship' and two of the available elective modules; 'Curriculum development', 'Using data and evidence to improve performance', 'Leading staff and effective teams', 'Leading change for improvement', 'Leadership in diverse contexts', 'School improvement through effective partnerships', 'Closing the Gap' and 'Leading inclusion: achievement for all' (Department for Education, 2013). For each of the modules The National College for Teaching and Leadership (2013) state that there will be approximately 50 hours of study with 20 hours of workbased study, 15 hours of face to face activities focusing on leadership development, and 15 hours of reading and reflection.

During the development phase there is a nine-day placement supported by a network of trainee headteachers, coaches, work-based learning that takes place in the [trainee headteacher's](#) own organization, and other events such as conferences and master classes (Quality Through Leadership, 2013). Crawford and Earley (2011) and Simkins et al (2009) argue that coaches play a very important role in leadership preparation, but the local variations cannot be compensated for through large-scale quality assurance processes and practices and further research is recommended here.

The final stage is assessment against the competency framework including a work-based task in the school where the trainee headteacher is employed, and a task in [a](#) partnership placement school, and the school where the trainee headteacher is employed. These assessments need to map to the school improvement priorities, take up to a year to complete and demonstrate a sustainable positive influence. The final assessment is a case study that includes teacher appraisal. The teacher appraisal maps to the new performance management policies (Quality Through Leadership, 2013).

Education policy includes the National Standards for Headteachers which Doughty (2013) argues were developed with limited consultation in 1997, and revised with full consultation in 2004. The 2010 election [prevented](#) their planned revision, and Doughty has stated that it is not a priority to update them. However, Doughty (2013) also argues that standards are very important because they provide a framework for headteachers, inform performance management, guide governing bodies when appointing headteachers, and underpin the National Professional Qualification for Headship. The standards focus on:

1. Shaping the future
2. Leading learning and teaching

² For the full report please go to [Http://qtl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/npqh-lessons-learned-intake-1.pdf](http://qtl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/npqh-lessons-learned-intake-1.pdf)

3. developing self and working with others
4. managing the organisation
5. securing accountability
6. strengthening community (DfES, 2004).

| [With](#) Doughty [arguing](#) the standards are not a priority to revise, a new competency framework is used for the revised National Professional Qualification for Headship. The National College of Teaching and Leadership, (2013, p.42) argues: 'assessment judgements cannot be made directly from the National Standards, assessment criteria have to be created from the Standards'. A competency framework with 16 competences has been developed that does not have criterion referencing to the Standards. Taysum (2012) argues that standards are deemed to be achieved or not achieved based on the assessment of competences or skills. Thus the standards are based on current job specifications, and the competences or skills provide an opportunity to criterion reference to the standards, and ultimately to the job specification.

| The issue that [new](#) competences and skills have been [developed](#) before the standards have been revised is confusing, given that the education systems are based on standards. Further, prior to the revised National Professional Qualification for Headship, trainee headteachers taking the legacy National Professional Qualification for Headship needed to keep a portfolio of evidence that captured how they had met the leadership standards. Interestingly the Institute of Education have stated that successful completion of the five modules and work-based studies will automatically give them 30 credits ([CAT points](#)) towards a Masters programme taken at the Institute of Education. To get a further 30 credits, trainees need to complete an Independent Study Module. The Independent Study Module requires a 5000 word assignment in two parts. The first part is a 1000 word reflective commentary, and the second part is a 4000 words critical piece drawing on substantive literature, and research (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2013). Guidance for the Independent Study recommends using excerpts from blogs or contributions to discussions to reflect upon, that demonstrate progress and development. The British Educational, Leadership, Management and Administration Society are holding bi-weekly conversations on twitter and provide a forum for educational leaders to network and share knowledge and support critical reflection to address professional challenges (British Educational Leadership, Management, and Administration Society, 2013). The reflection pieces have similarities with the portfolio that was mapped to demonstrating progress against the leadership standards. However there appears to be variations because the Quality Through Leadership (2013) National Professional Qualification for Headship states that 60 credits ([CAT points](#)) towards a Masters qualification can be gained if a portfolio is kept that [meets](#) the learning outcomes of the modules mapped to the competency framework. Further research is needed into this.

