

# **Headteacher Recruitment and Selection in an Urban Context: Realities in Practice**

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## **Abstract**

Through the medium of three in-depth case-studies in primary schools in different urban areas, this thesis undertakes a critical analysis of how the governors in these settings undertook the process of recruiting and selecting a headteacher.

Headteachers have a potentially crucial role to play in creating educational success. This is particularly important in schools in challenging urban contexts where there is an urgent need to raise the pupils' levels of educational achievement. Yet responsibility for the appointment of headteachers resides with individual schools' governing bodies. School governors are most frequently lay-people and are volunteers. They may therefore lack the time and expertise to undertake each stage of the headteacher recruitment and selection process effectively

The findings from this study show that the enactment of the process is not a simple matter of policy implementation. It is a social activity which is shaped by governors' individual and collective knowledge, experiences and expectations. The findings also show that the wide range of factors that comprise a school's context influence the way in which the process is enacted.

From these findings, elements of effective practice are identified. These are used to create a 'Programme of Readiness' which is shown to be an important precursor to the headteacher recruitment and selection process. The identified elements are also used to generate the ingredients of an 'Effective Practice Model' for urban schools. This is not designed to be a prescriptive model. Rather, its purpose is to guide governors' thinking towards creating a model to suit their own unique context from elements of practice that were shown to be effective and in compliance with the relevant legislation. To conclude, implications for policy and for future research are discussed.

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## **Personal Statement**

This statement provides a reflective account of my learning experiences during the Education Doctorate (EdD) programme. It shows how the four taught modules and the independent study have enabled me to develop and refine my long-held interest in educational leadership and to explore my emergent interest in the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the work of schools. This statement also explains the ways in which all elements of the EdD programme and engagement with wider academic and professional communities have increased my knowledge and understanding both within and beyond my original fields of interest and thereby enhanced my professional practice.

In order to discuss my professional journey, I have examined the elements of the EdD programme in three sections viz. the four taught modules and assignments, the Institution-Focused Study and the Doctoral Thesis and I have recorded my developing interests and professional practice within each section as appropriate.

### **The taught modules and assignments**

At the end of a stimulating term of lectures on 'Foundations of Professionalism', the first study that I undertook traced the history of parent participation in schools and their involvement in children's education particularly in working-class areas over the past 30 years. Using ethnographic and sociological material, it showed the entrenched position adopted by many teachers over much of that time wherein working-class parents' perceived attitudes and life-styles were seen as a hindrance to children's educational opportunities and progress (Sharp and Green, 1975). It also showed that early initiatives such as home-reading schemes were undertaken on teachers' terms and legislation to involve parents formally was implemented only half-heartedly, teachers doubting parents' ability and fearing for their own possible loss of professionalism. Inspired by the work of Troman (1996), the latter part of this study

described a personal journey towards a new form of professionalism where parents came to be regarded as partners in their children's education, initially from expediency and later for reasons of social justice. On reflection, this piece of work provided a résumé of the ways in which my thinking and regard for people has changed over time. It marked the beginning of a personal reconsideration of the role of the headteacher with respect to the other participants within the educational process and a quest to discover how my own experiences were supported by or contradicted relevant literature and current research. It also marked the beginning of my engagement with the wider academic community that is concerned with the sociological aspects of education, especially those relating to equity and social justice.

From the study of parent participation, my thoughts progressed almost naturally to children. Until comparatively recently, children's opinions were seldom sought in matters relating to education and their voices rarely heard. However, my attention was drawn to an unhappy situation involving a male pupil aged 10 whom I overheard telling his mother who was a play leader at the same school how much he disliked her being there because it was **his** school. Having counted 14 pupils across two primary schools who were in a similar situation, I decided to explore children's views of being in the same school as their parents for my assignments at the end of the second and third modules (Methods of Enquiry 1 and 2). The first stage of this piece of research focused on teenagers' reflections of their experiences in primary school. This study enabled me to test out particular research methods, for example individual and small-group interviews. It also gave me the opportunity to consider the ethical and logistical implications of interviewing minors and find a way to perceive myself as a researcher rather than my informants' previous headteacher. Perhaps most importantly, the findings from this piece of research which indicated that males generally disliked being in the same school as their mothers for fear of being called 'Mummy's boy' and consequently maintained a physical and emotional distance between themselves and

their mothers, caused me to reflect on the ethical implications of discussing children's negative feelings yet being unable to alter their predicament. As a result, I decided not to continue my research with younger children as planned, even though it was extremely interesting.

This small-scale piece of research has become the subject of much debate within my Local Authority and has been used to endorse changes in the Admissions' procedure so that teachers' children are no longer automatically allocated places at their parents' schools. In view of the current proposals from central government that children should be admitted to the schools where their parents teach even when all the places have been filled, this study has been written up for presentation for publication in an educational journal in anticipation that it will reach a wider audience and thereby further promote children's rights to schooldays free from any pressure that might derive from their parents' presence.

My fourth assignment written as part of the 'Leadership and Learning in Educational Organisations' module related to my work as Consultant Head in a school judged by Ofsted to be in need of special measures for a second time. The study discussed school improvement, the importance of strong leadership and a quality action plan in general terms and interrogated whether speed and sustainability of improvement are mutually exclusive or compatible goals. Within the context of the case-study school, culture, particularly regarding relationships and teachers' low expectations, was identified as a key contributing factor to the school's inability to sustain success. After considering the initiatives undertaken, the conclusion drawn was that within the principles of sustainability as identified by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) speed is irrelevant. Rather, it is the quality of what has been achieved. This study relates to my first study in that both demonstrate that by adopting a more democratic form of professionalism that seeks to empower other significant parties to participate more

fully within the educational process, headteachers can create dynamic possibilities for the benefit of children within their care.

Preparation for the fourth assignment provided me with an amount of research-based information that would have been invaluable in the early days of my work as a consultant head. Knowledge that such a wealth of information is readily available has changed my professional practice in that when starting new projects I now try to discover what other people have experienced or researched rather than seeking validation after the event. This constitutes a new way of working and is something I am recommending to colleagues.

During the course of the fourth module, I spent time interrogating what it means to be a successful leader. My thoughts focused on the provisional nature of success and the need to nurture it creatively to face and even pre-empt the challenges of an ever-changing world. At this time, I had the opportunity to participate in a project relating to urban leadership that was conducted under the auspices of the National College. This added a new dimension to my interest in the impact of the urban context upon school leadership. I was also privileged to be invited to address the inaugural meeting of the Japanese Students' Society at the Institute of Education where I shared my thoughts on primary school leadership with a new group of professionals from an entirely different culture. Our relationship developed as I conducted visits for these students to a school in outer London. This professional relationship has been mutually beneficial.

### **The Institution-focused Study**

My Institution-focused study (IFS) was a pilot for my doctoral thesis. It concerned the work of another group of stakeholders, namely school governors, and specifically interrogated whether they felt competent and confident to undertake one of their most important tasks, that of appointing a new headteacher. It was entitled, 'Headteacher Recruitment and Selection: The Governors' Perspective.' The IFS gave me the

opportunity to practise my skills in interviewing and confirmed my preference for this type of research method. It also provided me with an insight into the work of governing bodies from the perspective of the governors themselves. During my conversations with two Chairs of Governors, the need for a model to support governors in the recruitment and selection process was raised: this was followed up in my thesis.

As a result of my IFS, two important matters arose. Firstly, I was introduced to interesting professional and academic literature on the subject of the urban context and its implications for urban leadership (e.g. Brighouse and Fullick, 2007; Riley, 2008). These were of immense value to my thesis. Secondly, I realised that the suggestions I had produced as a result of my findings in the IFS which were designed to support governing bodies in the process of headteacher recruitment and selection were of limited usefulness even though they had been well-received by the Local Authority. This was because my suggestions were based on the findings from one school and since the Chair of Governors in this school worked in a branch of education, she was more knowledgeable than many other Chairs. Consequently my suggestions did not cater for the needs of the majority. This was therefore a situation that I needed to address when undertaking my thesis.

I took the opportunity to present the findings from my IFS at a Poster Conference at the Institute of Education. This experience was invaluable because the majority of attendees at the conference were unfamiliar with my subject. Hence detailed discussions with staff and fellow students helped me to sharpen my thinking and clarify my proposals for my thesis.

### **The Doctoral Thesis**

My doctoral thesis, entitled, 'Headteacher Recruitment and Selection in an Urban Context: Realities in Practice', brought together my interests in leadership, the urban context and the role of stakeholders within the educational process. Its greater length

provided the space for me to interrogate different academic perspectives within these fields. My chosen subject also led me to consider the theoretical and practical aspects of a different field, that relating to the advertising of posts and the selection of candidates. This was made possible through visits to libraries within Higher Education establishments and professional conversations with colleagues with training in recruitment advertising and in Human Resources. This experience has greatly enhanced my professional practice. It has made me aware of relevant legislation and policies such as those concerning Equal Opportunities and because of this I have been in a better position to support individual teachers, governing bodies and whole schools. By critically evaluating the process of headteacher recruitment and selection within three different urban settings, I have been able to compare the ways in which the process was enacted within and between the schools and reflect upon the causes of these differences. This has put me in a stronger position than the one I had reached at the end of the IFS and as a result I am confident that the elements of an 'Effective Practice Model' that I have identified as a result of my findings in this thesis will be able to be used by governors in all schools to support them in the most crucial aspect of their role, that of recruiting and selecting a headteacher.

## **Summary**

My learning experiences during the EdD course of study have been many and varied and frequently challenging. My engagement with different professional and academic literature has deepened and broadened my thinking and my interactions with colleagues from different disciplines and with different backgrounds have added a new dimension to my professional knowledge and subsequently to my professional practice. My studies have increased my interest in equity and social justice and my knowledge of research methods has given me the tools to critically examine issues that concern me deeply. Perhaps most importantly, I have, through the EdD,

developed a greater understanding and appreciation of what it means to be a professionally reflective researcher.

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I am also grateful to my husband, my sister and several good friends who were constant sources of support and encouragement, to those colleagues who have maintained interest in my work since its inception and to Professor Gemma Moss whose perceptive guidance made the completion of this study possible.

This study arose from a life-long interest in education within urban areas that are characterised by social disadvantage. It has been a privilege to work with inspirational teachers and support staff who have been determined to provide children and young people in those areas with the opportunity to succeed educationally and a real joy to see many of those youngsters grasp that opportunity and reach heights that many would have thought impossible to attain. This study is dedicated to them all.

## Declaration

I declare that except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Word Count (exclusive of the list of references and appendices but inclusive of footnotes, figures and charts) 45,518

Signed *MBarrowman*



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## List of Abbreviations

**DCSF** Department for Children, Schools and Families

**DES** Department of Education and Science

**DfE** Department for Education

**DFEE** Department for Education and Employment

**DfES** Department for Education and Skills

**EDS** Education Data Surveys

**NASG** National Association of School Governors

**NCSL** National College for School Leadership

**NGA** National Governors' Association

**OECD** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**Ofsted** Office for Standards in Education

**SIP** School Improvement Partner

**STPC** School Teachers' Pay and Conditions

**TES** Times Educational Supplement

## Chapter One

### Introduction and Rationale

This thesis focuses on the role of governors in the recruitment and selection of primary headteachers in England. It concentrates on schools in urban contexts, specifically areas of social deprivation, where there is a compelling need to 'close the gap in achievement [in education]' between youngsters in those areas and other young people (Bell, 2003). It pays particular attention to primary schools within this context because it is here that my personal and professional interests lie and it is also here that evidence suggests the greatest difficulties are experienced in appointing new headteachers (NCSL, 2008(a)).

My decision as a researcher to explore the headteacher appointment process in urban schools stemmed from the values concerning social justice that I have espoused in my professional career. I have a particular interest in ensuring that the children who live in areas characterised by social and educational disadvantage are provided with the best opportunities to succeed educationally. My view is that the headteacher plays a crucial role in achieving this goal, this position being supported by academic literature (e.g. Brown, 2004; Emery and Riley, 2007). As a researcher and a professional, I became interested in the ways in which schools undertake the headteacher appointment process and decided to ascertain if research could play a role in helping schools appoint the best headteacher they could.

Unlike the situation in some other EU countries (OECD, 2008), the responsibility for the appointment of a headteacher in England resides with a school's governing body. The headteacher appointment process is a rare experience for all governors and may raise a range of new challenges, for example knowing if they should purchase specialist services (TES, 2011) and how they should use them. A preliminary review of the literature suggested that little attention had been paid to how governors in urban

contexts undertake the task of appointing a headteacher and to the kinds of support they require. I therefore hoped that by undertaking research into this area I would be able to devise some practical recommendations that would help school governors execute the task well.

I would not claim that the work of governing bodies within urban areas is qualitatively different from the work of all other governing bodies. However, previous experience has indicated that governors within areas of socio-economic deprivation do encounter particular difficulties when they are seeking to appoint a headteacher and may be least well-prepared to carry out this task. My aim was therefore to create something from my research that would be of practical use to those governors who serve schools within the most challenging urban areas. Such a goal is very much in line with my values. Thus, in essence, to use the eloquent words of Bassey (1999:90), my study 'reflects a partisanship which derives from the social identity and values of the researcher.'

In addition to my personal reasons for conducting this study, there are many and varied reasons why the recruitment and selection of a headteacher is a key theoretical and professional issue to explore in urban contexts. A brief review of three different issues raised in the literature will be discussed to examine why this might be so

### **The Role of the Headteacher in School Effectiveness and School Improvement**

Perhaps the most important theoretical and professional reason for studying the appointment of headteachers stems from the findings of recent research that showed that headteachers are rated as having the greatest (positive and negative) influence in **all** schools (Leithwood et al., 2006). It follows, therefore, that irrespective of the type of school and irrespective of the pattern of leadership adopted within the school,

whether it is vested in a few or distributed amongst many, the position of the headteacher as leader is of seminal importance.

The relationship between the quality of a school's leadership and its success has been well documented. For example, in his annual report 1999/2000, Mike Tomlinson, the then Chief Inspector of Schools, stated:

The importance of high-quality leadership cannot be over-estimated.

There is also clear empirical evidence that professional leadership is a key determinant of school effectiveness and school improvement (e.g. Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore, 1995; Harris, Day and Hadfield, 2003; Benn, 2007). Moreover, as Emery and Riley (2007:169) reported, 'Leadership has come to be viewed as an important vehicle for closing the gap' [between the achievement of young people in deprived areas and others]. In the light of these statements, therefore, the selection of a headteacher is seen as crucial to the success of all schools, this being of particular importance for schools in areas of disadvantage.

### **The Implications of Headteacher Shortage**

Nationally, the recruitment of headteachers is problematic. More than 10,000 headteachers are expected to retire within the next five years<sup>1</sup> but fewer people are applying to become heads, reportedly because of issues such as 'increasing bureaucracy', 'an aggressive system of accountability and assessment' (Brookes, 2007:2) and lack of pay differentials. The result is that the number of primary headteacher posts that remain unfilled after the first advertisement has reached 40 per cent, this being the highest figure recorded since the survey of unfilled posts began 26 years ago (EDS, 2011). It should be noted, however, that this is the national figure for England and Wales and, although precise up-to-date figures are not

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<sup>1</sup> TES 29.1.10

available for areas of social deprivation, research conducted on behalf of the NCSL (NCSL 2008(a)) indicates that primary schools within urban areas are more likely to experience recruitment difficulties. Clearly this is a cause for concern because of the key role headteachers play in establishing educational success.

There have been a number of suggestions of ways in which the situation regarding headteacher shortage could be addressed. These range from the practical approach of seeking to accommodate the needs of all potential heads, particularly females who may have caring responsibilities (NCSL, 2008(b)), to the more academic approach of exploring the possibilities of 'growing one's own leaders' (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006: 270). However, whilst the more immediate needs of all potential heads could be accommodated through flexible working practices, the notion of identifying and developing leadership talent (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006) will take time to bear fruit.

### **The Responsibilities of School Governors in Appointing Headteachers**

As I explain in detail in Chapter Two, there have been many changes to the roles of both headteachers and school governors since the Education Reform Act (DES, 1988) made provision for the devolution of responsibility for the local management of schools. As a result of these changes, governors' duties and responsibilities have progressively increased (DCSF, 2010: 8-10).

One of the new responsibilities that have been handed to governors is that of appointing a headteacher. The School Standards and Framework Act (DfEE, 1998) first made provision for this responsibility to be shared between school governors and the Local Authority. However, in 2003 governors were handed sole responsibility for this task; the Local Authority maintaining just an advisory role (DfES, 2004(d), chapter 9:2). This change in the legislation has had significant implications for the process of headteacher recruitment and selection.

School governors are volunteers and, generally speaking, are representatives of the local community. As important stakeholders, they bring a variety of experiences, skills and local knowledge to the governing body. They also constitute an important element of the democratic process. Yet, many have little experience of current educational policy and practices and no experience at all of appointing a headteacher (Martin and Holt, 2002). The implications of governors' voluntary status and lack of experience are important. Some governors have insufficient time to undertake selection training and can offer limited time to the task itself due to other responsibilities, these issues being compounded within the urban context because of the large number of vacancies on governing bodies (Rollock, 2009). Governors may lack the appropriate skills as well as knowledge of current equality and employment issues. Some may also lack confidence in the process. This was demonstrated in a 2004 survey undertaken on behalf of the National Association of School Governors<sup>2</sup> which found that only 62 per cent of governors who responded to questions about governors' responsibilities expressed confidence in the appointment of staff, this figure having dropped from 65 per cent in 1999 (NASG, 2004). In addition, within working-class settings in particular, the teaching profession has tended to stand apart from parents and the local community because of teachers' claimed 'special form of understanding' (Shulman, 1987:8). Consequently, many teachers have not welcomed the contributions of these groups to educational activities and their position on school governing bodies is often questioned (Barrowman, 2005). As a result, many working-class parent and community governors may be denied access to the information and resources that would enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively (Deem and Brehony, 1991). This could include the appointment of a headteacher.

Official documents suggest that governors may possess other skills not specifically associated with the duties of governing bodies that could be effectively transferred to

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<sup>2</sup> Now the National Governors' Association

new situations (e.g. DfES, 2004(c):8). However, these may not compensate for governors' lack of the knowledge and skills needed for headteacher recruitment and selection. Moreover, as Hughes, Jewson and Unwin (2007) reported, group processes and group dynamics affect individual members' participation and performance within groups. Working within the unfamiliar situation of a formal selection panel to perform an unfamiliar task is not ideal and may impact upon governors' preparedness and ability to engage in the headteacher recruitment and selection process.

### **The Focus of my Pilot Study and the Present Study**

In the light of my personal interests and the professional challenges and concerns arising from the above, I undertook a pilot study into the recruitment and selection of headteachers within one Local Authority. Findings from this study indicated that even though the headteacher appointment process appeared straightforward and guidelines had been produced to support governors in its enactment (NCSL 2006(b)), the implementation of the process could vary and seemed to be contingent upon an amalgam of diverse meanings and interpretations relating to the procedures, roles and responsibilities. The initial study indicated that these are constructed both individually and collectively by governors.

As a result of this pilot study, I produced guidelines to support the headteacher recruitment and selection process. However, even though these guidelines were welcomed by the Local Authority, I came to realise that they did not cater for the needs of the majority of schools because they were largely based on research I had undertaken in one school that was untypical since its Chair of Governors worked in a branch of education. Additionally, because this work was confined to one Local Authority, it left an important unanswered question concerning any connection that might exist between a school's context and the implementation of the headteacher recruitment and selection process.

This present study therefore addresses the question of whether there is a connection between a school's context and the way in which the headteacher recruitment and selection process is enacted. It also seeks to redress the shortcomings of the guidelines that I produced as a result of my pilot study. It looks in detail at the ways in which the process of headteacher recruitment and selection was interpreted and executed by the governors in three primary schools within different urban contexts and examines the variances in practice within and between these schools. By considering the factors that influenced the way in which the process was enacted, this study investigates the possibility of identifying the elements of a model relating to the appointment of headteachers for all schools, particularly those within urban contexts. This was the main aim and purpose of this study.

I also hoped that my study could supplement a gap in the research that was undertaken into the headteacher recruitment and selection process on behalf of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL 2006(a)). Here, the researchers found that the literature on the subject of recruitment is 'expansive' but there is 'less empirical evidence on what works in appointment and selection' (NCSL 2006(a):61). Even more importantly, the research made no specific reference to the challenges of the urban context that can impact on school leadership such as the transience of the school population (Riley, Hesketh, Rafferty and Taylor-Moore, 2005) and economic and social disadvantage (Lupton, 2004). This study therefore contributes to filling this gap in the research by focusing on the process of headteacher recruitment and selection specifically within the urban context. It also enhances the existing empirical evidence on what works in selection by paying particular attention to selection practices that the governors deemed successful in their own context.

In seeking to achieve the aims of this study, I have focused on the following research questions:

- **How do governors formulate understandings of the process of headteacher recruitment and selection in urban schools?**
- **Are there common factors that influence the enactment of the process in different settings?**
- **Can an analysis of the process in different research sites suggest a model to support governors in urban contexts?**

## **Study Overview**

In **Chapter Two** I begin with a detailed review of the theoretical and empirical literature from the field of Education that most closely relates to my study. I also review some of the literature on Marketing and Human Resources that I consulted during the course of the research. I draw out themes from these literatures to indicate why this study is important. This provides a framework for my research. **Chapter Three** continues with a discussion of the methodological approach I adopted, a description of the research design and operation and an explanation of the methods of data analysis I employed.

In **Chapter Four** the context of the three case-study schools is described. This includes a brief description of the local demographics of each school and details of how each governing body functioned and the way in which each selection panel was formed. This is followed by a detailed account of the way in which each selection panel defined their school's needs as they embarked upon the process of recruiting a new headteacher. In **Chapter Five** the ways in which the governors sought to attract potential candidates to apply for the post at their school are explained. This includes an examination of the advertisements and the contents of each school's application pack. In **Chapter Six** the methods the governors used to decide who should be appointed are expounded. This includes a discussion of the tasks the candidates were asked to perform and an examination of both the formal interview questions and the

methods the members of the selection panel used to record the candidates' responses.

In the final chapter (**Chapter Seven**), I reflect upon the ways in which the process of headteacher recruitment and selection was enacted in each school and compare my findings with the official advice as represented in the guidance (NCSL 2006(b)) and with other relevant literature. To conclude this chapter and this study, I offer my suggestions for the ingredients of an 'Effective Practice Model' that I have created from my research findings. This will enhance the available literature within the field of headteacher recruitment and selection and serve to support governors when they need to appoint a new headteacher for their school.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

In the absence of literature specifically relating to the subject of the recruitment and selection of headteachers for primary schools in urban contexts, I have identified seven areas of theoretical and empirical literature that have informed my research. These seven areas of literature facilitated the development of a framework for my study and are reviewed in this chapter.

The first area comprises the relevant policy and academic literature on **the changing role of the headteacher**. The second area comprises work on schools in **urban contexts**. This provides a 'rich theorisation' (Wodak and Meyer, 2009:169) of the study's setting and the theoretical field within which this study is located. The third area concerns the role of **school governors** as responsibility for the process of recruiting and selecting headteachers currently rests with them. The fourth area considers **succession planning and leadership talent management**. This section is included as it addresses headteacher recruitment and selection from within this broader context.