The National Professional Qualification for Headship, based on the Competency Framework does not map to the standards. The Competency Framework was developed by the National College and a Team of experts who

used characteristics and behaviours of leadership judged to be outstanding, other competency frameworks, headteacher job descriptions from diverse settings, and a generic framework developed for other leaders such as School Business Managers³. National College for School Leadership (2012) present the competency Framework:

Strategic leadership

- Self awareness and self management
- Persona drive and accountability
- Resilience and emotional maturity
- Conceptual thinking
- Future focus
- Impact and influence

Educational Excellence

- Delivering continuous improvement
- Modelling excellence in teaching
- Learning focus
- Partnership and collaboration
- Organisational and community understanding

Operational management

- Efficient and effective
- Analytical thinking
- Relationship management
- Holding others to account

The competences tie in closely with Gove's (Department for Education, 2013d) identification of the hero leader. However, as Leithwood et al (2008) argue headship is the second most important influence on student learning, with classroom teaching being the first. The competences that map to the standards might be expected to demonstrate distribution of leadership throughout each section as identified by Hargreaves and Shirley (2012).

However, the National Professional Qualification for Headship does not address the standards, which needs problematizing because the education

³ The author lead the design of the MSc Educational Leadership School Business Management Programme, The University of Leicester with the National Association of School Business Managers (NASBM) based on addressing professional challenges through examining the substantive literature and engaging with action research. The programme ended with a full Masters, but students could exit with a Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert) worth 60 credits at Masters level, and a professional NASBM qualification. The 60 credit module was an action research module, for further details of this module please see Taysum (2011). This was a framework similar to that of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PG CERT) with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), where the University awards the PGCert and The Department for Education awards QTS. Included in the School Business Management programme was the 360 degree diagnostic tool that fed into the students reflective piece they needed to write to demonstrate they had achieved the competences that were criteria referenced to the standards to satisfy the requirements of the NASBM to gain Fellow status. The reflection piece focused on the 60 credit action research project Postgraduate Certificate worth 60 CAT points which is equivalent to the value of the National Professional Qualification for Headship.

system in England is based on criterion referencing to standards. The performance management is conducted using criterion referencing to accountability frameworks. The targets the English government sets are incredibly ambitious with Mr Gove identifying by 2015 that 50% of pupils from each school should get five GCSEs at grades A* to C including maths and English (Teaching Times, 2013). The gradings of the GCSE examinations demonstrate that children have achieved the skills, or competences that are criterion referenced to the standards. These meet the Ofsted inspection framework (Ofsted, 2012). However, there are significant issues here because although the whole system is built on meeting the standards, the GCSE examinations appear to be norm referenced. Norm referencing means that a percentage of the students who have been entered for the examination will pass with a grade A, a percentage will pass with a grade B, a percentage will pass with a grade C, [and](#) a percentage will fail. In essence students are awarded grades based on their ranking within a cohort (James, 2013). Thus the pass marks are set after the examination has been set and taken.

However, if the examinations [are](#) criterion referenced, the students [are](#) assessed according to whether they have met the standards or not. Evidence of this is found when the GCSE English examination taken in November 2011 required 10 points less to get a grade C [than](#) the GCSE English examination taken in June 2012. This demonstrates that the examinations do not appear to be criterion referenced, and that children who are meeting the standards at a grade C are not being awarded a grade C because the examination appears to be norm referenced and only a percentage of students can pass with a grade C. There are implications of this with regard to demanding that schools meet a percentage of students gaining GCSE A* - C, when the percentages of students being awarded these grades is determined by the number of students entered for the exam. Mansell (2012) argues:

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) state the proportion of good grades handed out should only change if the ability of the cohort taking the exam has changed from year to year...and the last set of external assessments taken by each cohort – their key stage 2 results – will determine their ability profile... It means that the quality of work produced by each cohort in each exam would appear to have little or no bearing on considerations as to whether more pupils should receive good grades in any particular year or fewer. In fact the only way for a year group to convince examiners that, collectively they deserve higher grades in their GCSEs would be to have performed well not in those exams themselves, but in key stage 2 Sats five years earlier.