The fifth area focuses on the **criteria for the selection of an urban headteacher** whilst the sixth area focuses on the **methods of advertising posts and selecting candidates**. This body of work sets the background to the choices governors have to make as they execute their responsibilities in relation to the recruitment and selection of their headteacher. The seventh and last area focuses on the **guidance that was produced by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL, 2006(b))** to support governors as they undertake the headteacher recruitment and selection process.

## **The Changing Role of the Headteacher**

Traditionally, the headteachers' role in English schools related to teaching and the curriculum (Webb and Vulliamy, 1996). Even when additional responsibilities associated with the post-war increase in pupil numbers and size of schools expanded their workload, the centrality of teaching within their role remained. This was detailed in the document 'Primary Education' (Ministry of Education, 1959: 92) as follows:

... whatever the difficulties, the Head's own teaching function is so important that he would be most unwise to neglect it.

Headteachers' responsibility for the curriculum within their schools remained largely unchallenged until the mid 1970s when serious questions concerning education were raised. For example Dearden (1976) questioned whether there could be any justification for schools, led by the headteacher, to continue to determine their own aims and retain the degree of autonomy they enjoyed. Concurrently, politicians such as James Callaghan were expressing dissatisfaction with education standards and the prevailing system itself (Callaghan, 1976). The general level of unease increased as the buoyancy of the economy decreased and resources were diminished. Their use, therefore, had to be maximised and value for money was demanded. As Dearden (1976:20) succinctly commented,

Pupil performance per pound spent is the new message.

Within the 1980s, the 'twin expectations of value for money and success for all' (Ansell, 2004: 2) became increasingly significant features of government thinking and comprised the basic principles upon which the Education Reform Act (DES, 1988) was established. This Act made provision for a national curriculum and the statutory assessment of pupils thus giving parents, as consumers, a yardstick whereby they could judge the productivity of their children's schools in terms of learning. The Act also made provision for the devolution of responsibility for the local management of

schools. This gave governors responsibility for finance and related matters, much of this, in turn, being delegated to headteachers. Under this new system, headteachers became, on the one hand, considerably more autonomous in terms of financial matters while on the other hand, they became subject to an increased level of surveillance and accountability. This increased further in the 1990s through the introduction of a national inspection regime and the publication of the results of statutory tests (Simkins, 2000). As Day et al. (2011: 224) posited, 'This autonomy was tempered by the highly developed national standards framework that held them [headteachers] accountable for school performance and subject to significant areas of national prescription.'

Further policy changes have continued to alter the context of school leadership (Crow, 2006). For example, market principles have been introduced to education whereby the private sector is invited to tender for services previously offered exclusively by the Local Authority such as cleaning, catering and human resources management. Also the marketisation of schools has gathered pace, in that individual institutions are adopting 'increasingly promotional strategies to achieve market-advantage, establish a brand image and attract parents' (Connell, 1998: 92). More recently, legislation has been passed to incorporate the 'Every Child Matters' agenda (DfES, 2004(a)) into the schools' work. Additionally, legislation has been passed for the establishment of academies and free schools (DfE, 2011(b)). These increase school diversity and enhance the choices available to parents.

Many writers have discussed the effects that the changing context has had on school leadership. Among these, the Report of the Working Group (DfES, 1999: ii) stated the following:

The enormous development in the role of the principal following societal, legislative and educational changes involves increasing responsibilities and wider aspects of the role, leading to new challenges and new tensions in carrying it out.

Even though this report was published more than a decade ago, it still has relevance within the discourse of twenty-first century leadership. I have selected examples from the literature that illustrate the range and complexity of the tasks a headteacher has to undertake and the challenges they face.

First and most importantly, as Gunter (2012: 18) stated, central government in the form of New Labour developed a 'leadership of schools' *game* wherein headteachers were required to deliver nationally prescribed 'educational products and processes.' This left little time for initiatives based on headteachers' own professional knowledge and expertise. Secondly, the increase in administrative tasks associated with the management role has led to less time for the professional leadership role (Whitaker, 2002). Headteachers have to 'juggle for competing priorities' (Southworth, 1998: 314) and manage the tensions created by their sometimes conflicting responsibilities (Jones, 1999). Thirdly, as Grace (1997: 314) suggested, headteachers have to choose between following the path of 'consumer accountability mediated by a relationship with an educational market' or 'democratic accountability mediated by the whole community of citizens' since the aims of the former are not compatible with the latter. Fourthly, headteachers have to find a 'balance between standards and welfare' (DfES, 2007(b): 161). This means that they are asked to 'retain a rigorous focus on raising pupil attainment' (Day et al., 2011: 227) while at the same time ensuring that the five outcomes of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda (DfES, 2004(a)) receive adequate attention. Fifthly, headteachers have to manage the school diversity and parental choice agendas, the challenge being to 'make sense of these initiatives at their local level, engaging with the broader system in a meaningful way while protecting their students, staff and school ethos from unco-ordinated or even unnecessary change' (Day et al., 2011: 228). Lastly, headteachers have to adjust to the 'more diverse student demographics ... the knowledge explosion and the pervasive influence of technology' (Dimmock, 2012: 19) that are typical features of the

twenty-first century. Inevitably, the context of education will continue to change and with it the challenges facing school leaders (NCSL, 2008(b)).

The emphasis on leadership in the literature indicates that not only has the headteachers' role changed, it has also become increasingly significant to the perceived success of a school. This is illustrated by the change of tone in the literature. Whereas the report entitled 'Excellence in Schools' (DfEE, 1997) suggested that the quality of a Head often makes the difference between the success or failure of a school, more recent literature makes more decisive links between a school's leadership and its performance. As Fullan (2002: 1) commented:

The more that large-scale sustainable reform becomes the agenda, the more that leadership becomes the key.

Alongside others in the school effectiveness and improvement literature (e.g. Stoll and Myers, 1998; Harris and Chapman, 2002; Nicolaidou and Ainscow, 2004; Harris, 2009; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009(b)), Fullan's work makes clear that the quality of leadership is critical to a school's success. Emery and Riley (2007) also recognise the importance of leadership in closing the gap in achievement between schools in urban schools and others in less challenging contexts as noted above in Chapter One. In seeking to appoint the best headteacher possible, therefore, it is necessary to consider whether they can deliver the quality of leadership demanded. This places the subject of the headteacher appointment process at the heart of the theoretical fields that relate to school success, viz. school effectiveness and school improvement (Harris, 2005). Yet whilst much has been written on the role of the head and the qualities they need to bring to that role if they are to lead a successful school, much less has been made of the crucial part governors play in appointing them. In addition, much attention has been paid to school organisation, types of leadership and internal practice that may influence school effectiveness and improvement (e.g. Reynolds and

Teddlie, 2000; Harris, 2009) yet little attention has been paid to the wider contextual circumstances within which schools operate (Thrupp and Lupton, 2006). This study is constructed to address these gaps in the research agenda accordingly. It will be of interest to all who are working to secure effective leadership for twenty-first century schools.

To complement the many large-scale and abstract studies that have been undertaken within the fields of school effectiveness and school improvement (e.g. Lee, Smith and Croninger, 1997; Fullan, 2000; Palardy, 2007) my study looks through a close-up lens at three different situations in which new heads were appointed in order to generalise from what happened in practice and draw insights for the literature. The research makes a contribution to school effectiveness and school improvement by rescaling these issues to a micro-level as a first step and then generating practical ideas that can be used to support the headteacher appointment process in more diverse contexts. The role of governors in the appointment of headteachers should be a fundamental element of the school effectiveness and school improvement agenda.

### **The Urban Context for Education**

Literature on the subject of the urban context for education is extensive. It describes the diversity of cities, documenting their benefits and opportunities as well as their challenges (e.g. Thrupp, 1999; Harris, 2002; Emery and Riley, 2007; Riley, 2008). It also provides a large amount of statistical information about the demographics of urban areas. However, within this literature, the concept of urban education is less well-defined. This is because, as Goodyear et al. (2012: 20) posited, it is a 'fuzzy concept' in that 'its boundaries are not fixed and most of its features are also apparent to some degree in categories that are "not urban education"'.

In seeking to illuminate urban education as a concept, Goodyear et al. (2012) undertook a research study in which 37 urban education experts and 20 rural

education experts across the USA were asked to identify prototypic features of urban and rural education from a list of 55 items. The results showed that experts in the field could discriminate 26 of the items as prototypic features of urban education, 14 as prototypic of rural education and 15 as peripheral. This prompted the researchers to conclude the following:

Whereas experts may struggle to define urban education, they *do* recognise it when they see it.

(Goodyear et al., 2012: 26)

The researchers also reported that several respondents had commented that the list of urban education features 'seemed grounded in a deficit model' (Goodyear et al., 2012: 27). This observation seems to reflect the majority of the literature in this field. Whereas some writers note the positive features of urban education (e.g. Riley, (2008: 32) highlighted 'the creativity, the energy ... of the children; the rich cultural understanding and experiences'), the majority emphasise the challenges associated with schools serving those parts of cities and other conurbations that are affected by social and economic disadvantage (e.g. Thornbury, 1978; Lupton and Sullivan, 2007; Rury, 2012). Over time, the challenges associated with urban education have tended to become its defining factor and reciprocally the most common defining factor of the urban school (Forsyth and Tallerico, 1993; Riley, Hesketh, Rafferty and Taylor-Moore, 2005; Ainscow and West, 2006). Based on the above, the term 'urban school' is defined within my study as a school that serves children and families who live in urban areas characterised by disadvantage.

Ahtaridou and Hopkins (2012: 136) have identified the following three broad categories of challenge that urban schools face. These are in addition to the challenges faced by all headteachers noted in the previous section.

### **1. Challenges arising from the children they serve**

These include very low levels of attainment on entry, a high proportion of

pupils from minority ethnic groups, very many of whom speak English as an additional language and high levels of pupil mobility (DfES, 2004(e))

## ***2. Challenges arising from the neighbourhood they serve***

These were described by Ofsted (2000: 10) in the following way:

They have in common a preponderance of families on low income, in poor housing and with little experience of education beyond compulsory schooling ... many are in low-paid manual or service jobs or unemployed. In some cases families are extremely troubled.

## ***3. Challenges arising from within the school***

These include staffing problems, behaviour problems, high rates of unauthorised absence and pupil exclusion, low levels of parental involvement (NCSL, 2004).

Lupton (2004) also looked at the challenges facing urban schools and focused on the influence that 'disadvantaged contexts of schools' can have on classroom practice, teaching resources and school organisation. The following summarises the ways in which she found this influence was manifested:

- The extreme learning needs of the lowest attainers
- The material poverty of families which impacts on the core curriculum and extra-curricular activities
- The emotional climate and disturbed behaviour of pupils that affect the way teachers have to work
- Low attendance by pupils and reluctant participation by parents in consultation evenings and parents' meetings

(Lupton, 2004: 8-11)

Leading a school within such circumstances is, as Keys, Sharp, Green and Grayson (2003: 20) reported, 'clearly a complex and difficult enterprise.' There are increased job pressures, demands to co-ordinate 'non-instructional needs' such as providing breakfast, the necessity to 'mediate helplessness' regarding lack of jobs and increasing crime in addition to managing diminishing resources (Portin, 2000: 500). And above all, there is the imperative to 'ensure the progression of the challenging

groups of students they serve' (Ahtaridou and Hopkins, 2012: 136). This latter statement specifically reinforces the urban headteachers' position at the heart of school effectiveness and school improvement and the challenging role they hold in a policy environment that makes high demands on them. Likewise, current policy assumes that leadership of schools, especially those within an urban context, is crucial (NCSL, 2004; Wilshaw, 2012). Yet the vital need for school governors to undertake the task of appointing a headteacher well attracts far less attention from policy makers or within the academic literature.

### **School Governors**

The present system of governing schools has evolved over time as schools' composition has changed. School governance has changed too in response to the political agenda of the time (Baron and Howell, 1968; Aldrich and Leighton, 1985; Sharp, 1995). An examination of the Education Acts that have been passed since 1944, the year that provision was made for primary and secondary schools to become separate entities, gives a picture of the changes in responsibilities that have been handed to governors by successive pieces of legislation. Since the passing of the 1998 Act, two official reports on school governance have been published (DfES, 2004(c); DCSF, 2010) setting out information on the work of governing bodies at the present time. The most important research undertaken on the challenges schools face in recruiting governors who can take on this new range of tasks is by Farrell (2000; 2005). Two further studies (Dean et al., 2007; Rollock, 2009) were of particular interest to this enquiry because they reported on the challenges faced by the governing bodies of schools which serve disadvantaged areas.

Most of the literature that has been published in the last 25 years concerns the changing roles and increasing responsibilities of governors (e.g. Maclure, 1988; Baginsky, Baker and Cleave, 1991; Thody, 1994; Walters and Richardson, 1997;

Lingard, Nixon and Ranson, 2008; Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011). There is, however, little available literature concerning the ways in which governors have managed to perform one of their most important tasks, that of recruiting and selecting a headteacher. It is this gap that my study was designed to fill.

To understand the changing role of school governors and the part they play in the appointment of headteachers, I have organised the remainder of this section under four headings, viz. 'Legislation since 1944', 'Governing Body Constitution', 'Governing Body Membership' and 'Governing Body Roles and Responsibilities.' I begin by providing a résumé of those elements of the educational legislation since 1944 that are relevant to the focus of this study.

### ***Legislation since 1944***

In addition to making provision for the separation of primary and secondary schools as noted above, the passing of the **Education Act, 1944** (Ministry of Education, 1944), provided for 'the constitution of a body of managers' for every primary school within the maintained sector (Section 17 (1)). Each 'body' was required to comprise at least six managers, all of whom would be appointed by the Local Authority (Section 18). The 1944 Act also made provision for several schools to be grouped together under one body of managers (Section 20). This situation applied until **1980** when, under the terms of the **Education Act** of that year (DES, 1980), the practice of grouping schools was curtailed (Section 3). More importantly, the title 'manager' was replaced by 'governor' (Section 1(1)). As Sharp (1995) observed, this title was previously reserved for secondary and higher education but was now applied equally to primary schools to reflect the increasing responsibilities associated with school governance. This system continues to the present day.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the education debate became focused on standards and the need to change the system of education to 'conform to the principles of choice and

accountability' (Rao, 1990: 5). There were also increasing tensions between the ideologies of central and local government (Maclure, 1988). Against this background, the next two pieces of legislation that impacted on the work of governing bodies were passed in quick succession. The most important provision of the first of these, the **Education Act No. 2 (1986)** (DES, 1986), was for the composition of governing bodies to be changed (Part II). Two years later, **The Education Reform Act (1988)** (DES, 1988) made two significant provisions. First, it handed responsibility to the Secretary of State to establish a national curriculum and a national system of assessment (Section 4 - (1)). Second, it provided for 'the delegation by the [local] authority of the management of a school's budget share for any year to the governing body of the school ...' (Section 33 – (2b)). By making the above provisions, this Act introduced limitations on the powers of local education authorities and gave greater autonomy to schools and governing bodies (Maclure, 1988; Rao, 1990). This marked a significant milestone in the evolution of school governance.

Ten years later, the **1998 School Standards and Framework Act** (DfEE, 1998), attempted to clarify what governors should be doing and served to rationalise and legitimise the variations in practice that had developed since the passing of the 1988 Act (Martin and Holt, 2002). Set within the context of the government's drive to 'improve schools and pupil performance' (Martin and Holt, 2002: 13), this Act made the following provision:

Subject to any other statutory provision, the conduct of a maintained school shall be under the direction of a school's governing body.

(DfEE, 1998: Chapter III, Section 38 – (1))

The Act also made provision for regulations to 'set out terms of reference for governing bodies of maintained schools' and 'define the respective roles and responsibilities of governing bodies and headteachers of such schools' (Section 38 – (3a and 3b)). Such regulations came into force on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2000 (DfEE, 2000).

Apart from requiring governing bodies to establish a written performance management policy (Regulation 9), the Regulations did not give governors new duties. Rather, they clarified the governing body's role, describing it as 'largely strategic' (Regulation 4 – (1)) and detailed the activities governors should undertake in 'establishing a strategic framework for the school' (Regulation 4 – (2)). The Regulations also stated that the headteacher should have responsibility for the 'internal organisation, management and control of the school and the implementation of the strategic framework established by the governing body' (Regulation 5 – (1)) thereby confirming that the headteachers' role was 'operational' (Martin and Holt, 2002: 15). Moreover, as demonstrated in the following extract, the Regulations attempted to clarify the governing body's relationship with the headteacher.

The governing body shall act as a 'critical friend' to the headteacher, that is to say, they shall support the headteacher in the performance of his functions and give him constructive criticism.

(DfEE, 2000: Regulation 4 – (5))

In the above overview of the legislation I have provided an explanation of the ways in which the current legislative framework within which governing bodies operate has evolved. There have been further additions and amendments since 1998 but these have only resulted in one substantial change, that of provision being made for sole responsibility for the appointment of headteachers to be handed to governing bodies (DfES, 2002). I now look in detail at three aspects of governing bodies that are particularly important within this study, namely constitution, membership and roles and responsibilities.

### ***Governing Body Constitution***

As noted earlier, the basis of the present composition of governing bodies in all maintained schools was determined by the 1986 Education Act No. 2 (DES, 1986). Under the terms of that Act, four categories of governor were established - parent,

school staff, Local Authority and co-opted - the purpose of the latter being to provide opportunities to associate industry and commerce with the work of the school. These categories were of roughly equal proportions so no one group predominated and their numbers, ranging from 9 to 19, were determined by the size of the school.

Two minor variations were made under the terms of the Education Act 2002 (DfES, 2002). Firstly, schools were granted flexibility to appoint associate governors who were able to bring additional expertise on to the governing body. Secondly, in 2005, the title 'co-opted governor' was changed to 'community governor.' This reflected evidence that many co-opted governors did not come from business and industry (Earley, 1994) and underlined the government's intention that a school should be served by people who live or work within that community (Phillips, 2008). In addition, the Education Act 2002 required governing bodies to reconstitute and choose their own size by the end of the school year 2006. Regulations for membership of these bodies within community schools are shown in Figure One. These regulations guarantee membership for the various groups of stakeholders and provide the opportunity for each school to exercise flexibility. However, as discussed below, this model can be difficult to achieve.

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At least one third parent governors</li> <li>▪ At least two but no more than one third staff governors including the headteacher (if they wish to be a governor or not)<br/>(If 3 or more staff governors, one must be a member of the support staff)</li> <li>• One fifth Local Authority governors</li> <li>• One fifth or more community governors</li> </ul> |
|---|

**Figure One: Composition of Governing Bodies in England since 2006**

### ***Governing Body Membership***

According to the latest figures, school governors form the largest group of volunteers in the country – approximately 370,000 in number<sup>3</sup>. Recent research indicates that the

<sup>3</sup> Figures obtained from 'Volunteering England 2010' (<http://www.volunteeringengland.org.uk/>)

main motivators for these people to give up their free time and become involved in the work of governing bodies are: 'involvement in the school community, working with and supporting staff, encouraging school success, pupil welfare, giving something back to society, being a link with the wider community, their own development and the use of their skills' (Phillips, 2008: 19). However, despite the positive aspects of involving volunteers in school governance, the literature indicates there are difficulties in recruiting governors, 'this problem being most acute in inner-city areas' (Ofsted, 2002: 4). At any given time, 10-15 per cent of the places remain vacant nationally<sup>4</sup>. Whilst there is a divergence of opinion concerning which category of governor has the highest level of vacancies (for example, Bird (1989) suggested co-opted governors whereas Scanlon, Earley and Evans (1999) suggested Local Authority governors followed by co-opted governors), there is consensus amongst these researchers that recruitment and retention of governors within poorer, urban areas is particularly difficult (Rollock, 2009). This is supported by recently published national statistics that quote the vacancy rate in some inner-city areas as 30 per cent or more<sup>5</sup>. Precise reasons for this level of vacancies are unclear. However, findings from recent research suggest the problem is two-fold. Firstly, because of the nature of schools in challenging circumstances and the level of local and national attention they may receive, governance can be very demanding (Dean et al., 2007). This may deter prospective governors from volunteering because of the level of expertise and amount of time required to execute the requisite tasks. Secondly, as Dean et al. (2007: 7) also suggested, 'if schools serving disadvantaged areas have a generally low-attaining student population, they may also have a parent body where few people have a professional background or feel inclined to become involved in the technicalities of governance.' This situation can be further exacerbated by a lack of professional people living in the locality and few businesses or other organisations to which

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.volunteering.org.uk>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.youthfunding.org.uk>

schools can look for volunteers (Dean et al., 2007). Thus, shortage of governors and/or shortage of expertise are likely to be problems within urban areas. They are significant issues within this study in that they impacted on the way in which the process of headteacher recruitment and selection was undertaken in one of my case-study schools.

The literature also explores the representativeness of governing bodies. In an attempt to remedy the shortage of governors, the 'One Stop Shop' was established. This was set up to recruit volunteers from business with appropriate skills and experience, the purpose being to 'add value to the Governing Bodies of those inner-city schools facing the greatest challenges' (Adams and Punter, 2008: 14). This organisation has had some success. However, the result means that the composition of some governing bodies is 'significantly different from the composition of local communities' (Dean et al., 2007: 7). Within the urban context, the issue of the under-representation of black and minority ethnic groups is seen as particularly challenging. Across London, 23 per cent of school governors are from black or minority ethnic backgrounds despite the fact that almost half of all pupils in the capital's schools are from those backgrounds<sup>6</sup>. However, this is only the aggregate picture since in some urban schools the proportion of black and minority ethnic pupils is over 90 per cent but governors from those groups are few (Rollock, 2009). This presents a situation which may not do justice to the children and their schools because governors may be asked to make decisions in the interests of children whose culture they do not fully understand (Open Society Institute, 2005). Such circumstances conflict with the democratic ideal of appointing governors from a local community to represent that community and facilitate engagement with the local school and other public services, thereby promoting community cohesion (Ofsted, 2009). Whilst this is a serious issue

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>

deserving research attention, it is not pursued here since it is not the focus of this study.

### ***Governing Body Roles and Responsibilities***

Within the relevant literature (e.g. Baginsky, Baker and Cleave, 1991; Martin, Taylor and Rashid, 1995; Farrell, 2005; Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011) there is general agreement that the provisions of the government legislation since 1986 have combined to make more demands on governors than ever before. I now consider a selection of official reports and research findings to determine how governors are coping with some of the vast number of duties that have been assigned to them.

The document entitled 'Governing the School of the Future' (DfES, 2004(c)) reported on a range of aspects of a governing body's work and concluded that they generally 'do a good job' (DfES, 2004(c): 6). The report also highlighted the responsibilities in which governors were less successful. These related to the governing body's main strategic function as set out in the Regulations (DfES, 2000: 4 – (1)) and can be seen in the following extracts:

In all they do, governing bodies need to focus on their strategic role ...

...they are not always as successful as they might be in shaping the direction of the school's work.

(DfES, 2004(c): 6)

This indication that governors may find their strategic role difficult to fulfil is echoed in the research findings of Farrell (2005). From her interviews with 28 school governors in eight schools within two South-Wales local education authorities, the researcher found 'very little evidence that governing bodies are involved in shaping the context, content and conduct of strategy' (Farrell, 2005: 102). In summarising her findings, she stated the following:

The finding of this paper is that the empowerment of governing bodies which has been going on since 1986 has not led to governors having a significant level of involvement in schools ... The evidence in this paper is that governing bodies are only involved in approving decisions taken by professionals within the schools – the lowest level of participation.

(Farrell, 2005: 108)

The above indications that governors are rarely involved in strategic decision-making in their schools are relevant to my study because it was the lack of experience in this area that impacted upon the way in which the governors in two of my case-study schools executed the task of appointing a new headteacher.