Thus with norm referencing, the quality of the work, or the competences mapped to the standards does not influence the grade. The argument is that the whole curriculum is standards based, but the examination system is not standards based. The system is therefore revealing inconsistencies that need addressing and the preparation/education/training of headteachers needs to facilitate their effective engagement with a dynamic education system that is open to critique and evidence informed leadership. Thus the move to academies and free schools to reduce bureaucracy and increase freedom,

may not have achieved its purposes, if the freedom is constrained by a system of standards that are not criterion referenced, indeed that are norm referenced.

A further problem emerges with the standards and the competences which is the moral purpose which Morrison (2011) identifies is so important. Morrison goes on to argue that building resilience to be able to resist forces that undermine moral purpose is essential. Taysum (2013c) evidence reveals that the government is interested in developing skills, which at a functional level focuses on whether people training for leadership have the skills or competences to be a headteacher. The next level is developing headteachers' creativity to work in a range of settings and build strategies for participation in school processes and practices that moves towards deep democracy. Research into the revised National Professional Qualification for Headship will reveal its effectiveness in preparing candidates for headship.

Alternative pathways to school leadership preparation and development

Educational leadership preparation needs to enable school leaders to gain an understanding of deep democracy, and to critique and resist policies that may prevent deep democracy from occurring. Shields (2013) argues that school leadership can make a difference to the academic achievement of children particularly from disadvantaged home contexts through Transformative leadership. Transformative leadership ensures the range of children's experiences brought to the classroom are recognized. Without this Shields (2013) argues [it will](#) not be [possible](#) to facilitate 'universal access to equitable achievement' (p.2) unless leadership starts with questions of justice, democracy, and the moral purpose of education systems. Earlier, the standards and competences were presented as lists. Here eight elements of transformative leadership are presented that emerged from Shields (2013, p.4):

- the mandate to effect deep and equitable change
- the need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice
- a focus on emancipation, equity, and social justice
- the need to address the inequitable distribution of power
- an emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good
- an emphasis on interdependence, inter-connectedness, and global awareness
- the necessity of balancing critique with promise, and
- the call to exhibit moral courage

Shields (2013) argues that these elements are not exhaustive, but if present in each headteacher they offer opportunities for engaging with questions of 'power, privilege, and justice and material inequities both inside and outside of school' (p.4). McGuinness et al (2013, p.17) affirms this and suggests:

The challenge is for a new style of school leadership, one based on a system of values such as respect and trust and optimism, one that sees the concept of community as going far beyond the narrow confines of

the individual school boundaries, but reaching even beyond other schools and into the community. Such leadership must ask not only what I can do for my students, but what can I do to improve the lot of all students in my locale?

Potter (2013) argues that moving from a fierce leader fighting for the reputation of their school to a collaborative leader practicing distributive leadership is transformative and challenging. The shift in identity is from a closed system that is self seeking to an open system of distributed leadership across schools, and getting the balance right (Kohlberg, 1981). Further Shields affirms Morrison's (2011) argument that moral and ethical behavior are at the centre of conceptions of leadership that explicitly engage with power relationships and dialogue. Shields presents a number of examples including Catherine a headteacher who worked in the school team meetings held weekly to explore personal constructs. Catherine would write on the board: 'The difference between high and low performing students is....' and the team would complete the sentence. Over time, the team began to see how their own constructs presented barriers to recognizing children from diverse backgrounds. The levels of participation engaged with by the teachers in team meetings began to be reflected in levels of participation of the children in class and in school. Volunteers for sharing what they had been learning with the school developed, along with performances of plays, and engagement with collaborative games. As Shields (2013, p.11) notes, this participation in school processes and practices:

'exuded enthusiasm and collaboration, these were not simply fuzzy attributes divorced from high academic expectations and student achievement – as evidenced by the school's success on state tests and their receipt of a state achievement award in the year of study.

The findings are affirmed by Ehrich et al (2013) who identified that [recognizing children's cultural capital in the classroom and school, and enhancing participation in processes and practices closed](#) the gap between school outcomes. [Further such practices lead to](#) schools with minority groups often exceeding other schools in outcomes. There are [also](#) many similarities between the cases that Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) present and the transformative leadership that Shields (2013) [identifies](#). [Taysum \(2012\) identifies that](#) postgraduate research programmes have a role to play in developing transformative leaders. [Postgraduate research programmes](#) include Masters courses, and the distinctiveness of the doctorate which, Taysum (2012) argues is hallmarked by Learning to Critically Analyse and Reflect for Emancipation, or Learning to CARE. Here research informs transformative, and inclusive strategies. [The research includes](#) school leaders' [asking questions that address their professional challenge](#). [The leaders critique policies and different forms of knowledge that address their research questions and help them understand their professional challenge in new ways](#). [The leaders then develop rigorous and systematic research designs and collect and analyse their data, which they compare and contrast with the conceptual frameworks that emerged from the critical review of the literature](#). [The conclusions can leave headteachers questioning policies and structures](#).

However, evidence from Taysum (2013c) reveals that league tables of outcomes are only credible if people do not question them. Thus headteachers need to ensure that their school is as high up in the league table as possible, which is about competing in the market place (Ball, 2004). If a person suggests there are flaws in the system, their views are not welcome. These findings link in with Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) and Sahlberg (2012) who suggests that the most successful headteachers encourage participatory school practices and processes and work in counter-intuitive ways that yield the best outcomes and [potentially the best](#) returns on investment.

There are many postgraduate programmes offered at both Masters and Doctorate level, and it is challenging to explore all their modular pathways. However, different kinds of institutions have different kinds of core beliefs, or principles. Thus the postgraduate research programmes of study reflect different institutional principles and strategies. The institutions and their postgraduate research programmes have a common core which is the desire to generate new knowledge and provide individuals with the thinking tools required to work for the public good. These aims tie in closely with [the](#) notion of deep democracy [Shields \(2013\)](#), distributed leadership (Hargreaves and Dennis, 2012) and Morrison (2011) and [an](#) emphasis on moral purpose ([Ehrich et al, 2013](#)). Thus Postgraduate research programmes that focus on developing educational leadership facilitate access to different forms of knowledge and provide thinking tools to work with that knowledge. The University is therefore a connector of discourses that provides networks of knowledge workers as part of a research process through the democratization of knowledge that does not privilege forms of knowledge over others (Taysum, 2012). The research is conducted within an ethical framework that recognizes diversity which meets the call from Morrison (2011) and Ehrich et al (2013).

Tentative Practical Implications for Headteacher Preparation and School Leadership Development

Educational leaders need to have points of reference upon which to reflect, and concrete experience of headship that they can conceptualise, and inquire into. The findings from their inquiries may enable the development of new understandings to enable conclusions to inform strategies for improvement. The strategies need to address the institutional priorities, that map to purpose(s) of education/education systems that align with community values and principles (Taysum, 2013c). Thus there may be a strong argument that the National Professional Qualification for Headship prepares individuals for headship and is a step on the way to school leadership development. The school leadership development is then furthered through postgraduate research where school leaders can begin to critique and reflect upon school leadership, and perhaps on their experiences on the National Professional Qualification for Headship. An important feature of the landscape of leadership development through the National Professional Qualification for Headship and the Postgraduate Research Programmes is the role of the coaches and/or mentors they work with. Thus as headteachers begin to critique their own leadership development, they may in turn become coaches and mentors of the

National Professional Qualification for Headship, and for Postgraduate Research Programmes, as they build capacity, and wisdom within the system.