A more recent document repeated the earlier conclusion that the majority of governing bodies do a good job (DCSF, 2010). However, this document also noted the following:

There needs to be more clarity concerning the strategic management role of the governing body and the day to day management role of the headteacher to ensure that neither party crosses over into each other's role.

(DCSF, 2010: 3)

Within the relevant literature, the difficulty caused by the lack of differentiation between the roles of the governing body and the headteacher is a frequently-repeated theme (e.g. Thody, 1994; Walters and Richardson, 1997). Some writers such as Martin and Holt (2002: 13) suggest that governors tend to get more involved with non-educational matters than those 'closer to the heart of education' because it is those with which they feel most comfortable. Other documents (e.g. Ofsted, 2002) suggest that some governors are over-dependent on the headteacher to provide information on issues such as how well the school is performing and as a consequence are failing to fulfil their designated role as 'critical friend' (Ofsted, 2002: 16). This indication that governors may be unsure of their position relative to that of the headteacher or uncomfortable with the role they are expected to adopt is important and may indicate

that they are not well-placed to undertake one of their most important tasks, that of appointing a headteacher.

### **Succession Planning and Leadership Talent Management**

In the light of the increasing difficulty in filling headteacher positions, attention has turned towards the subject of succession planning within schools (Southworth, 2006). The relevant literature addresses a specific aspect of this, namely leadership talent management. The main points arising from this literature are considered here.

The decline in the number and quality of applicants for headteacher posts is of increasing concern to all who are working towards school improvement (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; Dimmock, 2012). The shortage of headteacher applicants has been attributed to a number of factors, one of the most compelling arguments being provided by Fullan (2000). He suggested that the shortage was a direct result of the neglect of leadership training and development: hence, he said, 'the need is to pay explicit attention to the cultivation of leadership' (Fullan, 2000: 5). By this, Fullan indicated that schools should be pro-active in identifying and developing leadership talent.

In a study across 70 contextually different schools, Rhodes, Brundrett and Nevill (2008) used focus group interviews and questionnaires to discover headteachers', middle leaders' and classroom teachers' perceptions of leadership talent identification and development. The findings revealed 20 characteristics of leadership talent. When these were placed in rank order according to the number of times they appeared in the respondents' individual selection of the five most important characteristics, the results showed 'people skills', 'communication skills', 'vision' and 'respect of staff' as the key characteristics in leadership talent identification (Rhodes, Brundrett and Nevill, 2008: 328). These results suggest that it is these characteristics that should be identified, fostered and developed to prepare future school leaders.

The findings from the above study (Rhodes, Brundrett and Nevill, 2008) also revealed areas of dissonance within and between the various groups about leadership talent identification. These included the advisability of disclosing one's desire to be considered for promotion and the validity of relying on the headteacher's 'gut feeling' rather than any national standards to assess an individual's leadership potential. The effect of school size upon development opportunities was also an area about which there was considerable variance in opinion. There was, however, greater agreement among all the respondent groups about the factors that aid leadership development. These were identified as 'opportunity created in terms of leadership distribution, work-shadowing and rotating of roles ... mentoring, coaching, closer learning relationships with senior staff and good role-modelling' (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009(a): 394).

The studies discussed above are mainly concerned with the headteachers' role in developing their staff for progression to leadership positions. Explicit attention is not paid to the ways in which the governing body are to be involved in this task but it can be inferred that in undertaking their strategic function, they could frame the school development plan in such a way as to allow structural changes to permit professional growth and allocate financial resources to facilitate that growth. Leadership talent management could also feature in the headteachers' performance objectives. It is, however, abundantly clear that an imperative exists for the governing body to ensure that succession planning is an integral part of the overall strategy for the school's effectiveness and improvement (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006).

While Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) identify this important role for governors, they do not examine the relevant experience that governors might bring to this task. My questions are, Are governors prepared and competent? And perhaps more fundamentally, are the suggestions regarding the governors' role within succession planning based on an accurate perception of the membership of governing bodies and

of the effectiveness of those bodies particularly in urban areas? (Dean et al., 2007; Rollock, 2009). These important questions have driven my enquiry.

### **Headteacher Selection - The Academic Perspective**

My attention now turns to the wide range of literature including textbooks, academic papers and government reports and documents that provide an indication of the issues that need to be considered when the criteria for headteacher selection are under discussion. This area of literature is reviewed under the three headings that correspond to the main categories into which the issues can be grouped, namely; 'The Importance of Context', 'Headteacher Qualities for an Urban Context' and the 'Headteacher-Governor Relationship.'

#### ***The Importance of Context***

Within the past ten to fifteen years, research has been undertaken in the field of leadership in successful schools. This research was frequently associated with school improvement (e.g. Gray, 2000) and from this a range of leadership qualities was identified. Amongst these, an important issue arose, that successful leadership and context are inextricably linked (Fink, 2003 cited in Ofsted, 2003(a)). The link between leadership and context was repeated by a number of writers including Harris and Lambert (2003) and Rhodes and Brundrett (2006). Additionally, the document entitled 'What we know about school leadership' emphasised '**Context Matters**' (NCSL, 2007: 20).

Within the relevant literature the notion of context is expressed in several different ways including, for example, 'the circumstances of different schools' (Ainscow and West, 2006: 4) and 'the current state and future direction of the school' (Fidler and Atton, 2004: 111). Hence 'context' embraces a number of different features of a school from its historical legacy, the composition of the community it serves, the

experience of its staff and its level of success in terms of academic achievement through to its future trajectory. Each school context comprises an individual combination of these features and it is this that determines the type of leadership the school requires. It follows, therefore, that when seeking to make a successful appointment, governors should aim to appoint the person whose experience, skills and attributes most closely match their particular situation. That is, they should appoint the best headteacher for their school rather than the best headteacher per se.

Almost 30 years ago, an opposing viewpoint was put forward by Morgan, Hall and Mackay (1983) as a result of a small piece of research that was undertaken into the appointment of secondary headteachers. These authors suggested that one reason for not using context or 'local situational factors' as job criteria was the 'real danger that these local factors so dominate the selection criteria that candidates are not fully assessed, if at all, across the task categories of the basic job' (Morgan, Hall and Mackay, 1983: 20). When considering this statement, it is important to consider the date it was written. At that time, selection decisions were said to be based on 'arbitrary and unknown criteria' (Morgan, Hall and Mackay, 1983: 1). Headteacher job descriptions were not the norm and there were no agreed national standards for headteachers. Therefore, these writers were attempting to make a case in favour of formalising all the tasks and responsibilities of headship and using these as selection criteria in order to make the process more objective. Against this background, a view against choosing a headteacher to suit a specific context may be plausible.

At the present time, however, the situation regarding published material relating to the responsibilities of headship has changed. Since 1991, a generic job description for headteachers has been included in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (DfE, 2011(a)) and National Standards for Headteachers have been published (DfES, 2004(b)). These can be translated into objective criteria for any headship position in England. More importantly, it is now mandatory for every first-

time headteacher to have been awarded the National Professional Qualification for Headship and many serving headteachers are also taking the opportunity to gain this qualification. Hence it could be said that all headteachers are pre-assessed against objective criteria related to the generic tasks and responsibilities of headship before applying for posts. This means that governors should concentrate on seeking to ensure that the candidate is 'matched to their school' (Fidler and Atton, 2004: 111). In other words, they should appoint a headteacher who meets their unique requirements. This is vital for schools within an urban context because of their distinctive characteristics and particular needs (Donnelly, 2003).

### ***Headteacher Qualities for an Urban Context***

Recent studies of the urban context have attempted to identify the qualities that urban leaders need in order to be successful (Harris and Chapman, 2002; Donnelly, 2003; Riley, Hesketh, Rafferty and Taylor-Moore, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2006; Emery and Riley, 2007; Riley, 2008). The following extracts provide examples of these qualities:

... [placing] human needs before organisational needs

(Harris and Chapman, 2002: 3)

... committed to social justice and bound to their schools by a deep commitment to their work and a passion for children and young people and the communities in which they live

(Riley, Hesketh, Rafferty and Taylor-Moore, 2005:19)

... persistent ... resilient and optimistic

(Leithwood et al., 2006:14)

The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) has also published a document entitled 'A Model of School Leadership in Challenging Urban Environments' (NCSL 2004). Based on many sources of research and evidence such as interviews with more than 30 successful urban headteachers, this paper identified the following nine

common core values and behaviours of effective urban leaders; 'Courage and Conviction', 'Enduring Resilience', 'Community Engagement', 'Focused Vision and Simplicity', 'Open and Connected Leadership', 'Accountability and Consistency', 'Leading Learning Innovation', 'Purposeful and Responsive Influencing' and 'Filtering, Judging and Acting' (NCSL, 2004: 11). These characteristics, which were found by Matthews (2006: 9) to have 'considerable credibility', echoed the findings of a range of writers including those cited above and others for example Keys, Sharp, Green and Grayson (2003). Whilst it may be argued by some that all successful leaders demonstrate such qualities, those most familiar with the urban context would counter this argument and state from experience that there is a strong correlation between these core values and behaviours and the ability of leaders to succeed in schools within challenging urban contexts (Brighthouse, 2004).

Within the NCSL (2004) document, the nine characteristics detailed above are set out in a framework. One of the purposes of devising this framework was to provide a set of criteria for the recruitment and selection of headteachers in urban schools. As soon as it was published, copies of this framework were sent to all schools in several urban Local Authorities. This was specifically done to support governors in the headteacher recruitment and selection process and to enable them to identify outstanding teachers in urban schools. Additionally, Assessment Centres were set up where candidates' suitability for urban headship could be judged by trained assessors against these criteria. However, apart from a reasonable level of interest in 2005/6, these have been little used, reputedly because governing bodies considered them too expensive even though they gave good value for money (Matthews, 2006). I have found little evidence that this framework was ever used by governors to help them in the headteacher recruitment and selection process. This is perhaps unsurprising because its format is difficult to navigate even for those professionals who are familiar with it. It also uses

terminology that lay-people could have difficulty understanding. For example, in the section entitled 'Leading Learning Innovation' it states the following:

'The ability to lead learning ... is a vital counterpart to courage and conviction giving it pedagogical rather than political expression.

(NCSL, 2004:18)

However, there is a document that is more straightforward in its presentation and its language. This document is entitled 'National Standards for Headteachers in Focus: Urban Primary Schools' (Rodger, 2006) and is one in a series of papers that takes the National Standards for Headteachers (DfES, 2004(b)) and applies them to various contexts. This document provides a composite picture of the experiences and perceptions of three urban headteachers and cross-references these to the National Standards for Headteachers and the nine characteristics of successful urban leaders detailed above. As the following extract demonstrates, this document provides clear examples of what the characteristics of urban leaders look like in practice:

In order to achieve the high standards that are sought, the urban leader has to communicate high expectations and maintain the essential role of educational leader. This will usually involve the application of the skills of leading learning innovation.

(Rodger, 2006: 4)

Hence because of its practical nature and its use of plain English, this document could be used by governors to help them identify the qualities needed in an urban headteacher.

### ***The Headteacher-Governor Relationship***

As expounded in the earlier section entitled 'Governing Body Roles and Responsibilities' the 1986 and 1988 Education Acts transformed the role of school governing bodies. These Acts handed governors a significant increase in their statutory responsibilities and as a result they have come to be viewed as part of the school leadership team (DfES, 2003; Ofsted 2003(b)).

According to the relevant literature, these 'imposed changes' (Martin, Taylor and Rashid, 1995: 3) have given rise to difficulties in the relationship between members of the governing body and the headteacher. These difficulties appear to have several root causes. For example, some writers have suggested that as lay people, many governors have difficulty 'coming to terms with the specialist knowledge and language of education' (Dean et al., 2007: 3). This can have the effect of alienating them from the professionals and marginalising their involvement in the work of the governing body, particularly the formal meetings (Huckman, 1994; Ranson, 2008). Other literature suggests that governors' difficulties may be compounded by the fact that some headteachers feel insecure, even threatened by what they perceive as a questioning of their 'professional competence' (Walters and Richardson, 1997: 22). As a result, rather than fulfilling their statutory responsibility to advise the governing body and provide them with relevant information that would assist them in their role (DfEE, 2000), headteachers make their own decisions about the information they present to the governing body thereby influencing their ability to execute their responsibilities well (Thody, 1994; Martin, Taylor and Rashid, 1995; Farrell, 2005). These factors, coupled with the different views that lay-people and professionals might have about education have impacted on the headteacher-governor relationship (Deem, Brehony and Heath, 1995).

Within the relevant literature, there have been indications for many years that the headteacher-governor relationship should be seen as a partnership. For example, 20 years ago, Beckett, Bell and Rhodes (1991: 1) stated the following:

The headteacher-governor relationship must develop into an effective partnership based on mutual respect and trust.

Almost two decades on, the same idea featured in the sub-title of a research report as follows:

[Thinking Ahead] Exploring the strategic role that headteachers and governors can carry out in partnership.

(Harwood-Smith, 2008)

In addition to being current orthodoxy, this notion of the headteacher working in partnership with governors has been demonstrated by research to be effective. For example, Ranson, Farrell, Peim and Smith, (2005: 317) found that a 'partnership of mutual support' between a headteacher and governors is a 'practice of good governance' that is associated with school improvement.

There are, however, flaws in this notion of partnership concerning the 'power relations' between the headteacher and governors (Grace, 1995: 7). These are manifested by the fact that, as noted above, the headteacher can influence the work of the governing body by limiting their access to information. Yet the headteacher is accountable to the governing body. It is this group of people who have responsibility for reviewing the headteacher's performance and ultimately, the 'power ... to dismiss him or her' (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011: 25). Hence, because of the ultimate power of the governing body, this relationship can never be 'not unequal' as Earley and Weindling (2004: 138) proposed it should be.

Within the literature, a headteacher's relationship with their governors is seen as an important feature of the recruitment and selection process. This is evidenced in the following:

Increasingly those who select heads will be looking for the attitudes and skills which the relationship with governors demands ...

(Sallis, 2001: 13)

It is also a significant issue within this study in that it was a determining factor within the final stages of the headteacher selection process in each of my case-study schools.

Thus from the literature that I have reviewed in this section, I have identified three important areas that are pertinent to the decisions governors make about headteacher selection criteria. The difficulty is, however, that governors would be unlikely to have the time, skills and resources to be able to read this literature and discern how it applied to their situation (Matsuda, 2009). This is therefore one of the major reasons for conducting this study and engaging in the possibility of developing a model to support governors in the headteacher recruitment and selection process.

### **Selection - The Technical Perspective**

This review of the relevant literature now changes direction and considers the more technical aspects of the process of recruiting and selecting a headteacher. It focuses on the theoretical background to the decisions governors have to make about the format and content of the advertisement and about the methods of selection they use. In view of the apparent paucity of academic interest and research within the field of education into the subjects of advertising posts and selecting candidates, the following evidence is largely drawn from papers and handbooks in the fields of marketing and human resources. Some of the papers date back 20 years but in the absence of more recent work, I have assumed that their findings have continuing relevance. Within each sub-section, the relevance of the literature to the headteacher recruitment and selection process is assessed and a number of unresolved issues are noted. The latter are considered together at the end of the section.

#### ***The Advertisement***

It is a statutory requirement that headteacher posts are advertised nationally. These have traditionally been advertised in the press, most usually the Times Educational Supplement (TES). Since 2007, posts have also been advertised on the TES website, in the same format as they appear in the newspaper. Within the very limited literature on the subject, two main elements of the advertisement are highlighted,

namely its appearance and its text. The advertisement's appearance is significant because researchers such as Kaplan, Aamodt and Wilk (1991: 383) suggested that there is a positive link between what they term the 'variables to enhance the physical features of the advertisement' such as 'white space, size, border and graphics' and the 'quantity of an applicant pool.' The advertisement's text is significant because it is the medium used to convey important messages about the post and the school. Cooper and Curtis (2001: 28) suggested it should 'speak directly to applicants in plain English' while Hobby, Crabtree and Ibbetson (2004: 53) stated there should be a 'clear definition of requirements [for the post]' that will enable potential candidates to 'rule themselves in or out.' This notion is supported by Ryan, Gubern and Rodriguez (2000: 359) who stated the following:

The more specific the language and detail, the more targeted the ad. Thus, applicants will be able to screen themselves and decide if they fit the requirements.

From the above it can be seen that the choices that are made about the appearance and text of the advertisement are of seminal importance within any recruitment process. Within the specific context of headteacher recruitment, this raises two important questions. First, how are school governors expected to become familiar with the theoretical principles underlying effective recruitment advertising? Second, would school governors, as lay-people, be able to put these principles into practice without some form of professional guidance and support? These are two of the areas that this study addresses.

### ***Methods of Selection: The Interview***

The interview has been the most widely used selection technique for more than 150 years and has been shown by research to have a number of advantages (Armstrong, 2006). Within the context of the selection of headteachers it has the additional advantage of being familiar to governors since many have experience of interviewing

in their place of work, as was the case in two of my case-study schools. There is, however, a large body of evidence that suggests that the reliability and validity of an interview is unimpressive because of certain limitations (Henderson, 2008). These include the following:

- ... the inherent subjectivity and proneness of interviewers to make false assumptions ... to recruit people to whom they take a liking

(Runnymede Trust, 1980:16)

- Interviewers may hold stereotyped images against which candidates are judged

(Bratton and Gold, 2007: 260)

The interviewer may also be said to be a 'victim of an over-simple trait model of personality' (Cook, 1979: 144). This model assumes that people do not change and do not react to experiences. If this were the case, it would be possible to determine which traits a candidate possesses and state confidently how they would behave on a completely different occasion. If, however, as I suggest in Chapter Three, it is believed that an individual's behaviour is determined largely by where he is and who he is with 'the interview doesn't look such a sensible enterprise' (Cook, 1979: 144). Hence, within the literature I have located, the disadvantages of an interview appear to outweigh the advantages.

However, given that the interview is a statutory method of selection, I have selected work from other writers who have looked in detail at ways in which the effectiveness of interviews could be improved. In the light of my research findings which are discussed later in the study, I would suggest that the essence of this work could form elements of training that governors should undertake before they embark on the process of headteacher selection. This literature relates to two aspects of the interview process, namely the types of interview questions posed and the avoidance of bias and subjective judgments.

Bratton and Gold (2007: 260) identified two types of interview question; 'situational' and 'experience-based'. In the former, 'applicants are asked what they would do in response to particular events in particular situations' (Bratton and Gold, 2007: 260). Since questions of this type do not ask applicants to describe past behaviour, they are said to be poor predictors of future performance because 'what people say is not a good guide to what they do' (Hobby, Crabtree and Ibbetson, 2004: 2). On the other hand, experience-based questions are said to interrogate what people do and the 'beliefs and principles that genuinely guide their behaviour' (Hobby, Crabtree and Ibbetson, 2004: 3). These are claimed to show better results with respect to 'predictions of job performance, that is, predictive validity' (Bratton and Gold, 2007: 260).

The other aspect of the interview that the relevant literature highlights concerns the avoidance of bias and subjective judgments. In this connection, it points to the need for interviewers to be aware of their obligation to comply with Equal Opportunities' Policies and Employment Legislation (e.g. Hukins, 2006). It also states that interviewers should be aware of the ways in which they can 'avoid bias creeping into the assessment of applicants' (Runnymede Trust, 1980: 17) and suggests that this is best avoided when the 'attributes and skills required for adequate job performance' are identified and interviewers are trained to assess candidates against these rather than according to personal characteristics (Taylor, 2008: 185). From this literature, therefore, the imperative emerges for governors as a group to decide in advance what characteristics they are looking for in a new headteacher, how they will know that the candidates possess these and how they will record their judgments. The questions then arise as to how governors will know that they should be doing this and how they will know what to do. These questions are unresolved within this area of literature.

### ***Other Methods of Selection***

In spite of efforts to improve the effectiveness of the interview through the training of interviewers and the introduction of a more systematic form of questioning based on the specific attributes and skills required for a particular job, doubts as to its efficacy remain and even increase over time (Wolf and Jenkins, 2002). As a result, other means of selection have been introduced and developed. These include tests of aptitude and 'personality and motivational characteristics' which tend not to be widely used because they can only be administered by trained and registered testers (Cooper and Curtis, 2001: 37). Also included are group tests which are used to assess interpersonal skills and the ability to argue logically (Cooper and Curtis, 2001) and 'analogous tests' (Morgan, Hall and Mackay, 1984: 49). Analogous tests take the form of simulations of the job for which candidates are being selected. They are said to have good 'face validity' because they 'reflect the job to be filled in a realistic and common-sense way' and were found in 30 research studies to have good 'predictive validity' (Morgan, Hall and Mackay, 1984: 49). Because group tests and analogous tests are easy to set up, they have become the most popular means of assessment to supplement the interview during the process of headteacher selection.

The relevant literature provides two reasons for using more than one means of assessment. Firstly, as Bratton and Gold (2007: 266) suggested, as with many jobs, the 'complexity and demands of work have increased' and this has created the need for a variety of selection methods. Secondly, Torrington, Hall and Taylor (2008: 171) found that 'accuracy in selection generally increases in relation to the number of appropriate selection methods used.' Here the important word seems to be '**appropriate**', reflecting the following statement of Cooper and Curtis (2001: 38):

Selectors need to weigh up the relative worth of each method and consider its contribution to the overall selection process before deciding whether to adopt it.

From this literature, therefore, it is evident that governors need to choose appropriate methods of selection to enable them to judge whether the candidates possess the skills and qualities they are looking for. By implication they will have to identify beforehand what these skills and qualities are and decide what they will look like in practice. As with the interview, they also need to ensure that their assessments are standardised against agreed criteria in order to reduce the effects of subjectivity in their judgments. This raises questions about training in selection methods which are not addressed in this area of literature.

Thus within the available literature concerning the practical aspects of recruitment and selection there are a number of gaps and unresolved issues, for example how governors should have the relevant expertise concerning interviewing techniques (Hobby, Crabtree and Ibbetson, 2004). These are particularly important because, as already noted, school governors are lay-people who may be in a position of being involved in the process just once in their lives. They therefore need relevant guidance that will support them in the execution of their responsibilities. The only research-based document that claims to provide this is now discussed.

### **The National College for School Leadership Guidance**

In 2003, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) commissioned a pilot study to explore the headteacher selection process (Weindling and Pocklington, 2003). This was timely in that the last piece of research on the topic had been undertaken 20 years earlier (Morgan, Hall and Mackay, 1983) and, as discussed in previous sections, significant changes had occurred both in the role of the headteacher and in the roles and responsibilities of governors in the intervening period. The pilot study comprised case-studies in 20 schools, primary, secondary and special, where a headteacher had been appointed during the previous 12 months. As a result of the research, a model of the headteacher selection process was produced

and 'key players' and significant features of the process were identified (Earley and Weindling, 2004: 133). Support was also demonstrated for a larger research project that was under consideration by the NCSL.

The research that followed the pilot study (Weindling and Pocklington, 2003) claimed to be the 'most extensive study of its kind in the UK' (NCSL 2006(a): 12). It was conducted over a two-year period and comprised a broad range of methods including a literature review which was published separately, (MacBeath, Oduro, Jacka and Hobby, 2006), ten case studies, interviews with stakeholders, surveys of Chairs of Governors and recently-appointed headteachers and benchmarking both within and outside education. As a result of the literature review and research, a document was written specifically for school governors entitled 'Recruiting Headteachers and Senior Leaders: Full Guidance' (NCSL 2006(b)). This lengthy document is presented in the form of general advice and is usefully divided into seven stages: 'Preparation', 'Definition', 'Attraction', 'Selection', 'Appointment', 'Induction' and 'Evaluation'. Whilst not claiming to be a comprehensive guide, it does claim to 'highlight important factors that you [governors] will need to take into account to ensure that the process is *efficient, effective and fair*' (NCSL, 2006(b): 6). It was welcomed with enthusiasm by delegates from the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), National Governors' Association (NGA) and Professional Associations at its launch on October 30<sup>th</sup> 2006 in London (Barrowman, 2006). As the only document of its type it has assumed the status of 'official advice' and from my professional conversation with a senior advisor from the NCSL on April 30<sup>th</sup> 2008, I am given to understand that the College expects governors to follow this advice, believing that it will enable them to successfully recruit a new headteacher.

There are, however, as noted in my introduction to this study, important gaps in this research that have implications for the recruitment and selection of headteachers of schools within urban contexts. There are also significant questions concerning the

accessibility and usefulness of the guidance that was produced as a result of the research (NCSL, 2006(b)). These are now considered.

### ***Accessibility***

The guidance is only available on-line and consists of 78 pages. There is also a summary document consisting of 32 pages. Whilst the latter is available in paper-copy, it can only be ordered on-line. Therefore the assumption seems to be that governors will down-load and print their own copies of the guidance or order a summary as necessary. However, from the discussions I have had with at least 20 urban governors over the past two years, this assumption is incorrect because I have only met one who has seen a copy. Although the other governors did not provide reasons for not having a copy, I put forward my own suggestions based on my knowledge of urban areas and on the relevant literature (e.g. Dean et al., 2007). Firstly, in areas of socio-economic disadvantage it is possible that some governors may not have access to a suitable computer. Secondly, as volunteers, they may not have the time and aptitude to search the internet. Thirdly, they may not have sufficient resources to be able to print 78 pages. Hence accessibility in terms of being able to procure a copy of the guidance may have been the problem.

From studying the document closely, I would suggest that even if the governors had accessed the guidance, its size and layout could have presented a problem. This is because, in addition to being lengthy, it is printed in a small font and even though it is divided into sections, it would be a daunting task for governors, most of whom are lay-people, to work through the text on their own and be able to discern which elements are mandatory and which are pertinent to their school. Moreover, the guidance is not written in straightforward, everyday language. For example, the following is included in 'Things to Consider':

Test the logic of the connections between the school's needs and the attributes you are looking for by ensuring the attributes are individually necessary and collectively sufficient.

(NCSL, 2006(b): 31)

Hence the guidance would be unintelligible and therefore inaccessible to some governors especially those for whom English is an additional language or are unused to language of this type.

### ***Usefulness***

In addition to being inaccessible to some governors, there are many conceptual and practical constraints as to why knowledge of the NCSL (2006(b)) guidance might not help governors, particularly those who serve urban schools, undertake the process of recruiting and selecting a headteacher. For example, the guidance presupposes that a fully-functioning governing body exists with the ability and capacity to undertake the headteacher appointment process; yet the relevant literature (e.g. Dean et al., 2007; Rollock, 2009) reported that this is frequently not the case. The guidance also presupposes that governors will have sufficient time to undertake the necessary training and read all the suggested documents. However, the majority of governors are in full-time employment and time for voluntary duties is scarce (Thody, 1994). Hence, this would be difficult. Furthermore, the guidance presupposes that governors will know how to put its guidelines into practice. This would be difficult for most governors because of their lack of experience of appointing a headteacher (Martin and Holt, 2002). Additionally, because the guidance does not make specific reference to the urban context, the governors would be unaware of the implications for headship of the particular issues associated with areas of deprivation such as 'poverty and mental health problems' and working with people with 'very low expectations ... and a dismissive attitude towards learning' (Riley, Hesketh, Rafferty and Taylor-Moore, 2005: 3). Finally, and most importantly, the guidance gives inadequate emphasis to

the level and type of support that governors might need in order to undertake the process effectively and fairly (DfES, 2004(c)).

From the above, it can be seen that on its own and as it stands, the NCSL (2006(b)) guidance does not really solve the problems that governors face as they undertake the task of recruiting and selecting a headteacher. This raises an important research question concerning the kind of guidance that would be more helpful to governors and is one of the main foci of this study.

### **Summary**

From the seven areas of literature that I have reviewed, an interesting research problem regarding headteacher recruitment and selection has emerged. This problem derives from the fact that the legislation has handed sole responsibility for the recruitment and selection of headteachers to school governors yet as lay-people, governors, particularly those in urban schools, may not be well-placed to undertake this responsibility. However, even though it is acknowledged within the relevant literature that governors tend to be inexperienced and untrained in headteacher recruitment and selection, the information and guidance that is available to them concerning the aspects they need to consider is limited and leaves many issues unresolved. This is one of the major areas I address within this study.

Before I present my findings, I describe and discuss the way in which my study was executed. This is the topic of the next chapter.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology, Research Procedures and Data Analysis**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the methodology and methods I used to investigate and understand the process of primary headteacher recruitment and selection in an urban context. It begins with a discussion of my ontological position and continues with an explanation of my reasons for believing that a social-constructivist paradigm provided the most appropriate framework for this particular study. After discussing my research design and methods, I provide a detailed account of the ways in which I collected data in three primary schools during the period September 2008 to October 2009. I also show how my original plans which were to conduct face-to-face interviews with three governors from each school had to be modified in the light of each school's contextual features, particularly governor availability. After evaluating my research methods, I discuss the methods I used to analyse my data in order to build up a picture of how the process of recruiting and selecting a headteacher was undertaken in each school and seek to understand the causes of the variations in practice between the schools.

#### **Adopting an Ontological Position**

The ontological position I have adopted for this study can be summarised in the words of Husserl (1946) who stated the following:

...the world and 'reality' are not objective and exterior, but socially constructed and given meaning by people.

(Cited in Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1991: 24)

Within this discourse, the assumption is that our experiences are determined by the constructs of the situation in which we find ourselves including our own previous knowledge, experience and expectations. Moreover, in group activities, the meanings, activities and experiences of participants are influenced, amongst other things, by the

knowledge, experience and expectations of the other participants and by the shared cultural mores of that group (Mead, 1964; Hughes, Jewson and Unwin, 2007). The way we describe our experiences to others is therefore not only determined by the meanings we ascribe to each experience. It is also determined by the message we want to portray and the information we expect the listener wants to hear. In turn, the way the listener interprets what is being transmitted is determined by their own knowledge and experience (Wenger, 1998). Hereby it is given meaning. Thus not only are experiences subjective; the discourse about those experiences is complex because it is fashioned by the subjectivity of each participant.

With this view of the subjective nature of reality, the epistemological approach I have taken for this study is based on the assumption that reality is neither objectively knowable nor measurable (Patton, 2002). This stance led me to seek a research paradigm where this position could be accommodated and where I could explore reality as constructed by individuals in the belief that each person's 'way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other' (Crotty, 2003: 58). In adopting this stance in my research design I tried to pay attention to the stories my interviewees told me in their own words. This affected both the interview design in that I used prompts that invited open-ended reflection and the way in which I analysed the data.

### **The Selected Paradigm**

The two paradigms that most closely fulfil my requirements are 'interpretivism' and 'social-constructivism'. Scheurich (1997: 118) described their relationship in these terms:

... they are a loosely coupled family of methodological and philosophical persuasions... that share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it.

The advantages of this 'family' of paradigms over other more positivist research traditions were clearly described as follows by Christensen and James (2000: 137):

Whereas conventional positivist enquiry is linear and closed, seeking to measure, aggregate and model behaviour, constructivist methodologies have been promoted for their qualitative exploratory power in providing depth, richness and realism of information and analysis.

Adopting a social-constructivist framework would enable this study to pursue an open-ended and creative way of addressing the research questions, not regulated by the need to test existing theories but rather to investigate areas that 'defy quantitative research' (Holliday, 2002: 4). In common with other research studies undertaken within this framework, this study adopted a qualitative approach, based on the idea that people's knowledge, views, understandings, experiences and interactions are meaningful properties (or 'qualities') of social reality (Mason, 1996: 39).

### **Research Design**

My research design comprised three in-depth case studies. I chose to use the case-study method because it provides a robust means of studying complex phenomena within their real-life settings (Patton, 1987; Yin, 1994). By comparing three examples of how governors approached the issue of appointing headteachers, I hoped to gather data of sufficient richness and breadth to enable me to achieve my objectives (Yin, 2003). These were to explore the ways in which school governors formulate understandings of the headteacher appointment process and to determine if a model to support governors could be generated. The selected cases do not claim to be representative of schools in general. Rather, they were selected for their intrinsic interest, variety and accessibility to throw light on a particular category of schools, those operating within challenging urban contexts.

I used 'purposive sampling' (Teddlie and Yu, 2007: 77) in my identification of cases, choosing to select schools working in disadvantaged urban contexts. I anticipated that in such schools, one might expect the challenges in appointing heads would be higher because of the likelihood of a limited range of experience amongst governors (Dean

et al., 2007) and a smaller number of applications for headteacher posts in these contexts (NCSL 2008(a)). In line with the qualitative research tradition, my approach to sampling was 'based on a specific purpose' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003: 713). In making my selection of cases I also drew on the work of Riley (2008) who distinguished four types of urban schools serving different kinds of communities:

- an inner-city, relatively homogeneous community
- multiple and diverse communities within a locality
- an estate community
- multiple and diverse communities over an extended area

(Riley 2008: 33)

Because the first three of these categories are more likely than the fourth to be characterised by different forms of social deprivation, I considered them the most appropriate for this study. I decided to look for one sample from each of these categories in order to achieve the 'balance and variety' that Stake (1998: 102) suggested is needed in a study.

However, with these criteria in mind, the choice of specific research sites was to a large extent 'opportunistic' (Kemper, Stringfield and Teddlie, 2003: 283). Having made a principled decision regarding the type of site I required, I had to take advantage of available leads in order to identify three research sites where it would be possible for me to focus on discovering governors' perspectives of the headteacher recruitment and selection process. The agreement of the first two schools was secured with comparative ease. This was probably because one member of each Governing Body knew who I was and the governors were therefore prepared to make time for my research and trust me with confidential information. However, a third school was difficult to find. I wrote almost 20 letters to Chairs of Governors where headship posts had been advertised. Just three expressed an interest but subsequently withdrew as they were unable to appoint a headteacher. The situation was resolved when a colleague introduced me to the Chair of Governors of a school where a headteacher

had been appointed six months earlier. This school fitted my criteria and the Chair was happy to participate in my research.

My final selection of cases was as follows:

**School A.** This was a new two-form entry primary school in an urban area outside London. The area was described in the 2001 census as having a mainly white working-class population with a 'higher than average rate of unemployment.' This was an example of a school that served 'an estate community' (Riley, 2008: 33).

**School B.** This school was a two-form entry community primary school<sup>7</sup> with nursery in an area in outer London described in the 2001 Census as a 'community in the process of change.' According to the Census, it had the highest level of socio-economic deprivation in the borough within which it is located and the highest percentage of residents with no formal qualifications. This was an example of a school that served 'multiple and diverse communities within a locality' (Riley, 2008: 33).

**School C.** This was a two-form entry primary school with nursery that served an area of high deprivation within inner London. The parents of virtually all the pupils were from the Indian sub-continent or East Africa. Almost all the pupils were at the early stages of speaking English<sup>8</sup>. This was an example of a school that served 'an inner-city single, relatively homogeneous community' (Riley, 2008: 33).

## Research Methods

Within a qualitative research framework, one of the most usual research methods is the open-ended or semi-structured interview. These interview-formats are intended as an effective means of understanding the interviewees' perspective by giving them some freedom over the direction the interview takes. As Kvale (1996: 1) suggested, they are a way to 'get to know how they [informants] understand their world.' This

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<sup>7</sup> The word 'community' is included as it appears in the school's real name and seemed to be significant

<sup>8</sup> Source – Ofsted Reports 2006 and 2009.

seemed an ideal method that corresponded well with the aim of my study. I considered other means of investigating what people think and feel. These ranged from self-completed questionnaires at one end of the spectrum to life-stories at the other. By studying the relevant literature, for example Taylor (2008), the advantages and disadvantages of each method were examined. In the end, I chose semi-structured interviews as they 'provide flexibility and yet retain some degree of standardisation' (Hutchinson and Wilson, 1992 cited in Lewis et al., 2004: 167). For this study, this element of flexibility would give participants freedom to decide the amount of time they spent talking and the amount of detail they provided. This was particularly important given that governors are volunteers who most often undertake their governing body responsibilities in addition to full-time paid employment. For them, time for my research could have been brief.

Wherever possible, I wanted to interview the participants face-to-face in order to encourage their co-operation and develop a rapport with them (Robson, 2002). I also recognised that 'non-verbal cues may give messages which help in understanding the verbal response...' (Robson, 2002: 273). However, given the constraints of my interviewees' time, it was not always possible to meet them personally. In those circumstances, I decided that I would 'interview' the participants through email exchanges. I was aware that this alternative method might have limitations because of the different level of interpersonal contact (Kivits, 2005) and used it with one of the participants in two of the sites. I was alert to the potential impact this method might have on the material gained (Meho, 2006) and paid attention to any possible contrasts at the point of analysis. Because of the small number of email interviews involved, the potential effects of using this alternative method were minimised whilst data coverage in each site was maintained.

With both types of interview, I considered it essential that the questions were open-ended as these leave respondents 'free to answer in a way that seems most

appropriate to them' (Munn and Drever, 1990: 23). The questions were formulated with two inter-connected foci (Appendix 1). One related to the first part of the recruitment process and was an enquiry into the way the governors prepared for the task of appointing a headteacher, particularly how they decided on the characteristics they believed a headteacher should possess. The other focus related to the next part of the process, namely the selection of the candidates. This was an enquiry into the methods the governors used to enable them to identify the characteristics they deemed necessary in a new leader for their school and the criteria they used to make their final choice. All the interviews were designed to enable me to learn what influenced the enactment of the headteacher appointment process as far as the governors were concerned both individually and collectively. This included a discussion of the role assigned to any individuals or groups outside the selection panel. It also included a discussion concerning any training and support received from the Local Authority or elsewhere and the governors' evaluation of its usefulness in undertaking the task of appointing a headteacher.

To supplement the interviews, I collected relevant documentation because, as Fei (2004: 220) posited, 'We live in a multimodal society which makes meaning through the co-deployment of a combination of semiotic resources.' This documentation included the advertisements and application packs which were publicly available. By examining the visual images and text used in these, my intention was to determine how the governors sought to communicate explicit and implicit messages about the school and the selection criteria for the headteacher position to potential candidates. Other documentation such as the formal interview questions was also deemed potentially useful in furthering the development of an understanding of the surfacing issues but I was aware that this would be determined by what the participants could find and what they were willing and able to share with me, bearing in mind the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

As noted above, I was aware that governors do not always have sufficient time to talk with researchers. I was also constrained by having to recognise that I might only get one chance to interview the key players. Moreover, I knew that each informant would have a different story to tell and I had no idea what their story would be until I started talking with them. Hence my research design highlighted the need to be continually reflective and flexible (Patton, 2002). This involved being prepared to go to each interviewee's preferred location at a time of their choosing or contact them via email in an agreed time-frame. It also involved adapting my approach in the light of the time available and developing my questioning in the light of each interviewee's responses. Furthermore, it involved following up the interviewees' suggestions regarding contacting and arranging to interview other stakeholders who had participated in the headteacher recruitment process, some of whom were minors. This level of 'emergent design flexibility' (Patton, 2002: 45) was necessary in order to create what McNiff (1988: 44) has termed an appropriate 'generative framework' within which my case-studies could address the research questions and the research aim of getting underneath the recruitment and selection process and ascertaining how individuals and groups dealt with that process.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The Ethical Guidelines of the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2002) highlight two ethical considerations relating to consent and outcomes that are applicable to this research. Firstly, I had to ensure that all participants gave their informed consent. This meant that I had a responsibility to 'explain in appropriate detail and in terms meaningful to [the] participants what the research was about ... [and] why it was being undertaken ...' (BSA, 2002: 3). I also had to make the participants aware that they could decide to discontinue at any stage during the course of the research. This did not occur but had it been the case, I would have respected their decision. In addition, as some of the participants I chose to interview were minors, I had to ensure that I

gained their parents' consent and reassure them that I had an enhanced CRB certificate<sup>9</sup>.

Secondly, I had to consider the outcomes of the research. I needed to guarantee all participants confidentiality and ascertain the level of anonymity that both the individuals and schools required when the report was written. It was also necessary to give due regard to how the report would be communicated and disseminated bearing in mind the rights of the participants, who 'as fellow human beings ... are entitled to dignity and privacy' (Bassegy, 1999: 74).

Additionally, there were ethical considerations particularly pertinent to this study. The most critical of these was the fact that a highly sensitive subject was under investigation. I therefore had to be reflexively aware of my position. This meant staying within the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. It also meant having to 'maintain neutrality' (Patton, 1987: 142) and not appear as an expert or react when the participants' responses indicated that they had not complied with legal requirements such as those relating to Equal Opportunities' Policies. Furthermore, one of the schools presented its own ethical considerations. As I was acquainted with the school, I could be regarded as an insider-researcher although for reasons of confidentiality I have not revealed the details of my connection with it. Therefore even though I had only met the Chair of Governors on one occasion about two years before this present study, I had to be careful to separate my two roles at the outset. By doing this, I believed that this previous encounter would not make any discernable difference to the outcome of the research. I had, however, met the staff on a number of occasions. This meant that I had to ensure that I was seen as a researcher who remained neutral and observed confidentiality one hundred per cent. Had I not done this, my credibility would have been compromised. The final ethical consideration

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<sup>9</sup> An enhanced Criminal Record Certificate within the meaning of sections 113B and 116 of the Police Act 1997 which clears the named adult to work with children

related to me personally. Throughout I needed to ensure that conclusions were drawn from the evidence and data were not used to simply support views I already held.

### **Data Collection**

Before commencing this study, I undertook a pilot-study which enabled me to test the adequacy of my research methods and refine my research design (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). In particular the pilot-study highlighted the need to make my interview questions less complicated. It also gave me confidence that the range of data I collected would give sufficient coverage of the process I wished to study. The following chart summarises the data I collected from each school; further details of all the written documentation are provided at the points in the study where they are analysed in depth.

<u>School</u>	<u>Data Set</u>
<u>School A</u>	Face-to-face interview with the Chair of the Selection Panel Email 'interview' and follow-up with Governor A1 (the Chair of Governors) Job Advertisement, Application Pack, Documents relating to the Interview Days.
<u>School B</u>	Face-to-face interview with the Chair of Governors/Chair of Selection Panel Email 'interview' and follow-up with Governor B1 (a member of the Panel) Face-to-face interview with a staff governor (not a member of the Panel) Face-to-face interviews with a class teacher and a member of the support staff Group discussion with the School Council Job Advertisement, Application Pack, Documents relating to the Interview Day
<u>School C</u>	Face-to-face interviews with the Chair of Governors/Chair of the Selection Panel and with Governor C1, a staff governor (a member of the Panel) Face-to-face interview with the SIP Job Advertisement, School web-site, including on-line Application Pack, Documents relating to Interview Days, Local Authority Guidance on Recruitment

**Figure Two: Data collected in Schools A, B and C**

The difference in coverage reflects a range of different circumstances I encountered in each school as detailed below.

**School A**

The Chair of the Selection Panel invited me to her home to discuss the recent headship appointment. Because of the Chair's personal circumstances, the conversation was not tape-recorded but I made full notes and emailed them to her for checking. She returned the amended notes promptly together with details of the tasks the short-listed candidates had to undertake and the questions for the formal interviews. The other governor who agreed to take part in my study, 'Governor A1', was the Chair of Governors and a former headteacher. He expressed a preference for an email 'interview' so I sent him a copy of the interview schedule that I had used with the Chair of the Selection Panel and he provided detailed responses. He knew that I was familiar with educational terminology so he did not elaborate on the educational jargon he included in his responses, e.g. '*using Ofsted criteria*'.

**School B**

I met with the Chair of the Selection Panel (she was also the Chair of Governors) four weeks after the new headteacher had been selected. We allocated one and a half hours for our meeting; however, this was restricted to 25 minutes due to urgent school matters that required the Chair's attention. I asked the Chair the same questions that I had asked the Chair in School A. As there was not an opportunity to set up the tape-recorder, I made detailed notes of the interview and emailed these to the Chair for correction and elaboration. The Chair agreed to send me copies of the interview questions and tasks. These arrived three months later. When I had studied them, I met with the Chair again briefly to follow up a few issues.

Because I had to wait some weeks before I could conduct an email 'interview' with 'Governor B1', the only other governor who had taken part in the whole headteacher appointment process, I contacted and interviewed other people whom the Chair had mentioned namely a staff governor, a class teacher and a member of the support

staff. Each interview was different and was devised according to each participant's role within the school and the information I believed they could provide. The interviews were not tape-recorded but I took notes and checked the details at the end with each participant. After the necessary protocols which are discussed under 'Ethical Considerations' above, I met with the 11 members of the School Council whose parents had signed consent forms. This was a group discussion pursuing some of the ideas the pupils had raised in their letter to prospective candidates that was included in the Application Pack (Appendix 2). I scribed the pupils' comments verbatim and a volunteer from Year Six checked the script. After making one alteration, he agreed it was a true record of what had been said. Even though these interviews were conducted more than two months after the headteacher had been selected, the participants appeared to remember what had happened in detail. This input supplemented the information provided by the Chair and gave a fuller picture of how the headteacher selection process had been enacted in **School B**.

### ***School C***

Because it was less easy for me to identify a third school, the **School C** interviews were conducted almost six months after the selection process had taken place and just after the new head had taken up his post. However, I was careful to remind the participants that I wanted them to talk about the selection process, not their impression of the appointee's first few weeks in school. It is my belief that they did this to the best of their ability.

I met the Chair of Governors (he was also the Chair of the Selection Panel) at his home after an introductory email exchange during which he had forwarded copies of the Advertisement, Person Specification and his letter to prospective candidates. I posed the same interview questions as I had used with the Chairs in Schools A and B. The Chair was relaxed and had allocated enough time to talk at length. During this

meeting, the Chair gave me the contact details of another governor and suggested interviewing the School Improvement Partner/Local Authority Advisor (hereinafter referred to as the SIP) as she had played a vital part in the headteacher selection process.

I was unable to make contact with the other governor but did meet with the SIP for just over an hour. She provided additional documentation including the interview questions and guidance produced by the Local Authority. I posed slightly different questions from those I had asked the Chair as I wanted to develop some of the issues he had raised. Because the SIP knew I worked in education, she made a number of 'asides' that she knew I would understand. This added richness to her responses. During this discussion, the SIP told me that the school staff had participated in the headteacher appointment process. Hence I arranged to interview the teacher governor. Again, I reflected on the responses of the other two participants and adapted the questions accordingly. All three interviews with informants from **School C** were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Even though I was unable to interview three governors from each school as I had originally planned, this did not detract from the goal of this study, as in each case-study site the range of data collected enabled me to triangulate across different sources to gain a fuller picture of the process. As is demonstrated in the research findings in the following three chapters, the resultant picture is rich and maps out the complexity of the process of headteacher recruitment and selection within each of the given contexts.