Conclusions

The current professional challenges for leadership teams and governing bodies in England's schools are shaped by enormous policy and systems changes. These changes are a result of the move to academy status for several thousand schools and the opening of free schools (Farrar, 2012). There has also been a move from government to governance. Thus the education system is experiencing a general de-centering. The system has shifted the responsibility to meet education policy to individual schools with a background of a new accountability framework, a new National Curriculum 2014, new assessment and qualifications including General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and other Key Stage 4 (KS4) qualifications, new performance management systems, new teacher standards and new funding models. The Governing body are accountable for the quality of school processes, practices and outcomes, including holding the headteacher accountable (James et al, 2013). However Gunter et al (2013) argue that holding one person accountable for school processes, practices and outcomes is too much. This is particularly significant when Leithwood and Levin (2008) argue that school leadership is the second largest influence on learning with classroom teachers having the greatest influence. Thus distributed leadership is very important for leadership of school systems (Hargreaves, and Shirley, 2012; Oswald and Engelbrecht 2013). The complexity within education systems requires high quality leadership. Questions emerged regarding what kind of leadership is required, and how can headteachers be effectively prepared for headship?

The paper introduced the National Professional Qualification for Headship, with three key phases. The first phase is identification of suitable candidates, the second phase is the development phase through three core modules and two elective modules. The third phase is the assessment phase focusing on case studies that are work-based in the trainee headteacher's placement school, and the trainee headteacher's school of employment. These assessments need to map to the school improvement priorities, take up to a year to complete and demonstrate a sustainable positive influence. The final assessment is teacher performance management.

The National Professional Qualification for Headship is based on a 16 competency framework. However, these competencies do not map to the standards for headteachers that require revising. With a standards based education system it is important to ensure the starting point are the principles, aims and purposes of the education system, that are addressed through standards. Competences or skills map to the standards using criterion referencing. When assessing competences against standards to meet aims and principles, clarification is required regarding criterion or norm referencing (James, 2013).

Further the moral purpose of education needs to be explicit within the standards of education systems (Morrison, 2011; Ehrich et al (2013). This is particularly important when headteachers need to work for deep democracy and closing the achievement gap through transformative leadership (Shields, 2013). Transformative leadership ensures the range of children's experiences brought to the classroom are recognized without which universal access to equitable achievement will not be possible. Shields (2013) argues leadership starts with questions of justice, democracy, and the moral purpose of education systems. Eight elements of transformative leadership identified by Shields (2013, p.4) are the mandate to effect deep and equitable change; the need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice; a focus on emancipation, equity, and social justice; the need to address the inequitable distribution of power; an emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good; an emphasis on interdependence, inter-connectedness, and global awareness; the necessity of balancing critique with promise, and the call to exhibit moral courage. These elements can be critically examined through postgraduate research programmes including Masters and doctoral programmes. Postgraduate research programmes that focus on developing educational leadership, facilitate access to different forms of knowledge and provide thinking tools to work with that knowledge. The University is therefore a connector of discourses that provides networks of knowledge workers as part of a research process through the democratization of knowledge that does not privilege forms of knowledge over others (Taysum, 2012). The research is conducted within an ethical framework that recognizes diversity, which meets the call from Morrison (2011) and Ehrich et al (2013).

However, educational leaders need to have points of reference that they can critique and upon which they can reflect. Such points of reference are provided through concrete experience of leadership, [including internships prior to a first formal headship appointment. The leadership experiences can then be conceptualised](#), and [inquired](#) into. The findings may enable the development of new understandings with conclusions that inform strategies for improvement. The strategies need to address the institutional priorities, that map to purpose(s) of education/education systems [and principles](#) that align with community values and principles. Thus there may be a strong argument that the National Professional Qualification for Headship is an important step to school leadership development. The next step might be postgraduate research where school leaders can begin to critique and [further](#) reflect upon their school leadership experiences. As school leaders progress, possibly to doctoral level, their humility, confidence and wisdom may enable them to become custodians of the field, and [key to](#) capacity building and [fostering](#) a commitment to continual Learning to Critically Analyse, and Reflect for Emancipation (Taysum, 2012).

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