### **Evaluation of Method**

The paradigm and methods selected for this present study were appropriate for the purpose of the study in that they enabled me to gain knowledge and understanding of governors' perspectives on the ways in which they had enacted the process of the

recruitment and selection of a headteacher. The identification of three schools within different urban settings proved to be an adequate number to achieve the desired 'balance and variety' in the study (Stake, 1998: 102) because each selection panel had implemented the process of the recruitment and selection of a headteacher in a different way and therefore presented a range of perspectives. Additionally, each selection panel had chosen to involve different individual and groups of stakeholders thus presenting a variety of models. The semi-structured interviews enabled the informants to tell their own story in their own words whilst covering a similar range of themes (McDavid and Hawthorn, 2006). In combination with documentary materials, this approach generated a range of rich data that furthered my knowledge and understanding of the process of headteacher recruitment and selection in different urban contexts. Whilst I did manage to overcome most of the difficulties and generate worth-while data that will contribute to an important gap in knowledge, if I designed the study again, I would plan to include a broader range of interviewees. This would make the study less reliant on governors as well as increasing the variety and richness of the data.

### **Data Analysis**

In this study, I used the different types of data to triangulate across the data-set, comparing the perspective generated from a range of sources, both oral and written. This meant that I was not relying on a single method of data-analysis to document and identify the governors' understandings of the process of headteacher recruitment and selection. Creswell (2007: 151) described this as a 'combination of analysis procedures.' My particular combination of analysis procedures developed as the study progressed. As I moved back and forth between the data, the emerging themes and my reading of the relevant literature, I selected different analytic methods that seemed most appropriate to my purposes. These ranged from immersion in the text to analyses of minute details. I also referred to the literature on the subject of Qualitative

Data-Analysis and found the work of Patton (1987, 2002), Robson (2002) and Creswell (2007) particularly helpful. The combination of procedures I selected is discussed below.

My data-analysis began as soon as I had collected the data in **School A**. I gathered copies of all the documentation viz. the advertisement, the application pack and the formal interview questions into a folder together with the interview transcripts and, adopting what Robson (2002: 458) termed an 'Immersion' approach, I read all the data closely to ascertain if any significant features emerged in the various accounts of the appointment process and began to identify key themes related to the research questions. This analysis was strengthened through comparison with the data that I subsequently collected in **School B** and **School C**. After the initial reading I began to organise my interpretations of the governors' understandings and activities more systematically (Patton, 2002).

The categories that the NCSL (2006(b)) guidance identified for each stage of the headteacher recruitment and selection process proved useful since four of them ('Preparation', 'Definition', 'Attraction' and 'Selection') corresponded with the focus of my study. I used these to begin the organisation of my data. I took every piece of documentation from each school and labelled it 'P' (Preparation), 'D' (Definition), 'A' (Attraction) or 'S' (Selection). Then, informed by the work of Miles and Huberman (1994), I drew three matrices, one for each school, and having divided the matrices into four sections according to the NCSL (2006(b)) headings, I categorised each document under the relevant heading and coded them for later 'retrieval' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 54). I then took copies of the interview transcripts and began labelling and categorising 'chunks' of script (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 56) in the same way but this was slightly more complicated than labelling the documentation. This was because the informants had been invited to tell their own story and their comments did not automatically fit into any one of the categories I was using.

Consequently, I used a 'best-fit' judgment (Agung, 2011) in order to place each segment of interview transcript into the category that seemed most appropriate. By organising all the data in this way, I generated three coherent 'case records' (Patton, 1987: 147), one for each school, that charted the enactment of the headteacher appointment process sequentially from the time the governors knew they needed to find a new headteacher until the moment one was selected. These provided a 'comprehensive, primary resource package' (Patton, 2002: 449) that facilitated a more detailed examination of the data.

I began the more detailed examination by analysing the segments of interview script, looking for examples of dialogue that appeared to be part of the same 'underlying idea' (Patton, 1987: 149). To record this activity, I drew four matrices for each school, one for each of the NCSL (2006(b)) headings. These were then divided into rows according to the themes of the interview questions (McDavid and Hawthorn, 2006) and split into columns according to the number of informants (counting the School Council in School B as one). Each informant's actual phrases or sentences were then entered in the appropriate boxes. I also recorded all the additional information that the participants had provided on the same sheets.

Having analysed the verbal data, I focused on the documentation that had been categorised and coded earlier. My analysis of the visual materials was informed by the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) and Banks (2007). Guided by their work, I noted the 'grammar' of the images (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 2), that is, the way in which the images were organised and presented. I also considered the 'stories' they told (Banks, 2007: 14) and recorded the meanings I had derived from these on another grid. My analysis of the text of the recruitment materials was informed by the work of Van Dijk (2004) and Bowen (2009). Here, I noted the 'grammar' of the texts (Bowen, 2009: 27). This did not take the form of a structural text-analysis. Rather, I 'interpreted the text' (Van Dijk, 2004: 7) and reviewed the choices that the governors

had made about the content of the recruitment materials and their 'functional coherence' (Van Dijk, 2004: 5). I recorded my analysis of these elements on the same grid as the visual data. By displaying all the data in this way, I built up a picture of how the process of headteacher appointment had been undertaken in each school.

The final stage of the data-analysis process entailed comparing and contrasting how the three schools had handled different parts of the process. In order to make these comparisons, I adopted a recursive thematic approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006), moving within and between the schools and within and between the categories that I had adopted from the NCSL (2006(b)) guidance. I also referred to the relevant theoretical and empirical fields in an iterative way (Brown and Dowling, 2010). From this activity, many ideas and meanings emerged which I clustered into groups or themes (Creswell, 2007). Then, making what Patton (1987: 154) termed 'carefully considered judgments about what was really significant and meaningful in the data', I selected ten of these themes as headings for data classification. Because this number was quite large, I grouped them into four 'families of themes' (Creswell, 2007: 153). These were as follows:

1. 'The history of the governing body as a working group', 'The size and composition of the Selection Panel' and 'The support governors received from their Local Authority or similar.'
2. 'Defining the job to be done – governors' priorities' and 'Defining the qualities needed to do the job – governors' priorities.'
3. 'Image of the school transmitted through the recruitment materials' and 'Messages about the school and the post transmitted through the written text of the recruitment materials.'
4. 'The choice and use of selection methods' and 'The final choice – How? Why?'

I placed the tenth theme, 'The role of other stakeholders', as a sub-theme in all the families of themes because it carried varying degrees of weight within them all.

Having analysed and noted the commonalities and variances in practice between the three schools, I reflected on the factors that might have caused them. Clearly they were not related to the governors' interpretations of the NCSL (2006(b)) guidance because the evidence had revealed that they were all unaware of its existence. Instead, using what Patton (1987: 158) termed 'evaluator speculation' I conjectured that the variances in the ways in which each school had undertaken the headteacher recruitment and selection process were related to the context of that school, some aspects of which were included in my first family of themes. In the light of this proposition, I reflected further on the data against the background of the contextual features of each school and discovered some 'causal linkages' (Patton, 1987: 158). These could not be proven but were data-based. I therefore felt that I was in a strong position to develop links between the headteacher appointment process and the context of the school and use it as the basis of my argument. However, I did not do this without looking for 'rival hypotheses and competing explanations' (Patton, 1987: 159) within the data. Indeed, when I re-read the data, themes relating to bias, informants' backgrounds and experience in the workplace emerged. I had not included these in my analysis but as they did not relate to all three schools, I did not consider them relevant to the 'causal-linkage' argument. I did, however, consider them of sufficient importance to discuss them at the points where they featured in the headteacher recruitment and selection process so that they could be understood in context.

### **Trustworthiness**

Because of the nature of qualitative research, evaluative criteria are less precise than those used in scientific research where situations can be re-created, results quantified and causality determined (Creswell, 2007). Hence writers tend to use the term 'trustworthiness' instead of the more traditional terms 'reliability' and 'validity' (e.g. Robson, 2002: 168). According to the research literature (e.g. Cohen and Manion

1994; Patton, 1987, 2002; Robson, 2002) there are many ways of achieving trustworthiness. In my own research, trustworthiness was achieved in the first instance through a pilot-study during which I was able to refine my research procedures (Yin, 2003). During the course of this study, I used two types of 'Methodological Triangulation' (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 236). This involved using the same methods to investigate the headteacher appointment process across three different sites. It also involved using different sources of data such as interviews and document collection in order to examine the 'object of study' from different perspectives (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 236). As the interviews were conducted with people in different status positions and with different perspectives on the headteacher appointment process, trustworthiness was also achieved through data triangulation (Denzin, 1978).

Within the relevant literature, it is widely accepted that a review of the findings by research participants is one of the most important forms of triangulation (e.g. Lincoln and Guba, 1985). During the course of this study, I gave the informants the opportunity to review the interview notes I had made and I subsequently made the minor amendments that they suggested but I decided not to send the informants a copy of my draft findings for their comments and reactions. This was because it had been my intention to uncover the intrinsic logic of each case (Yin, 2003) and not to be judgmental. However, by comparing accounts of how the process was enacted in different settings, my study had revealed one strong example of the headteacher appointment process against two that were relatively weak. I believed it would be an abuse of my position of power as a researcher to expose the participants to the full details of the data analysis (Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009). In particular, I considered that 'sharing [of the interim findings] might have unintentional consequences for the participants' (Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009: 286). Instead, I decided to use the findings from each individual case to generate a more

abstract set of principles which could be easily shared with schools operating in very different circumstances and which would not depend on the particular characteristics of any one school.

### **Generalisability**

Many writers have expressed concern about the generalisability of the findings from qualitative research. Amongst these, Patton (2002) argued that it is neither possible nor desirable to generalise such findings in the same way as findings from scientific research can be generalised. This is because the samples in qualitative research are frequently small (Patton, 1987) and the research focuses on social phenomena that are 'variable and context-bound' (Patton, 2002: 582). However, there is an alternative strategy. This is to present qualitative research findings as a 'working hypothesis, not a conclusion' (Cronbach, 1975: 125). In other words, research findings are not simply transmitted from one context to another but are used as bases for discussion and adaptation within each context (Carroll, 2008). In this sense, the findings are relatable rather than generalisable (Bassegy, 1990). This is the position I have adopted here. The findings from the three case-study schools can be related to other contexts in the form of a hypothesis to promote discussion and the reconstruction of knowledge, taking into account the variables of each individual setting. This notion is developed further in the final chapter of this study where I present the model that I have produced from my findings to support governors in the headteacher appointment process. Because I believe this model is relatable rather than generalisable, it is presented in the form of ingredients for governors to discuss and customise rather than as a model of good practice to be strictly followed.

The next three chapters focus on the analysis and interpretation of my research findings. The first of these begins with a detailed analysis of the context of each

school; this forms the background to the way in which I present and reflect upon the rest of the data.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Background to Each School and Defining the School's Needs**

#### **Introduction**

The analysis of the data generated within this study indicates that when the process of headteacher recruitment and selection was enacted within the three case-study schools there was considerable divergence between the schools. Evidence suggests that these variations may have been determined by the unavoidable constraints of the situations within which the governors had to operate. Additionally, they may have been determined by the differing individual and collective understandings about the process that were developed by members of the governing bodies and other stakeholders.

Using data which were generated from all three schools by means of both semi-structured interviews with a sample of the people involved and document collection, the presentation of findings begins by focusing on those aspects which provide a background to the schools. These include details about the context within which each selection panel was formed, about the individuals who made up those panels and about the type and level of support they received from outside the school. These aspects are considered first because they provide some explanation of the way things happened the way they did in each of the schools.

After focusing on the schools' backgrounds, this study moves to an in-depth consideration of three stages of the enactment of the process, from the stage of defining the school's needs to the stages of attracting applicants and selecting the best candidate. The first of these is presented in this chapter and the remaining two in the following two chapters. Each section begins with a short overview of the findings. This is followed by a detailed account of what happened in each school. Each section

ends with a reflection on the factors that may have influenced the way in which the process was undertaken.

### **Background to Each School**

Data for this section were derived from face-to-face interviews with the Chairs of the Selection Panels in all three schools and a governor and the School Improvement Partner/ Advisor (SIP) in **School C**. They were also derived from email correspondence with the Chair of Governors in **School A** (known here as Governor A1 as he was not the Chair of the Selection Panel) and another governor in **School B** (Governor B1).

#### **School A**

As noted in Chapter Three, **School A** was a new school. At the time of this present study it existed in name only as the building was not ready for occupation. It was designed to serve an existing area of high deprivation where the housing and facilities were being increased to serve a growing population. At an early stage in the school's development, the Local Authority appointed a temporary governing body. This comprised experienced governors from other schools who had either been nominated by the headteachers of those schools or had volunteered to serve on this new body. Because the Local Authority wanted the headteacher to be in post two terms before the school opened, the very first task this new group of governors had to undertake was to appoint a headteacher selection panel. This panel comprised five governors, four of whom were chosen either because of what the Chair described as *'their desire to be in on the key issues'*<sup>10</sup> or because they had experience of interviewing at work. The fifth member was a former headteacher. He was included for his experience and expertise. None of the members had any experience of appointing a headteacher. Additionally, the Chair reported that because of the very short time-scale within which

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<sup>10</sup> Throughout this study, the informants' actual words and direct quotations from school documentation are printed in italics.

they had to operate, there had not been any time for training. However, two senior Local Authority advisors supported the governors in some of their activities. The governors saw this input as helpful.

Thus in **School A** the Selection Panel embarked on the process of recruiting and selecting a headteacher as a group of willing individuals. However, they had little knowledge of each other, had minimal experience of working together and had not had the time or opportunity to discuss any strategic plans for the school's future. Additionally as individuals they had no vested interest in the school and once it was established, their future as a group was undecided. Furthermore, they had not received any specific training and were unaware of the official guidance relating to the recruitment and selection of headteachers (NCSL 2006(b)) although they did receive some support from Local Authority advisors.

### ***School B***

**School B** also served an area of high deprivation. Since it opened approximately 15 years ago, it had had just one substantive headteacher. At the time of this present study, the headteacher had been seconded to another position for over a year and had decided not to return to the school. In her absence, the school was led by an Interim Head. According to the Chair, the governors were hoping this person would apply for the permanent post and were not made aware that she had decided not to do so until the closing-date. The Chair did not say how long she had occupied that position on the Governing Body, but she did emphasise the fact that she had been Chair during the successful Ofsted inspection that had taken place almost three years earlier.

From the evidence, the Chair initiated the headteacher recruitment and selection process by asking for volunteers amongst the governors to form a Selection Panel. Only three came forward, all parent governors, just one of whom was available for

every part of the process. This level of availability seemed to reflect the Chair's comment that attendance at all meetings of the Governing Body was sporadic. However, general irregular attendance at meetings did not account for the absence of any staff governors from the Selection Panel as all the activities were planned to take place during the school day. The data-base contains two different accounts of why staff governors were not included. On the one hand, the Chair suggested that their inclusion could have presented problems with supply cover, particularly in the case of the teacher governor. On the other hand, the teacher governor believed she would not have been allowed to take part, hence she did not volunteer. Clearly this matter was not aired, with the result that misunderstandings developed. None of the governors had any experience of appointing a headteacher and none had undertaken any training. The Chair personally tried to find out what to do by researching information from what she considered to be appropriate websites, for example Governornet<sup>11</sup> and the TES, but her search did not direct her to the official guidance (NCSL 2006(b)). For some unspecified reason, the Chair invited the Local Authority Principal Advisor rather than the SIP to support them in the process after the Panel had been formed but even though he provided them with documentation and joined their meetings on two occasions his support was not *'timely'* (Governor B1). In other words, as the Chair concurred, his response to their requests invariably took longer than the governors had anticipated.

Thus in **School B**, the governors embarked on the recruitment and selection process when there had been a hiatus in the school's leadership. They knew their school had been judged as 'good' by Ofsted and were hoping that the Interim Head, who had been the school's deputy at the time of that inspection, would apply for the post. Because of their difficulties in forming a Selection Panel comprising governors who were in a position to participate in all the relevant activities, it was virtually impossible

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<sup>11</sup> The official website for governors; decommissioned in 2011 as part of the Department for Education's programme of rationalisation.

to create a cohesive working group. None of the governors had undertaken any relevant training and support from the Local Authority did not comply with the governors' expectations. Furthermore, the Chair's efforts to find out how to implement the process did not result in accessing the official guidance (NCSL 2006(b)).

### **School C**

**School C** served an area of multiple deprivation where the level of child poverty was particularly high. The school was opened almost 20 years ago and had had just one headteacher who was to retire at the end of the academic year. In this school, the recruitment and selection process was initiated by the School's Personnel Advisor. This person came from outside the Local Authority and was employed by the governors for Human Resources' matters because, as the Chair stated, *'the personnel department of the education service had not been very good in recent years.'* At this early stage, the governors invited their School Improvement Partner/School Advisor (hereinafter referred to as the SIP) to support them in the process. The governors knew her well and her positive role within the school had been noted in the most recent Ofsted report. The governors did not access any relevant information or guidance available nationally, for example from the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) or National Governors' Association (NGA), but the SIP provided them with Local Authority guidelines that incorporated the legal requirements. According to the evidence of both the Chair and Governor C1, decisions about the composition of the Selection Panel took the form of a discussion and a consensus was reached fairly quickly. However, the SIP held a different view. She reported *'a big difference culturally'* between herself as a representative of the Local Authority and the external Personnel Advisor in that the latter was *'very anxious'* about the suggestion that there should be a staff governor on the panel. The SIP remembered him saying, *'It's like a minion appointing the chief!'* Nonetheless, his opinion did not alter the governors' minds and, in line with Local Authority guidance and the SIP's

advice, one governor from each category, including the school staff, was chosen to serve on the Selection Panel plus a second community governor, making a total of five. For four members of the Panel, this was their first experience of appointing a headteacher. In contrast, this was the eighth headteacher appointment in which the Chair had been involved. He had also undertaken Safer Recruitment Training (DfES, 2007(a)).

Thus in **School C**, the governors embarked on the process of headteacher recruitment and selection at a time of great change for the school in that their long-serving headteacher, the only one the school had ever had, was leaving. The governors were a well-established group who, according to the Chair, attended meetings regularly, and as a result were used to working with each other. They had no difficulty in appointing a Selection Panel; in fact they had to make purposive choices to form a representative and balanced group. They were happy to use the expertise of their Personnel Advisor and pro-active in seeking the advice and support of their well-regarded SIP from the outset.

### **Summary**

From the data I have presented, it is evident that there was a similarity between the schools in that none were aware of the official advice regarding headteacher recruitment and selection as represented in the guidance (NCSL 2006(b)). It is also evident that there was a significant difference between the schools in that each embarked on the process of recruiting and selecting a headteacher from a different starting point. Thus whereas in **School C** there was a firm foundation in that the governors were an established group who attended meetings regularly, were in a position to decide who would best serve the school on the Headteacher Selection Panel and had the support of their well-regarded SIP, this was not the case in the other two schools. As documented above, because **School A** was new, the governors

were not well-established as a group. They only knew in theory who might be the best Panel members because of their experience outside the Governing Body and not because of their direct interest in the school and they had not established a working relationship with the Local Authority advisors. Hence their foundation was rather tenuous and under-developed. The foundation in **School B** was even less secure. This was because meetings were generally not well attended and due to governor availability and a level of misunderstanding, it was impossible to form a Selection Panel that comprised governors who represented the various groups within the school and were able to participate in every part of the process. Furthermore, their relationship with the Principal Advisor did not match their needs as they perceived them.

Against this background of three very different contexts, I now present and reflect upon my findings concerning the ways in which each school proceeded with the task of recruiting and selecting a headteacher. As noted above, the stage that I have called 'Defining the School's Needs' is presented in this chapter; the other two stages, namely 'Attracting the Right People to Apply for the Post' and 'Selecting the Best Candidate for the School' are presented in the next two chapters.

### **Defining the School's Needs**

After forming a selection panel, one of the first tasks involved in the process of recruiting and selecting a headteacher involves 'defining the needs of the school, the job to be done and the person needed to do it' (NCSL 2006(b): 32). In this study, evidence shows that this was undertaken in a different way in each school in that different methods were adopted, different people were involved and different decisions were made. Contextual factors related to each school seem to have been responsible for these variations. Amongst these factors were the school's stage of development, the governors' level of involvement in the school and the composition of

the selection panel. Together these impacted on the level of shared understanding that each group of governors had formulated about the school and its needs which in turn impacted on this stage of the process of recruiting and selecting a headteacher. This is exemplified in the following accounts of what took place in each school. Data for this section were derived from the following:

<u>School</u>	<u>Data Source</u>
School A	A face-to-face interview with the Chair of the Selection Panel and email correspondence with Governor A1 (the Chair of Governors)
School B	Face-to-face interviews with the Chair (she was the Chair of Governors and Chair of the Selection Panel), members of the School Council, a Staff Governor, a Class Teacher and a Member of the Support Staff
School C	Face-to-face interviews with the Chair (she was the Chair of governors and chair of the Selection Panel), Governor C1 and the SIP

**Figure Three: Data source for 'Defining the School's Needs'**

Data were also obtained from documentation, for example, Job Descriptions and Person Specifications, contained within Application Packs or provided by the Chairs.

### **What the schools did**

#### ***School A***

Since **School A** was a new school, there was no history of success or otherwise and no other members of staff had been appointed. Hence, the governors had no performance data about the school upon which to base their identification of the qualities they required in a headteacher. Neither were there any other people's skills and abilities to consider. As a consequence, they started with a blank canvas. From the available evidence, three members of the Selection Panel formed a sub-group to consider the school's needs (the Chair and Governors A1 and A2). As demonstrated in Figure Four below, the Chair and Governor A1 had different perspectives about

how the process was undertaken. They remembered different things and considered different aspects important.

Question	Chair's Response	Governor A1's Response
How did you decide on the qualities you were looking for?	<i>We all chose five things that we wanted and came up with the same five but in a different order. We all wanted someone who knew about building-work, with several years' experience ... we wanted a solid person ..., child-friendly, community-focused ... and a good communicator.</i>	<i>We were advised by HR and two experienced senior advisors...We wanted someone with good experience at managing a primary school ... good qualifications, a strong focus on the individual child, a very strong focus on 'community', a good 'people person', a proven track record in terms of teaching and the curriculum, a strong focus on Every Child Matters ...</i>

**Figure Four: School A – An example of governors' differing views about how decisions were made about the qualities they were looking for in a new headteacher**

Coming from different backgrounds, they had different experiences and expectations. Consequently, it appears that these were translated into differing views of some of the qualities they required. For example, both wanted somebody who was knowledgeable and experienced but for the Chair this was someone with experience of building-works whereas Governor A1 wanted somebody with a *'proven track record in teaching and the curriculum.'* Thus the quality they termed 'experienced' conveyed different meanings to each of them. Additionally, they used a different style of language to express what appear to have been the same desired qualities. The Chair used everyday terms, for example, *'child friendly.'* On the other hand, Governor A1 appeared to have been influenced by his own educational background, and used terms such as *'a focus on the individual child.'* However, despite their differing viewpoints on some of the desired qualities and a differing choice of expressive language, both stated that there was total agreement amongst the governors about the type of headteacher they needed.

### **School B**

In **School B**, the Chair co-ordinated the activities that related to this stage of the process. She was supported in this role by Governors B1 and B2, this being the only part of the entire process in which the latter participated. The Chair reported that they met as a group and 'brainstormed ideas', later referring their suggestions to the other governors for feedback but the available evidence does not reveal what these suggestions were. The Chair also requested that all groups of staff and the School Council be consulted about the qualities they wanted in their new headteacher and asked the Interim Head to facilitate this. This is noteworthy as this was the only school where this type of consultation took place. Samples of the individual and group responses are shown in Figure Five below.

<u>Informant</u>	<u>Identified headteacher qualities</u>	<u>Derivation</u>
Staff Governor	<i>Dynamic leader, open personality</i>	<i>Things we'd experienced as successful. We picked on the things we'd admired in both of our previous heads.</i>
Member of support staff	<i>Firm but fair...Someone nice to get along with, someone who wanted to be here in this school, not just wanted the job.</i>	<i>From my own experiences of my childhood in London. I went to good schools. They were firm but fair. It was good for me.</i>
Class Teacher	<i>Someone who sets standards</i>	<i>Our standards of work and behaviour are good.</i>
School Council	<i>Someone who is kind, respects children ... caring ... fair with no favourites ... organised, helpful, loving ...able to teach properly ...</i>	<i>All the people we have had as heads have been good teachers ... They should be a good role model.</i>

**Figure Five: School B – The different headteacher qualities identified by informants**

This figure shows that a range of different qualities were identified by the members of the different groups of staff and pupils. The informants also gave different reasons for their choice of particular qualities. For each informant, their experience at school either as a pupil or teacher was the major influence on their thinking. Interestingly, there were only two references to teaching or standards. All other qualities were, as

the staff governor told me, *'purely based on person, personality and drive.'* When asked how the governors finally decided on the qualities they required, the Chair replied, *'...what the various stakeholders found most important.'* From this it could be deduced that there were not any larger principles driving this decision.

### **School C**

In **School C**, the stage of defining the school's needs appears to have lasted several weeks, demonstrated in Governor C1's recollection of *'loads of meetings'* (her emphasis) between the five members of the Selection Panel, the SIP and the Personnel Advisor. No other stakeholders were involved at this stage. From the available evidence, this was a corporate activity. There were, however, differing perspectives on the basic considerations that determined the governors' thinking. These are shown in Figure Six below.

Question	Chair's Response	Governor C 1's Response
How did you decide what qualities you were looking for?	<p><i>The outgoing head was the founding head ...It was quite something because she was the only head the school had had.</i></p> <p><i>For this particular school this wasn't just a change of head ... this person's going to have to come in and work with the only ethos the school has ever had</i></p>	<p><i>Because the school is known for its creativity we wanted that to continue</i></p> <p><i>We were good at our last Ofsted and we felt we needed the next push up</i></p> <p><i>... We have a lovely staff, a really friendly staff.</i></p>

**Figure Six: School C – Governors' views on the important considerations when making decisions about headteacher qualities**

The above comments are interesting in that as an experienced member of headteacher selection panels, the Chair knew this was an unusual situation. He showed sensitivity concerning how the outgoing head might feel and acknowledged that the new head would face a daunting task. On the other hand, as a young teacher with only a few years' experience at the school, Governor C1 was more interested in the impact the new head would have on the school. Clearly proud of the school's

success and congenial atmosphere, she was keen for these aspects of the school to continue.

However, in spite of the fact that the two governors appear to have had differing views, they were in essence part of the same picture. This idea was articulated by the SIP as follows:

*... It [the process of discussing headteacher qualities] was about trying to keep the ethos of the school but acknowledging that it was transferable ... it was about wanting what was best for the children and the community within the context of where the school was at the moment.*

From the evidence available, this seems to be an accurate summary of the framework within which the governors undertook this stage of the process. They reputedly knew the school well and were clear about the direction in which they wanted it to move.

In addition to defining the qualities they required, the governors had to decide on the Job Description and Person Specification. The choices they made are shown in Figure Seven below.

<u>School A</u>	<u>School B</u>	<u>School C</u>
Adopted Local STPC document 2008)  Devised own Person Specification	Adopted Local Authority Job Authority Job Description (Copied from Description (Copied from STPC document 2009)  Adopted LA Person Specification (Copied from the National Standards for Headteachers 2004)	Adopted JD provided by Personnel Advisor (Copied from STPC document 2009)  Devised own Person Specification

**Figure Seven: Governors' decisions regarding which Job Description and Person Specification they should use for the headteacher post in their schools**

From this figure it is important to note the different choices that the governors made. Whereas they all chose to use a generic Job Description, **School A** and **School C** chose to devise their own Person Specifications. The contents of the latter are discussed in the next chapter in conjunction with the other documents in the

Application Packs as this was deemed more appropriate: for the present part of this study it is simply necessary to note the choices that were made.

### **Reflective Summary**

In the preceding sections, the data collected in each site showed the variations in the way in which the process of defining the school's needs was undertaken by each group of governors. I now review these differences in the light of each school's background and reflect upon their possible causes.

Because of its newness and the short time-scale within which the governors were required to appoint a headteacher, the Governing Body in **School A** had not met as a group to engage in strategic planning for the school's future. As a consequence, when the Selection Panel met to discuss the qualities they required in their headteacher, each governor had individualistic ideas based on their own perceptions of the school's needs. These ideas were initially disparate and had to be negotiated through discussion but more importantly, they were strongly influenced by the school's immediate situation. This would suggest that by focusing almost exclusively on the school's present, largely practical needs, the governors were paying insufficient attention to the qualities their headteacher would require to enable them to meet the ever-changing and increasing challenges of a twenty-first century school (NCSL, 2008(b); Day et al., 2011; Dimmock, 2012).

In **School B**, the handful of governors who were available met as a group to '*brainstorm ideas*' (Chair). Neither informant said what these ideas were but the expression '*brainstorm ideas*' seemed to confirm the Chair's comment that the matter of needing to appoint a headteacher had not been discussed before this and, as in School A, was not part of any longer-term planning. As a result, the headteacher appointment process took the form of '*fire-fighting*' the vacancy that arose (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009(a): 393). Even though the governors did not divulge any ideas

they may have had, both emphasised the fact that they had consulted a range of internal stakeholders including staff of all levels and pupils. This involvement of stakeholders may have been part of the school's ethos but the strong emphasis on stakeholder involvement leads to the suggestion that the governors may not have been sufficiently knowledgeable of the school's needs nor sufficiently confident to contribute their own ideas, hence their reliance on others. This could have occurred because, as the Chair reported, the governors had not attended meetings on a regular basis and as a consequence had not developed a shared understanding of the school's requirements. Also, the evidence suggests that the governors relied heavily on the successful headteacher and her long-term plans for the school may not have been shared with and understood by the Governing Body (Ofsted, 2002). Whatever the reason for relying on stakeholders, the governors needed to have exercised caution because the stakeholders' views were based on their own past experience rather than any knowledge and understanding of the headteacher qualities required to successfully lead a school both now and in the future (e.g. Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; DfES, 2007(b)).

In **School C**, a different, more purposeful approach was adopted. Here, the Selection Panel held discussions over several weeks and were joined by their Personnel Advisor and the SIP. No other stakeholders were involved at this stage. Because all the governors attended meetings regularly, they were what Wenger (1998: 6) termed a 'community of practice' in that they were accustomed to working together as a group and had collectively established the direction in which they wanted the school to progress (Fullan, 2002). Between them, the Selection Panel members represented the various groups with an interest in the school. They had different levels of experience and expertise yet the qualities they agreed upon formed a composite picture of the headteacher they were seeking to recruit, demonstrating that they shared an understanding of the type of person the school required for the next stage

of its development (DCSF, 2010). From their experience of working together and the Chair's personal experience of previous headteacher appointments, the governors were also aware of their own limitations, hence their invitation to the SIP to support them in the process.

From the above evidence, it can be concluded that contextual factors relating to each school particularly the range of experience of the governing body and the level of support available were largely responsible for the varying levels of shared understanding about the stage of 'Defining the School's Needs' and the subsequent variations in practice. This is in line with the work of Thrupp and Lupton (2006) who suggested that differences between schools, particularly in terms of their capacity to improve, were more likely to be attributable to wider contextual factors than features such as internal organisation and leadership practices.

The activities detailed in this section mark the first stage in the recruitment and selection of a headteacher. The next two stages, those of attracting applicants and then selecting the best candidate for the school, are considered in the next two chapters.

## Chapter Five

### Attracting the Right People to Apply for the Post

#### Introduction

In this chapter, the next stage of the process of recruiting and selecting a headteacher is considered. The essence of this stage is encapsulated in the chapter's title. It involves attracting potential candidates to apply for the post and at the same time encouraging 'self-selection' through the quality of the information provided (NCSL 2006(b): 44). The chapter comprises a textual analysis of a selection of data that were compiled from the recruitment materials produced by the three case-study schools. These include the newspaper advertisements in all three schools, and, in the case of **School C**, the supplementary on-line information. They also include hard copies of the application packs in **School A** and **School B** and the on-line application pack in **School C**.

Analysis of the data reveals that there was considerable variance in the style and appearance of the advertisements and in the written text they contained. This is treated here as evidence of the different images of the school that the governors wished to portray, and of the different messages they sought to convey in order to attract potential applicants. There was also variance in the additional recruitment materials supplied, notably in the choice of documents, the way in which they were presented and in the type of information and level of detail they provided. This will be treated as evidence of the governors' different levels of knowledge and understanding of their school, of their priorities for its development and of the qualities they were looking for in a headteacher. It will also be treated as evidence of the governors' different levels of understanding of the process of attracting suitable people to apply for the post.

The data for each school are presented in separate sections so that a clear picture is built up of the similarities and differences between the schools. At the end of the chapter, a reflective summary considers the contextual factors that might have influenced the decisions each selection panel made about the materials they compiled and made available to prospective applicants.

## **What the Schools Did**

### ***School A***

According to the Chair of the Selection Panel's evidence (hereinafter referred to as the Chair), the governors in **School A** asked a commercial company to create some sample advertisements from which they chose one for publication in the Times Educational Supplement (TES). In the paper it stood out from the rest as it featured a cement-mixer with red paint spurting from it. It also featured sports equipment, young children's building-blocks and a few folders or books. The message from the picture was clear: the school was new, brand new. There were also implicit messages contained within this visual image. Firstly, the headteacher may have to be involved in building-works or at least have knowledge of building-project oversight. Secondly, the headteacher may be expected to promote sporting activities and competition, demonstrated by the sports equipment and large trophy. The majority of this equipment had a traditional male bias, namely football and cricket; hence even though the colour of the bag had been changed from blue to pink at the governors' request '*because it looked like a school for boys*' (Chair), there were suggestions that a male candidate might be preferable even though this was not stated. The choice of red paint shooting from the cement-mixer also suggested the excitement associated with becoming head of a new school as encapsulated in the everyday expression 'paint the town red' (Appendix 3).

The Advertisement's headline and first lines of text underlined the school's newness and explicitly confirmed the implicit message portrayed within the picture, that interest or experience in building-project oversight was a requirement for this post. The text read as follows:

***Put all your experience into building a new school***

*Become the first head teacher of a brand new community school in ...  
This is a rare opportunity to be involved in the development of a school  
from the design and construction stages all the way through to hiring  
the staff and enrolling the first year of pupils.*

This choice of words concerning what the Chair called a 'hands-on' approach to the building of the new school mirrored her priorities as noted in the previous chapter. Additionally, the word 'community' reflected one of the priorities Governor A1 (the Chair of Governors) had identified earlier. The final sentence in the Advertisement, however, introduced a new idea associated with becoming headteacher of **School A**. It read as follows:

*Creating a new school to your own standards will be the defining moment  
in your career.*

Explicitly, this sentence suggested that opening the school would provide a rare and exciting career opportunity. Implicitly it suggested that the governors were leaving this responsibility very much to the new headteacher.

**School A's** Application Pack was presented in a plain plastic wallet. It consisted of a Job Description, Person Specification, a Letter from Governor A1 to potential applicants and plans of the proposed school building. The latter gave an indication of what the new school would look like and how the rooms were organised together with a time-table for the completion of the work. As recorded in the previous chapter, the Job Description was provided by the relevant Local Authority and copied from the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (2008). As a generic document, it did

not provide details of the governors' priorities and requirements for this particular post. These could be determined from the other two documents included in the Application Pack, namely the Person Specification and Governor A1's Letter.

Both the Person Specification and the Letter focused on the school's newness, but each had a different emphasis. In the Person Specification, headteacher qualities relating to communication and relationships and promoting educational achievement were listed but from their position at the top of the list and from the frequency with which they occurred, it was the practical aspects of *'managing the new build'* that assumed the highest level of importance.

In Governor A1's Letter, on the other hand, on the eleven occasions that the school's newness was mentioned, it was the educational rather than the practical aspects of creating the school that were emphasised. One example of this is seen in the use of the word *'educational'* to qualify the term *'oversight of the new build.'* Governor A1's Letter also confirmed his concern for the community and for children which were recorded in Chapter Four. These can be seen in the letter-heading which read as follows:

***'... at the heart of the community serving children and families'***

Additionally, they can be seen in the following statement:

*We genuinely believe that **every** child matters and deserves the best possible personal and educational outcomes*

Furthermore, Governor A1's letter acknowledged that the advertised post would present many challenges, possibly because of the expected composition of the new community that the school was designed to serve. He therefore sought to reassure potential applicants that even though the school was new, the governors had a *'very wide range of experience'* and would be supportive. Nonetheless, whilst these

statements gave an indication of Governor A1's priorities for the school, they did not convey any clear information about the qualities in headship he was looking for.

Thus, taken together, the recruitment materials for **School A** stressed the school's newness in terms of getting the building ready and managing the school's opening but there was less emphasis on how the governors expected the school to develop. There was also little guidance for prospective applicants about the type of qualities the new headteacher would be expected to possess.

### **School B**

In **School B** the Advertisement was created by the Chair and Governor B1 and was based on ideas taken from advertisements in previous editions of the TES. It was a clear, clean-looking advertisement with a good proportion of white space. Red and blue bands of colour were used to highlight essential features such as the school's size and the salary offered. A small interesting logo depicting somebody juggling or reaching towards six stars was the only non-text feature. I discovered later that this was the school logo; however, its meaning and significance were not obvious to anybody who was unfamiliar with the school. Visually, therefore, the Advertisement did not transmit a definitive message about the school nor about the governors' priorities.

In contrast, the written text of the Advertisement communicated two clear messages about the school (Appendix 4)<sup>12</sup>. These were that children occupied a prominent position, demonstrated in the opening sentence, '*The children, staff and governors wish to appoint ...*' and the current leadership was successful indicated by the desire to '*build on the successes of the current leadership.*' The governors' requirements for the new headteacher were also listed. They read as follows:

*[We are looking for]:*

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<sup>12</sup> The logo has been deleted for reasons of confidentiality

- *a visionary leader who is able to enrich children's learning experiences*
- *a dynamic leader with proven leadership and management skills*
- *an inspirational leader who places the family at the heart of the child*
- *a leader who is able to foster excellent working relationships with children, families and the local community*

These requirements reflected some of the qualities identified as important by the various groups of internal stakeholders as reported in the previous chapter. Apart from the single reference to children's learning they were, as the staff governor commented, largely based on *'person, personality and drive.'* They provided a further example of the prominent position occupied by children and emphasised the seminal position of the community. Perhaps most importantly, the notion of the headteacher as 'leader' was stressed. This was in contrast with School A where the headteacher as overseer of the building-works was stressed. Since there was no indication of any vision that the governors may have had for the school's future development, it could be assumed that the headteacher, as leader, would be expected to do everything. Furthermore, the third listed requirement in the Advertisement was not clear. Even though the expression *'places the family at the heart of the child'* conveys the sentiment that the child's family is important, the sentence itself appears confused and the precise message not obvious. I thought that the Advertisement had not been proof-read but when I asked the Chair if the sentence was correct, she affirmed that it was. She added that it was meant to tell potential applicants what the school stood for and smiled. For her the message seemed self-evident but I remained unsure what meaning this phrase would have for a professional audience.

The written text of the Advertisement also contained two implicit messages. The first derived from the following statement:

*... In return we offer you ... a pro-active governing body.*

By making this statement, it would appear that the governors wished to portray the role they already enjoyed within the school and, by implication, intended to continue. The second implicit message related to the gender of the new headteacher. From the emphasis on children, families and relationships, there were hints of a traditional female bias. Thus, even though it was not explicitly stated, a female headteacher might be thought to have been preferable.

In contrast with School A, the folder containing the Application Pack was tailor-made for **School B** and featured a montage of photographs of pupils from the school undertaking a range of activities. This reflected the Advertisement's emphasis on children and the requirement for the new headteacher to have the ability '*to enrich children's learning experiences.*' The contents consisted of a wide range of information about the school including the Prospectus, the Home/School Agreement and details about the Breakfast Club, providing potential applicants with some insight into the way the school functioned and underlining the importance they attached to the relationship with parents and families as detailed in the Advertisement. The contents of the Pack also included the Job Description and Person Specification. As noted in the previous chapter, these were provided by the Local Authority and adopted by the governors without any amendment. Reasons for adopting these documents as they stood were not stated but whatever the reason, they were not specific to the school and as a result they did not indicate **School B's** particular requirements. However, the remaining documents in the Application Pack were of interest in furthering my knowledge of **School B's** priorities. These were two letters to prospective applicants. One was written by the Chair, this being usual custom and practice. The other letter was from the 16 members of the School Council whose ages ranged from seven to eleven (Appendix 2). According to the evidence, this letter was composed by the children themselves and scribed by the Assistant Head. The letter's inclusion in the Application Pack was unusual, particularly in primary schools, and confirmed the

prominent position occupied by children within the school as indicated throughout the Advertisement. As evidenced below, these letters were very different in style and content but each provided interesting details about the respective writers' priorities for the school and the qualities they desired in their new headteacher.

The Chair's letter was headed by two extracts from the latest Ofsted report. These highlighted the '*outstanding care and support*' pupils received and the '*very strong links*' with parents. By choosing to print these particular extracts, it could be assumed that the Chair was seeking to underline the features of the school that Ofsted had endorsed and which, by implication, she would wish the new head to continue. The letter itself was written in a friendly tone. As was the case in School A, it began '*Dear Colleague*', immediately indicating the type of relationship the Chair would expect to have with the headteacher. It continued with a word of thanks to recipients for being interested in becoming the school's next headteacher. This was particularly significant in the climate of headteacher shortage and may have been an attempt to underline the warmth of collegiality within the school. The main contents of the letter were largely a repetition of the Advertisement text in that ideas of '*visionary and inspirational leadership*', '*relationships*' and '*community*' were emphasised. Children's learning was given an even stronger focus, the new headteacher being required to be '*passionate about children's learning.*' However, no details were provided about what these ideas would mean in practice or how they fitted with any plans the governors may have had for the school's development. Nevertheless, the Chair's letter did elaborate on an important aspect of the school which related to the headteacher recruitment process. This concerned the current leadership position and read as follows:

*We are committed to seeking out the right person ... to build on the success and outstanding leadership of our previous Headteacher and current Senior Leadership Team.*

The explicit message was clear and repeated the Advertisement's claim that the school leadership was successful. However, there were two significant additional details. Firstly, the people in leadership positions worked as a team; consequently the new headteacher would need to be prepared to be part of that team. Secondly, from the use of the adjective '*previous*', it was apparent that the position was already vacant. It is therefore a possibility that by omitting to divulge the destination of the previous incumbent, some potential applicants may have been deterred from submitting an application because of the lack of clarity regarding the situation. Clearly, this would not have been the governors' intention.

In contrast with the rather general nature of the Chair's letter, the School Council's letter communicated a clear and powerful message. This was that the pupils enjoyed school and were clear about the type of person they wanted their new headteacher to be. It was written in simple terms and began '*Dear reader*', almost as if the pupils did not know how to address a prospective headteacher and lacked a proper ending. Nonetheless, three of the eight items they listed contained a wealth of information about the school that was not provided elsewhere. For example, there was an indirect explanation of the school logo expressed in the statement they '*would like someone who is able to keep us reaching for the stars.*' The most striking point, however, was that the pupils were proud of their school and were keen to maintain the status quo, this being demonstrated in the following requirement:

***Keep us smiling and ensure our learning stays fun.***

The remaining items focused on the personal qualities the pupils wanted their new headteacher to possess. These were more specific than those identified by the Chair. Whereas the latter had described the positive features of the school but left the personal attributes of the headteacher open to interpretation, the pupils translated

what was important to them into detailed characteristics and communicated these in explicit terms. This is exemplified in Figure Eight below.

Extract from the Chair's Letter	Extract from the School Council's Letter
<i>We take pride in our calm, happy and friendly atmosphere where all are valued and listened to.</i>	<i>We would like someone who is respectful of us ... treats all of the pupils equally... loving and kind and always willing to listen to us when we have a problem that needs sorting out.</i>

**Figure Eight: School B - An example of the contrasting levels of detail provided in the letters from the Chair and the School Council!**

The pupils' points were perceptive in that whilst they contained a certain amount of what an adult might consider humour, for example, they wanted their head to be '*fashionable but smart*', they indicated an appreciation of the main function of a school, encapsulated in the requirements for the new head to be '*... strict when needed to keep us on track*' and, '*able to ... maintain the high **School B** standard...*'. There was also a hint of traditional bias in favour of a female, suggested by the remark about the headteacher being fashionable. This bias may have derived from their own experience as both the Substantive and Interim Heads were female. If so, this would have confirmed their satisfaction with the school leadership and, as noted above, their desire to maintain the status quo.

Thus the recruitment materials for **School B** were rather disparate in content. They focused on the personal qualities that the various internal stakeholders, particularly the pupils, wanted their new headteacher to possess; considerably less attention was paid to the specific job that the new headteacher would be required to do.

### **School C**

According to the evidence of both the Chair and Governor C1, the governors in **School C** discussed the recruitment materials over a period of several weeks but when they were running out of time, the Chair made the final decisions. As he

commented, *'I suppose actually the final version was probably me...'* The Advertisement was published in the TES on a day when there were 193 other advertisements for headteacher posts, this being twice the average number I calculated over the period January to March 2010. The page on which it was published was cramped but it stood out from the rest because it featured a child's drawing of two children in school uniform with their arms around each other against a background that comprised a road, blocks of flats, commercial buildings and places of worship. The sunshine in one corner had a face that was almost smiling. Superimposed on another corner was the logo from the Basic Skills Agency, signifying that the school had been accredited for quality in the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy. Thus the message from the picture was clear: This is an urban school where children are important. It is a happy place where they interact positively with each other. Moreover, it is a place where learning occupies a prominent position (Appendix 5).

Compared with other advertisements for headteacher posts, the written text was lengthy. The first two paragraphs transmitted clear messages about the school, stating the following:

- The school was *'highly regarded', 'popular', 'successful', 'inclusive and happy.'*
- It had a *'clear development plan'* and a *'strong commitment both to academic standards and the individual growth of each child.'*
- It valued the Creative Arts; they were *'one of the school's strengths.'*

Corresponding with these details about the school, the Advertisement identified the personal characteristics that the new headteacher should possess. Some of these are evidenced in the following:

*We are looking for an exceptional leader who will inspire our outstanding team of teaching and support staff and who will deliver a school development plan focused on sustaining improvement in standards and attainment, while*

*building on our culture of inclusivity and a holistic view of children's achievements in and out of the classroom.*

These qualities thus focused on the governors' desire for the school to continue to improve and reflected the qualities that the informants had identified when they were discussing the school's needs as noted in Chapter Four.

There was, however, an additional quality that had not surfaced in these earlier discussions. This required potential applicants to be *'excited by the prospect of leading a confident school.'* This was an unusually positive statement at a time when the joys of headship are rarely mentioned and seemed to reflect the positive image of the school portrayed in the child's drawing. Hence both the visual image and written text of the Advertisement presented readers with a clear view of the school and of the governors' requirements. It also acted as a signpost to the school web-site where further information and an 'Application Pack' could be obtained.

The web-site comprised a celebration in photographs of school activities with a strong emphasis on the Creative Arts. This reinforced both the statement by Governor C1 and the assertion in the Advertisement noted above that creativity was *'one of the school's strengths.'* In addition to conveying strong messages about the school curriculum, the images transmitted direct messages about inclusivity. The enjoyment portrayed in these images also supported the assertion in the Advertisement that it was a *'happy school.'*

The 'Application Pack' comprised the Job Description, Person Specification and Letter from the Chair of Governors. As noted in Chapter Four, the Job Description was taken directly from the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (2009). As a generic document, it was not distinctive, nor specific to the school, hence did not indicate the governors' priorities. However, these could be discovered from the other documents, namely the Person Specification and the Chair's Letter.

From the Chair's evidence, the governors chose items for the Person Specification from the Local Authority samples provided by the SIP. The Chair recounted how one that had been used recently '*astonished*' him since it contained 51 items. He obviously found this excessive and the other governors either shared his view of their own accord or were persuaded to do so. In either case, they all chose to compile a much shorter Person Specification to suit the school's needs which, as noted above, had been discussed at length. From the Chair's account, and from its position at the head of the list of essential qualities, the '*ability to ... manage change effectively*' was seen as the most important. Other essential qualities related to vision and leadership, notably with regard to learning, and to relationships with all stakeholders, particularly governors. This is evidenced in the following:

*'Have knowledge of ... the ways in which a Headteacher and staff should work collaboratively with governors'*

This latter requirement is interesting as it had not been mentioned by the informants when we discussed the school's needs. The other quality that featured in the Person Specification that had not been mentioned previously read as follows:

*Demonstrate a commitment to valuing the culture and diversity of the school and its wider community*

This is interesting because it was the only time that any direct written reference was made to the context of the school. It gave potential applicants the clear message that the governors intended to appoint somebody who could show that they were committed to leading a school in a typical urban context.

The Chair's letter was written in a more formal tone than those in the other two schools and began '*Dear Applicant*' rather than '*Dear Colleague.*' It comprised two parts. The first part (a short paragraph) included the important messages that the school was '*thriving*', it had '*strong links with the local community*' and the current

head was retiring; hence the situation was clear. The following sentence also made the governors' requirements clear:

*Governors wish to appoint a new Headteacher who has the personality, skills and experience to take the whole community forward into the next decade.*

Although the letter did not elaborate on these requirements, possibly on account of the large amount of detail included in the Advertisement, it provided evidence that the governors were looking for long-term progression.

The second part of the letter (a full page) provided comprehensive details about visits to the school and about how to submit an application. It also provided details about the short-listing process with relevant dates. This level of attention to detail indicated that the Chair had a practical priority in addition to the other priorities that had been listed, namely to ensure that potential applicants were well-informed about all aspects of applying for the post. In so doing, he portrayed the governors as informed and organised in the execution of their responsibilities regarding the recruitment and selection of a headteacher.

Thus, taken together, the recruitment materials in **School C** formed a composite picture of the school, of the job that needed to be done and of the qualities that the new headteacher would need to possess in order to succeed.

### **Reflective Summary**

In the above accounts, the variations in the ways in which each school presented itself and attempted to attract potential applicants have been revealed. I now review the differences between the schools against the analysis of the different contexts in which they were working as discussed in Chapter Four.

I begin this review by considering the advertisements. Whilst people may have a range of motives for looking at the 'Situations Vacant' section in a newspaper, visual

impact is generally regarded as essential in order to 'capture the attention of the reader' (Ryan, Gubern and Rodriguez, 2000: 353). In this study, each Selection Panel used a different type of illustration and format in order to attract attention to their post (Banks, 2007). The contexts of the schools may provide an explanation for these differences. As noted in Chapter Four, the Governing Body in **School A** had only recently been formed and was required to appoint a headteacher within a very short time-scale. Therefore, lacking time and possibly lacking relevant expertise, they decided to use the services of a commercial company to design an advertisement specifically to portray the school's newness. The resultant image that powerfully represented the most 'compelling selling point' of the school at that time (Peasnell, 2008: 8) suggested that the decision to employ a company with specialist skills was wise.

**School C** were said to value the creative arts and had recently received funding for a new Arts Centre so it was not surprising that they chose to use a child's colourful drawing to visually 'tell the story' (Banks, 2007: 14) of the school's urban nature and its inclusivity. In **School B**, however, they used an image that was not easily recognisable and its visual 'grammar' was unclear (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996: 2). As a result, it may have had little significance to those who were unfamiliar with the school. It is possible that because the governors had hoped and believed the Interim Head would apply for the post, they considered that there was no need to pay too much attention to attracting the attention of people who did not know the school.

Whilst in commercial advertising, as Fairclough (1995: 7) suggested, 'the images have primacy over the words', in recruitment advertising the images attract attention but do not necessarily assume the highest level of importance. Here it is the text that is critical (Peasnell, 2008). Through this medium, each group of governors chose to convey specific messages about their schools in order to attract suitable applicants. Reasons for these different choices of emphasis can be traced back to two main

aspects of each school's context, namely the history of the governing body as an operational group and the interests and experiences of the members of that group. These two strands are now explored.

Given the rarity value of opening a new school, it would seem only natural that the governors in **School A** sought to impress potential applicants with the school's newness. However the recent composition of the Governing Body also meant that they had not undertaken any earlier strategic planning which had paid attention to 'Defining the School's Needs' or the headteacher qualities required to lead an urban school in the twenty-first century (e.g. Lupton, 2004; Ahtaridou and Hopkins, 2012). Despite this omission, the situation was translated into the following positive statement which was designed to attract potential applicants:

*'Creating a new school to your own standards will be a defining moment in your career.'*

This statement showed that individual governors had brought their personal experience to contribute to the work of the Governing Body. As a former headteacher, Governor A1 knew that opening a new school was an attractive proposition. He also knew that headteachers would expect the governors' priorities to centre on educational as well as practical matters. Hence such features were included in his letter, creating a balance of interest within the 'grammar' of the recruitment materials (Bowen, 2009: 27).

The governors in **School B** sought to impress potential applicants with the school's current levels of success, particularly regarding the relationships it had built up with families and the level of care shown to children, both of which were highlighted by extracts from the latest Ofsted report. This theme which featured repeatedly throughout the recruitment materials provided further evidence of the governors' satisfaction with the school as it was. It also suggested that they were unable to

identify the appropriate range of skills a new headteacher would need to be able to 'move the school in a sustained direction' (Fullan, 2002: 12).

The governors' limited range of ideas could have been a result of the composition of the Selection Panel. As reported above, only two governors were available for this part of the process, a community governor and a parent governor. This meant that the group was not only extremely small; it was also imbalanced because two categories of governor, Local Authority and staff, were not represented (DfES, 1986). In addition, their feelings of anticipation that the Interim Head would apply for the post could have influenced what they said about the school (Bowen, 2009), knowing that the person they wanted was already leading the school. It could also have influenced what they said about the qualities they required in a headteacher and their decision to pass this responsibility to the School Council by asking them to write a letter to prospective candidates detailing their requirements.

The governors in **School C** chose to use the school's current levels of success, its inclusivity and its emphasis on the creative arts to impress potential applicants and coupled these positive attributes with a message of their intention to build on the work that had already been accomplished and move the school forward (NCSL, 2006(b)). Because this Governing Body had been an established group for some time, and had developed what Hughes, Jewson and Unwin (2007: 4) termed a 'shared repertoire' of knowledge about the school's present and future leadership needs (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009(a)), the Selection Panel had a firm basis upon which to make their decisions about the information they would provide in the recruitment materials and about the ways in which they would seek to attract the right candidates in order to secure their school's progress on its 'espoused improvement journey' (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009(a): 382). This clearly underlines the value of the process of headteacher recruitment and selection being positioned as an integral part of the

governors' strategic thinking and succession planning (Bennett, 2006; Southworth, 2006).

The above evidence shows that the different ways in which each school had handled the earlier stage of 'Defining the School's Needs' were reflected in both the visual and written materials they put out for potential candidates, with only **School C** able to articulate a clear medium- and long-term view of what they wanted from their headteacher. All of this may have consequences for the application process as a whole and for the candidates who were attracted to apply for each school. There is a risk that those schools with the weakest grasp of what was involved at this stage of the process would have seriously narrowed the field of suitable applicants. This would be likely to have particularly strong impacts on urban schools in the way the literature on urban education predicts (e.g. Donnelly, 2003; Riley, 2008).

The next chapter moves on to the stage of selecting the best candidate for the school. It shows whether people were attracted to apply for the post. It also shows if the applicants were suitable in terms of the school's needs, bearing in mind the results of relevant research which demonstrated that a relationship exists between the information provided and the suitability of the pool of applicants (Roberson, Collins and Oreg, 2005).

## Chapter Six

### Selecting the Best Candidate for the School

#### Introduction

Within the process of recruiting and selecting a headteacher, the subject of this chapter follows that of Chapter Five where the governors' attempts to attract suitable candidates were considered. It focuses on the methods used by the governors to select the best candidate for their school from the initial stage of short-listing through to the final stage of choosing which candidate should be appointed.

Data for this chapter were obtained from a number of informants and from a textual analysis of the documents that each school was able and willing to provide. These were as follows:

<u>School</u>	<u>Data Source</u>
School A	Face-to-face interview with the Chair, email exchange with Governor A1. Details of Interview Day tasks, Interview Panel Questions
School B	Face-to-face interviews with the Chair and the Teacher Governor. Email exchange with Governor B1 and group discussion with the School Council. Details of Interview Day tasks, School Council Questions, Interview Panel Questions including 'Answer Pointers'
School C	Face-to-face Interviews with the Chair, Governor C1 and the SIP. Details of Interview Day tasks, Criteria for Year Assembly task and Assessment Matrix. Interview Panel Questions including Answer Prompts and Assessment Matrix.

**Figure Nine: Data Source relating to Methods of Selection**

For reasons of confidentiality, I did not request details of the candidates' application forms and responses to the tasks and interview questions; nor were they offered.

The analysis of data reveals that there was considerable variance within and between the schools in the ways in which each selection panel undertook the task of choosing

candidates for the short-list. There was also variance in both the number and content of the tasks chosen by each selection panel for the short-listed candidates to undertake and in the content of the formal interview. Furthermore, each selection panel used different methods of assessing and recording the candidates' responses and involved different individuals and groups of stakeholders within the final selection process. These variations will be treated here as evidence of the governors' different experiences and understandings of the process of selection in addition to their expectations for their new headteacher.

As in the previous two chapters, the selected data for each school are presented in separate sections so that a clear picture is built up of the similarities and differences between the schools. At the end of the chapter, a reflective summary considers the contextual factors that could have caused these variations.

## **What the Schools Did**

### ***School A***

#### *Short-Listing*

According to the evidence, each school received a larger number of applications than usual for primary headteacher posts<sup>13</sup>. This indicated that, in terms of numbers, the process of attracting people to apply for the post had a positive outcome in all the schools. This was most marked in **School A** where a total of 15 applications were received, possibly because of the rare opportunities provided by the school's newness. Copies of all of these were sent to each member of the Selection Panel giving them the opportunity to look at the forms before the panel met. Figure Ten below charts the Chair's and Governor A1's accounts of what happened next. From this, it can be seen that the governors decided on their own approach and undertook the task of short-listing accordingly.

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<sup>13</sup> In 2010, primary headteacher posts averaged 4.6 applications ( [http://www.governors.org.uk](#) )

Question	Chair's Response	Governor A1's Response
What method of short-listing did you use?	<i>I read the forms through twice. I discarded some. For example, there was a couple who wanted to job-share ... but supposing they got divorced... Their qualifications didn't mean much to me but I knew Governor A1 would know. I needed to visualise them in a hard hat! On the day, everybody discussed all the forms. Two people from the LA guided us through. They were excellent. We said, 'Yes', 'No, 'Maybe' and ended up with 6, 3 men and 3 women.</i>	<i>We used the Person Specification and Job Description as criteria for selecting the short-listed candidates. Each of us had a copy of all the applications and this enabled each of us to make choices ... At our panel meeting, we discussed every candidate in detail. Some were quickly eliminated unanimously. We read each of the references as well as the candidates' application forms. The officers' advice was very useful...</i>

**Figure Ten: School A - The process of short-listing**

The criteria used by the Chair were more personal than those of Governor A1. For example, the former would not countenance the idea of a married couple job-sharing in case their relationship broke down. She was also less interested in qualifications and more interested in the practicalities of ensuring the building was ready on time, indicated by her statement, *'I needed to visualise them in a hard hat!'* Governor A1, on the other hand, adopted the approach one would have expected of a former headteacher, scrutinising all the paperwork and assessing it against the criteria identified in the Person Specification and Job Description. However, despite their differing interests and ways of approaching the task, they agreed that the support from the Local Authority advisors had been helpful. They also identified the same six candidates for the short-list.

### *Interview Day Tasks*

The final selection process took place over two days at a near-by hotel. During the first day there were two main tasks. Task One involved a group discussion about organising an evening meeting to *'showcase the new school.'* It was observed and scored by the Selection Panel. Governor A1 suggested that the four Ofsted grades

(Outstanding, Good, Satisfactory and Inadequate) were used for each of the main criteria they had selected. He did not specify what these criteria were, but from the Chair's evidence, they appeared to have been the same five qualities which she had identified earlier, namely '*someone who knew about building work, was experienced... child -friendly, community- focused and a good communicator.*' Task Two, a presentation about integrating the new school with the community, was also observed and graded by the Selection Panel in the same way. At the end of this day, three candidates (two male, one female) were chosen to proceed to Day Two.

At the beginning of the second day, the candidates were asked to undertake a written task. This required them to identify the actions they would need to take in the two terms before the school opened. Thus from the above, it is evident that all three tasks focused almost exclusively on the school's newness and the place it would occupy within the local community. They made no reference to the school's development, suggesting that its future was not one of the governors' priorities at that time.

#### *Formal Interview*

During their interviews, the candidates were asked a total of seven questions (Appendix 6). There were no answer prompts for the Selection Panel to refer to and each member made their own notes on the candidates' responses. The first question was asked by the Chair. As shown in Figure Ten above, she had decided that she needed to '*visualise them in a hard hat.*' Hence it was not surprising that her question concerned the practicalities of the building works, asking the following:

*In the worst case scenario the building may not be ready on time.*

*What are the possible issues and how will you address them?*

The majority of the other questions also made reference to the school's newness but were more concerned with educational rather than practical matters. This is demonstrated in the following question from Governor A2:

*How would you ensure a broad curriculum taking into account the particular challenges of a new school?*

As was the case with the tasks, these questions concerned the school's immediate needs and gave little indication that the governors had thought about its future. One question, however, also from Governor A2, indicated that even though the governors might not have thought about the school's future, it was something they believed the new head should consider. This question asked the following:

*How would you thread the concept of sustainability through everything we do?*

This is interesting, not only because of its reference to the school's life beyond the first term or two but also because of the use of the word 'we'. As discussed below, this notion of the headteacher and the governors working together may have been significant within the final stage of the selection process.

#### *Final Decision*

From the accounts of the Chair and Governor A1, it is apparent that they held differing views about how the decision was made regarding which candidate to appoint. This can be seen in Figure Eleven below. From this record it is evident that the Chair's focus was on the building works and the community. It was the female candidate's answer to the question about where she would work if the building was not ready that caused her to be eliminated since the Chair did not support her idea of working at home. On the other hand, the Chair was interested in 'Nigel'<sup>14</sup> because he had some original ideas. Governor A1, however, had a different focus. He emphasised the importance of the references and application forms and reported that the senior officers' views had been sought. He did not appear impressed by Nigel's originality of

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<sup>14</sup> All names in this study have been changed

presentation and did not overtly favour or discount any of the candidates during the early parts of the discussion.

Questions	Chair's Responses	Governor A1's responses
How did you know if the candidate possessed the qualities you were looking for?	<i>We all had our own areas of interest and knew what we were looking for ... They all said similar things but we could see the difference when we asked them where they would work if there was no school building. The woman said 'At home' so that ruled her out. The candidate we liked said 'In the community centre.'</i>	<i>We read each of the references as well as the candidate's own application form. We also asked the senior officers their views... The interviews were very searching ...</i>
Did any of the candidates offer additional characteristics that interested you?	<i>One man (Nigel) was very sure of himself. He didn't do a computer-based presentation. He gave us all a dried poppy and a packet of seeds... That was a good idea.</i>	<i>Not really</i>

**Figure Eleven: School A - The final candidate selection**

Despite the fact that Governor A2 had decided on Day One who should be appointed and had tried to persuade the governors that they need not return for the second day, the final decision appears to have taken some time. After the Chair had discounted the female candidate, Governor A1 insisted that the governors look again at all the paperwork relating to the two remaining male candidates. However, even though both of these appeared to conform to the governors' various criteria, in the final analysis it was the personal aspect that was critical within the decision-making process. This is shown in Figure Twelve below. Interestingly, the Chair and Governor A1 had different reasons for choosing David. For the Chair, it was his quiet nature and '*sure confidence*', this contrasting with Nigel's keenness to '*do his own thing*' that she had initially found interesting. For Governor A1, it was the fact that David matched what he considered the most important qualities that he had emphasised throughout the

process. However, even though they had different reasons for 'feeling most comfortable' with David, in the words of Governor A1, together they appointed 'a real gem.'

Question	Chair's Response	Governor A1's Response
How long did it take you to decide who was the preferred candidate?	<i>We thought we'd look at the qualifications but we knew they just proved they could teach not how well... We looked at the references but that was unfair as one of the Chairs was obviously good mates with the candidate ...There was a long discussion.</i>	<i>[On Day Two] for about one and a half hours we discussed each of the candidates... I insisted on reading again the references and application forms. We looked in detail at the candidates' qualifications, how they scored against our criteria</i>
What made you choose David?	<i>In the end, I asked, 'Who do you feel most comfortable with?' And they all said 'David'. He is quiet but has a sure confidence. Nigel was too keen to do his own thing. David is just the sort of person we want.</i>	<i>We chose the person whom we all felt would be strongly community-minded and who would be excellent with parents and relate really well with children. The final choice was unanimous.</i>

**Figure Twelve: School A - The time taken to make the final selection together with reasons for the governors' choice**

## **School B**

### *Short-Listing*

In **School B**, the short-listing was undertaken by the Chair, Governor B1 and two other parent governors who had not taken part in the earlier stages of the recruitment process. They were supported by the Local Authority Principal Advisor. Eight applications were submitted but copies were not sent to the governors before their short-listing meeting. There was also a late application which was considered because the person was known to the school staff. Reasons for this above-average

response were not stated but it would seem likely to have been effected by the comparatively high salary offered.

The two informants (the Chair and Governor B1) gave varying accounts of how they undertook the short-listing activity. For example, the Chair made the following detailed statement:

*We went through all of them [the application forms] and made our own notes. We gave feedback and listened to each other. We identified possibles and nos. There were three strong candidates that everybody agreed with.*

On the other hand, Governor B1 simply stated the following:

*How the candidate met our requirements on the application form.*

Even though these were not conflicting accounts, they indicated that the governors approached the activity in different ways. Each made their own notes and since the governors' 'requirements' were not specified at any time, they may have sifted the candidates against criteria that were not sufficiently defined to permit objective judgments. This situation may have been further compounded because, as noted above, two members of the short-listing panel had not participated in any earlier stages of the process; hence their knowledge of any decisions that had already been taken might have been limited. Thus, from the unstructured method of short-listing candidates, it would seem likely that the governors had not agreed on their approach and as a result each governor made their own decisions about which method to adopt and acted accordingly.

#### *Interview Day Tasks*

In **School B** the tasks and formal interviews took place on the same day at the school. At the start of the day, three of the four governors who had undertaken the short-listing met with the Local Authority Principal Advisor and a representative from the Human Resources Department to select interview questions from the list provided by the Principal Advisor.

The fourth governor who had participated in the short-listing did not attend for the whole day; he observed the first tasks and then had to leave.

For each candidate, the day commenced with a 15 minute interview with the School Council. The Interim Head took notes of the candidates' responses and asked the pupils for their views on the candidates. At the end of the day she fed this information back to the panel. The interview questions which were written by the pupils themselves began and ended on a personal note, suggesting that they were attempting to discover the type of people the candidates were. For example, they asked, '*How would you feel if you were to become headteacher of **School B**?*' The overriding message from their questions was that they were proud of their school and wanted to find out if, under the new head's leadership, this would continue. They also wanted to know if their opinions would still be heard, as demonstrated in the following question:

*If the children are not happy with something, would you be prepared to change it?*

These questions related closely to the letter they had written to prospective candidates and reflected what they had told me about the qualities they wanted in their new headteacher.

The main task of the day required the candidates to place six scenarios in rank order and make written notes about how they would address them. From the Chair's evidence, these scenarios were written by the Interim Head on the evening before the Interview Day and were '*real **School B** stuff*' in that they were based on actual events that had occurred at the school in the recent past. Three of these, for example a failure in the mains water supply, could occur in any school. The remainder, however, would not be typical of the majority of schools and implicitly portrayed details about

the challenging nature of **School B** that were not provided elsewhere. One example was as follows:

*Your secretary informs you that a parent is being very aggressive in the front office threatening to physically attack a teacher after an incident in the school the day before.*

This was included to test the candidates' ability to meet the school's specific need, that of strength in dealing with people with challenging behaviour, even though this requirement had not previously been revealed. The candidates' responses to these scenarios were considered at the end of the day together with the responses to the other tasks.

#### *Formal Interview*

First of all, the candidates were asked to make a presentation on the topic '*What is your vision for **School B** particularly leading up to 2012?*' This was a general Local Authority question relating to the area's proximity to the Olympic Games' site.

However, it had no obvious connection with any headteacher qualities that the governors had previously identified and since the informants made no reference to the presentation, its place within the selection process is unknown.

There were 11 interview questions, all of which, as noted above, were selected on the morning of the interviews from a list provided by the Local Authority Principal Advisor (Appendix 7). Many of these had more than one element which in effect almost doubled the number of questions. For example, one question asked the following:

*What do you understand by an inclusive school and what would it look like in practice at **School B**?*  
*How would I recognise your equal opportunity policy in action?*

Each question had a range of 'Answer Pointers', (for example the above had 27), but there was no indication in the documentation that the governors had agreed upon which of these were appropriate within their situation.

One of the questions stood out from the rest in that it was the only question to make reference to the school's success. It also looked beyond the school's present situation, reading as follows:

*No school can remain static – how will you maintain and build on the success of **School B**?*

This question gave an indication that the governors thought they should be looking to the future, knowing that work would need to be done to maintain and develop the school's current level of success although the wording presupposed that the candidates would be familiar with the school's past. The majority of the other questions related to general aspects of leadership and were hypothetical or abstract in nature as evidenced in the following:

*What do you believe is your leadership style ...?*

Because of the way in which they were worded, these questions invited the candidates to respond in a theoretical way rather than describe an incident that demonstrated their leadership style and their personal and professional strengths. As such they gave the governors little indication of each candidate's leadership capabilities and suitability for the school. Therefore, according to the relevant literature noted in Chapter Two, (e.g. Hobby, Crabtree and Ibbetson, 2004), these questions would have been poor predictors of future performance as headteacher of **School B**.

There was just one question that concerned the governors' priorities for the school. This reflected their emphasis on relationships and asked the following:

*How will you successfully develop links with the whole school community?*

This meant that other features that had appeared important in both the Advertisement and Application Pack, for example, the ability to '*enrich children's learning experiences*' were not included. Hence, unless the governors felt that these topics had been adequately covered in the candidates' applications, which would seem unlikely since the application forms and supporting information were not discussed at any stage, it is assumed that they were omitted because they did not feature on the Local Authority list. Thus, unlike the School Council's questions which, as noted above under the heading '*Interview Day Tasks*', were detailed and focused on their identified requirements, the formal interview questions were general and only partially related to the governors' advertised priorities.

*Final Decision*

From the available evidence, it is apparent that the candidates' responses were scored in some way although the manner in which this was done was not revealed. These scores, together with those from the tasks, formed part of the basis upon which the governors made their final selection. According to Governor B1, the governors' other consideration was '*the views of the School Council.*' From the Chair's evidence, the governors decided on 'Hannah' straightaway. Given that the School Council's views appeared to carry so much weight, it is unsurprising that the pupils also chose 'Hannah'. Figure Thirteen below charts some of their reasons for making this choice. From this chart, it is evident that both the Chair and the School Council based their choice on what they perceived the candidates were like as people. The interesting difference is that the pupils' reasons related closely to some of the requirements detailed in their letter to prospective applicants, for example, '*fashionable*' and '*always ready to listen to us*' whereas, with the exception of being able to relate to children and '*deal with people*', the bases of the Chair's reasons were unclear since they did not relate directly to any requirements detailed in their recruitment materials.

Question	Chair's Responses	School Council's Responses
What made you choose 'Hannah'?	<p><i>Hannah had strength of character</i></p> <p><i>She had a sense of humour</i></p> <p><i>She talked about the children</i></p> <p><i>For the children she was the only one</i></p> <p><i>She showed strength of dealing with people and conviction</i></p> <p><i>She wore red. She made the effort to wear the corporate colours.</i></p>	<p><i>Hannah had the best ideas</i></p> <p><i>She looked warm and friendly</i></p> <p><i>She looked colourful and fashionable and smiling</i></p> <p><i>She looked like she wouldn't get angry but only if you did something serious</i></p> <p><i>She looked like she would remember you and say 'Hello' in the morning and care about what you think.</i></p>

**Figure Thirteen: School B – The Governors' and The School Council's reasons for choosing 'Hannah'**

There was, however, some indication of the Chair's thinking at that time. This was revealed during my conversation with the Staff Governor. In this account, the latter reported that when the Governing Body met to ratify the Selection Panel's decision, the Chair told the governors she *'thought Hannah was part of the family already.'* This remark connected the selected candidate with the predominant message emanating from the recruitment materials that children and families were the most important features of the school. Hence the choice of Hannah was not arbitrary. Rather, she was chosen because she was perceived as another member of the [school] family.

### **School C**

#### *Short-Listing*

In **School C**, copies of the seven application forms were sent to the members of the Selection Panel, the SIP and the external Personnel Advisor some days before they met to choose candidates for the short-list. From the evidence, it would appear that the Chair and Governor C1 remembered those features of the process that they considered most important. These are shown in Figure Fourteen below.

Question	Chair and Governor C1's Responses	Governor C1's Response	Chair's Response
What methods of Short-listing did you use?	<i>We had a grid with all the items in the Person Specification on and we rated all the candidates</i>	<i>We obviously didn't agree on the scores to start with but we worked together</i>	<i>The Business Governor could not get there for the beginning of the meeting but rang in ... Those of us there had agreed on the short-list but he clearly had different views ...I asked him to come ... We had another discussion ...We increased the short-list by one.</i>

**Figure Fourteen: School C - The process of short-listing**

From the above it is evident that all the panel members were required to assess the candidates against agreed criteria and record their scores on a grid thus lessening the influence of subjective judgment within the process. It is also clear that they respected each other's opinions, demonstrated in their preparedness to extend their meeting until the Business Governor arrived, knowing that he had not agreed with their original choice. As a result of their deliberations, five candidates were invited to proceed to the next phase of the selection process. According to the relevant research (e.g. Ryan, Gubern and Rodriguez, 2000) this high proportion of applications that met the short-listing criteria would indicate that the recruitment materials were sufficiently clear and detailed to enable potential candidates to 'screen themselves' and decide if they fitted the governors' requirements.

#### *Interview Day Tasks*

As in School A, the selection process in this school took place over two days. On Day One, the short-listed candidates undertook a wide range of tasks at the school. Where these tasks involved children, the internal candidate undertook them in another local school in order to be 'quite fair' (SIP). First, they prepared an assembly for two classes. Two governors observed each assembly and, using a prepared grid that itemised twelve 'Presentational Qualities', assessed each candidate on a scale of 1-4 against those qualities. The qualities related closely to the requirements listed in the

Person Specification and to the qualities that could be inferred from the picture in the Advertisement. They focused on pedagogical knowledge, the ability to engage with young children and the ability to discern and transmit what was important within this particular urban setting. In addition to assessing the qualities that had been agreed, this exercise gave panel members the opportunity to note any '*substantive other qualities*' and '*reservations*' about the candidates. This provided an additional dimension to the assessment of each candidate's suitability for the post.

In another activity, representatives from the School Council asked each candidate three questions. Precise details of the nature and content of these questions were unavailable. However, unlike the situation in School B, the main point of the activity was not to ask the children which candidate they preferred. Rather it was to gain a general idea of what the children thought and to observe how the candidates interacted with them. This exercise was not scored but was used as a '*gauge*' (SIP).

In a group activity, all five candidates were required to work together to agree a priority ranking for thirty statements about leadership and schools. One governor was assigned to watch each participant and make notes. For the Chair, this activity was particularly important since it was designed to link directly with one of the main qualities the governors required their new headteacher to possess. He expressed this in the following way:

*I suppose we were looking for someone with the interpersonal skills to work with the staff team. Yes ... we set up one of the exercises specifically to look at that.*

During the school lunch-break, the governors arranged for the candidates to have a meal in the staffroom. The only member of the Selection Panel who was with them was Governor C1: she had been asked to make observations. Although this was just an informal part of the process, it was nonetheless significant because, as Governor C1 commented, it gave the staff the opportunity to meet the candidates and to '*gauge*

the *feel of the person*' (her emphasis). They also had the opportunity to see if the candidates *'tried to fit in and make conversation with people'* (Governor C1). However, even though Governor C1 had identified these as important qualities as reported in Chapter Four above, she did not consider it her role to enter into discussion about individual candidates or ask the staff which candidate they preferred. Her role was to listen and give feedback to the panel.

At the end of the first day's activities, the panel met with the SIP and the Personnel Advisor. With the SIP in the chair, they calculated the scores for each candidate and discussed the *'soft indicators'* (SIP) such as the lunch. During this process, one candidate was eliminated. Governor C1 also met with the school staff to find out if there were any specific areas they would like covered during the formal interview.

#### *Formal Interview*

Day Two's activities took place at a nearby Education Office. They were led by the Deputy Director of Children's Services. According to the evidence, the candidates were given 45 minutes to prepare a presentation with the following title:

*What developments can you foresee in education in the next five years and how will **School C** fit into this picture?*

This choice of topic indicated that the governors were giving consideration to the school's future development both within the local context and within a much broader policy context. They were also giving the candidates the opportunity to reveal what they thought it meant to be a headteacher and lead a school within changing times. From the Chair's evidence the presentation was assessed on a scale of 1-4 for content.

The seven interview questions were compiled from samples provided by the SIP and the Personnel Advisor (Appendix 8). They were all pertinent to the school's situation and reflected the headteacher qualities that the governors had identified in our

conversations and had communicated to potential applicants through the medium of the advertisement and other recruitment materials. This can be seen in the following example where the school's interest in creativity and the need for the new headteacher to be able to manage change effectively are brought together in one question:

*What issues need to be considered for our school to best utilise the money we have been allocated to build the Arts Centre?*

Other questions concerned inclusivity, relationships and raising standards. Whilst the majority of these were hypothetical, they were constructed in such a way that the candidates could base their answers on their own experience as exemplified in the following:

*How would you maintain and establish strong links with parents and the local community?*

Responses to this type of question would therefore give the Selection Panel some knowledge and understanding of the candidates' abilities and suitability to meet their requirements.

One question, however, was of particular interest because it was different from any of the questions asked in the other two schools. It was also of personal interest because I have not seen it on any other schools' lists of interview questions. It asked the candidates to identify *'two positive and two negative impressions of the school and its ethos'* that they had gained from walking around the school. Unlike many others, this was a realistic rather than a hypothetical question, and was included to enable the governors to discover the extent to which the candidates' priorities matched their own.

The panel members were provided with a matrix for assessing the candidates on a scale of 1-4 against each of the questions. The three questions chosen from the SIP's list had a small number of 'Answer Pointers' to support the governors' decisions; the

remainder did not have these. As with the assessment of the tasks, the governors were asked to note any additional qualities or reservations they had about each candidate.

### *Final Decision*

After the last interview, there was a discussion where the candidates' scores were totalled and the non-assessed elements such as 'Lunch in the Staffroom' were considered. As a result the governors agreed unanimously to appoint 'Adam.' Interestingly, the Chair and Governor C1 placed different emphases on how he was selected. These can be seen in Figure Fifteen below

Question	Chair's Response	Governor C1's Response
What made you choose 'Adam'?	<i>I was looking for someone who would say, "Right, this is where we are now. Now we need to move forward."</i>	<i>We knew who would be strong... There was no room for error because there were five of us sitting there calculating the points.</i>

**Figure Fifteen: School C – The Governors' recollections of why 'Adam' was selected**

Thus, whereas Governor C1 emphasised working out the points for each question and seeing which candidate '*stood out*', the Chair emphasised the more personal element of the process. From this it is clear that there is room for subjective or personal judgment within a carefully structured process.

The different emphases of the Chair and Governor C1 may have been a function of their different levels of experience of the headteacher selection process. As it was the first time she had participated in a headteacher interview, Governor C1 was, as she said, '*very focused on exactly what was on paper and what we were looking for.*' This, she reported, gave her no time to think about what one candidate could offer compared with another so she relied on their scores. On the other hand, as an experienced member of selection panels, the Chair could look beyond the scores. As a result, he identified an element of Adam's interview that made him stand out. This

was his question **to** the governors which asked, *'This has to be a collective operation. What support can you as governors offer the incoming head?'* This interested the Chair because in his experience it was an unusual question for a candidate to ask at an interview. It also indicated that if appointed, Adam would be expecting to work **with** the governors. As recorded in the analysis of the recruitment materials in Chapter Five, this was one of the governors' essential requirements.

However, despite their differing foci, both governor-informants reported that they felt they had made the right choice. Their different perspectives and emphases seem to have complemented each other well, resulting in a team effort and a *'very good appointment'* (Chair).

### **Reflective Summary**

From the preceding sections, it can be seen that there were many variances between the three case-study schools in every aspect of this stage of selecting the best candidate for their school. As in the two previous chapters, I now reflect upon these variances in the light of each school's context.

In common with the earlier stages of the headteacher appointment process, in **School A** the theme of the school's newness permeated every aspect of this stage. It was the topic of the candidates' formal presentation, the focus of the majority of the interview questions and the Chair's main selection criterion viz. *'needing to see them [candidates] in a hard hat.'* The fact that the governors did not make a decision about the direction the school should take nor set their sights on what was needed to secure continuous improvement could have affected the school's effectiveness once it was operational (Creemers and Kyriakides, 2008).

Apart from a general reference to *'achieving high standards'* there were no questions that sought to discover the candidates' ability to lead an urban school in the twenty-first century, even though the recruitment materials had made reference to the

'significant professional challenges' (Governor A1) that the new headteacher would encounter. This is perhaps surprising considering that Governor A1 was a former headteacher. The latter did, however, have a positive impact upon the way this stage of the process was enacted in that he was more interested than the Chair in the candidates' application forms and references and insisted that the governors look again at these documents in order to make sure that the candidates fitted their criteria (Taylor, 2008). This would suggest that Governor A1's experience compensated to some extent for the Governing Body's lack of training in the process of selection.

In **School B**, the governors' lack of strategic planning to provide a vision for the future (Grace, 1997) and their failure to identify the qualities associated with effective leadership (e.g. Bennett, Crawford and Cartwright, 2003) had a cumulative effect throughout the enactment of the headteacher recruitment process. By the stage of selection, therefore, the Selection Panel had no basis upon which they could make a collective decision about the criteria against which the candidates would be selected for the short-list. They seemed unaware which of the 'Answer Pointers' that were provided for the interview questions they had chosen from the Local Authority list would constitute a good answer in the light of their school's leadership needs; hence they did not delete any and left each member of the panel to judge the candidates against self-selected 'Answer Pointers' or their own criteria.

The above had two significant outcomes. Firstly, the views of the School Council were given undue weight given the pupils' age, level of development and seriousness of the 'job in hand' (Badham and Wade, 2008: 7). Secondly, the governors used the criterion of what the Chair termed '*feeling like a member of the [existing] school family*' to make their final choice. According to the relevant literature (e.g. Runnymede Trust, 1980; Bratton and Gold, 2007), this would not have been the most reliable basis upon which to make a decision. It also reveals a disjuncture between the governors' thinking and the criteria associated with educational leadership as identified by academic literature

and recent research (e.g. NCSL, 2004; Goodyear et al., 2012) thereby suggesting that the school development and improvement journey in **School B** was likely to have been placed in jeopardy.

In **School C**, the governors' recognition that even successful schools need to keep moving forward (NCSL, 2006(b)) was reflected throughout this stage of the process. Here, the title of the presentation, *'What developments can you see in education in the next five years and how will **School C** fit into this picture?'* demonstrated the governors' understanding that the context of education has changed and will continue to change (NCSL, 2008(b)). It also showed that the governors knew that their school would need to make sense of and adapt to these changes and the headteacher, as school leader, would be required to steer the change process (Fullan, 2002; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009(a); Day et al., 2011).

One particular question that asked the candidates what strategies they would put in place to raise the levels of achievement for pupils and staff indicated that the governors had an understanding of two important issues. Firstly, that leadership plays an important part in ensuring the progression of the particular pupils the school serves, many of whom might have significant needs associated with the school's urban location (Emery and Riley, 2007; Ahtaridou and Hopkins, 2012). Secondly, that leadership has a crucial role in staff development which in turn is a major element of succession planning (Rhodes, Brundrett and Nevill, 2008; Dimmock, 2012). Together these indicate that the governors had a firm grasp of how improvement would be achieved within their school and therefore needed to be sure that their new headteacher possessed the appropriate leadership qualities.

As in the earlier stages of the headteacher appointment process, in **School C** the training and experience of the Chair and the presence and support of the SIP distinguished it from the other two schools during this stage of selection. Here, the

Chair not only acknowledged the need for objectivity and formality in the selection process (Taylor, 2008), he was also able to look beyond the scores that each candidate had accrued from the tasks and questions and see what other qualities marked one candidate out from another. His choice of the candidate who wanted to work with governors as a part of a '*collective operation*' not only fulfilled their requirements, it also resonated with the findings from research that indicated that a 'partnership of mutual support' is a practice of good governance associated with school improvement (Ranson et al., 2005: 317). This clearly boded well for the school's continuing effectiveness and future development.

From these reflections it can be seen that the different ways in which each group of governors handled the process of recruitment and selection ran right through the procedure to the point of interview and finally to the way in which they exercised their judgments in choosing which candidate to appoint. This indicates the imperative for straightforward guidance on headteacher recruitment and selection to be readily accessible for governors to help them look beyond the immediate context towards the future of the school and facilitate the selection of a candidate who will be able to put their aspirations and plans into action. This resonates with the work of Ansell (2004) and Rhodes and Brundrett, (2009(b)) who suggested that leadership is the most important factor leading to school improvement and sustained success and is of particular significance in urban schools where the quality of leadership is paramount (Portin, 2000; Riley, 2007; Ahtaridou and Hopkins, 2012).

The next chapter investigates the possibility of using the activities that were undertaken in any or all of the schools to generate the ingredients of a model that could be used to support governing bodies, specifically those within an urban context, to carry out these tasks.

## Chapter Seven

### Discussion and Conclusion

#### Introduction

Within this chapter I consider the ways in which my findings have provided responses to my research questions and I explain how my study has contributed to knowledge within the theoretical fields of school effectiveness and school improvement and of succession planning. I conclude with suggestions for policy development and for future research within the current rapidly-changing system of education in England.

#### Responses to my Research Questions

At the beginning of my enquiry into the subject of headteacher recruitment and selection, I wanted to find out what happens in urban schools from the moment the Governing Body know they need to recruit and select a new headteacher until the time one is appointed. I also wanted to find some practical ways of supporting governors in executing this important task. I focused on the following research questions:

- **How do governors formulate understandings of the process of headteacher recruitment and selection in urban schools?**
- **Are there common factors that influence the enactment of the process in different settings?**
- **Can an analysis of the process in different research sites suggest a model to support governors in urban contexts?**

Now at the end of my enquiry, this is how the situation stands. My research has revealed a relatively low level of preparedness in some schools when it comes to appointing a headteacher. This seems to be the case where governors have not worked together as a group over a period of time and where the question of needing

to appoint a headteacher in the near future has not been discussed. The majority of governors have not undertaken training in the recruitment and selection of headteachers and are unaware of the literature relating to successful leadership in twenty-first century schools (e.g. Riley, Hesketh, Rafferty and Taylor-Moore, 2005; Ainscow and West, 2006; Rodger, 2006). In addition, there is a general lack of awareness of the official advice as represented in the guidance (NCSL, 2006(b)). Because of this, governors formulate understandings of the process of headteacher recruitment and selection based on their own constructs and expectations of what a headteacher's job entails and of the qualities required to undertake the post successfully. In my case-study schools, systematic support was not always readily available. Where appropriate support was not accessed, the governors approached the task of recruiting and selecting a headteacher from the perspective of what was familiar and important to them both collectively and individually.

These findings matter because school governors have a crucial role in appointing headteachers. The quality of the latter may be the single factor that determines whether schools in urban contexts continue to develop and thrive in the twenty-first century (e.g. Fullan, 2002; DfES, 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Ahtaridou and Hopkins, 2012).

The remedy that the literature has put forward to support governors in the headteacher recruitment and selection process has taken the form of large quantities of information placed on the internet. This does not fully address the issues my case-study schools faced because it assumes a level of experience and knowledge that may be lacking in Governing Bodies, particularly those in urban schools. This point was noted by Dean et al. (2007) who found that governors' lack of expertise was most significant in schools serving areas of disadvantage.

The analysis of findings from this study also revealed the possibility of generating a model to support governors in the enactment of the headteacher appointment process. Before I discuss this matter in detail, I explain how my study has contributed to knowledge within the theoretical fields of school effectiveness and school improvement and of leadership talent management.

Throughout a wide range of literature (e.g. Stoll and Fink, 1994; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009(b)) it is generally agreed that there is a close link between leadership and school improvement. This literature falls into two categories, that concerning types of leadership and that concerning leadership development.

### ***Types of Leadership***

Over the past two or three decades, various models of school leadership have evolved. These include 'Instructional Leadership' (e.g. Mortimore et al., 1988) where the emphasis is on improving the quality of teaching and learning, 'Transactional Leadership' where leadership practices '... help people recognise what needs to be done in order to reach a desired outcome ...' (Leithwood, 1992: 9) and 'Transformational Leadership' where leaders are 'more concerned about gaining overall co-operation and energetic participation ... than they are in getting particular tasks performed' (Mitchell and Tucker, 1992: 32). These models have each run on their own trajectory and have assumed varying degrees of importance within the prevailing orthodoxies. Another model has appeared under different headings such as 'Distributed' or 'Dispersed' Leadership (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; Harris, 2004; Spillane, 2006) and 'Inclusive' Leadership (Rayner, 2009). Within this paradigm, the headteacher shifts responsibility for change to those who are intended to carry it out (Thomson, 2010). However, within the existing literature in this field, there is a major omission in that the role that governors have in contributing to this process, in particular through their key role in appointing headteachers, is under-researched and

undervalued. My study therefore shifts the subject of school improvement away from a narrow focus on types of leadership and the role of the head towards a wider picture that includes an examination of the way in which headteachers get into place at a key point in an institution's history.

### ***Leadership Development***

In addition to leadership being seen an important component of school improvement (Bush, 2008), leadership development is also seen as an important component of school improvement through talent management as noted above in Chapter Two. This is particularly important during a time of potential leadership crisis (e.g. Fink and Brayman, 2006). A number of writers have put forward suggestions as to how the 'leadership potential of individuals' (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009(b): 365) can be better achieved. These include enabling leaders to learn through experience by connecting theory with practice (Pegg, 2007) and by learning from a distributed perspective (e.g. Rayner, 2009). However, as with the general literature on leadership, there is a major omission in the literature on leadership development in that no mention is made of the way in which potential leaders are appointed to headship positions. In addition, even though the work of Rhodes, Brundrett and Nevill (2008) has provided guidance for schools to help them identify and develop leadership talent, these ideas and initiatives do not address the issues my case-study schools faced. This is because the guidance is focused on school staff and there is a lack of clarity concerning the governors' legal role in these activities. The lack of clarity regarding the governors' role coupled with the governors' possible lack of expertise represent a flaw in leadership talent management.

My study provides the fields of school effectiveness and school improvement and leadership talent management with a different focus. By looking at the headteacher recruitment and selection process with an analytic eye, I have captured the moment in

time in the trajectory of three schools when the governors had the opportunity to set their priorities and select a new headteacher, someone who would provide continuity as well as to live out their ideals in fresh ways. By looking through this different lens, I have shown, therefore, that the appointment of a new headteacher is an event that is central to a school's history and deeply connected with its future. As such, it is best regarded as a transition point in the life of a school, one of many possible transition points which may also be caused by circumstances such as rapid changes in the school population, an unfavourable Ofsted inspection or an alteration of school status. This focus on transitions and how they are managed within institutions raises a new set of questions and lines of enquiry that would require a different focus in research. These could be addressed by the wider academic community in a number of ways but understanding how institutions manage transitions over time is a vital element of the drive for school effectiveness and school improvement.

I have noted that the appointment of a new head is a major transition point in any school, but as yet the process has attracted very little research attention. One outcome of my own work is a clear finding that support for governors in managing such a transition is not yet fully adequate. In the final section of this thesis I will draw on my research to suggest an alternative model of how this could take place. In order to support governors in managing the headteacher recruitment and selection process, I have generated practical guidance which gives clear direction concerning the legal requirements as well as providing flexibility which encourages governors to customise the elements to their own requirements. This is the subject to which I now turn my attention.

### **A Model to Support Governors**

I begin this section by reflecting upon the most notable difference between the schools, this being the basis upon which each school's selection panel made their

final choice. I then review the position that the final choice occupied within the process as a whole and discuss the differences between the schools in the light of the relevant academic and empirical literature within the fields of Education and Human Resources that I considered in Chapter Two. From this, I identify the ingredients of an 'Effective Practice Model' that could be customised for any school, its purpose being to enable all governors in urban primary schools to recruit the best headteacher for their school.

### **Reflections on the Governors' Final Choice**

As described in Chapter Six, in each school the governors chose the candidate with whom they believed they could establish a relationship. For **School A**, this was the one with whom they *'felt comfortable'* and in **School B**, the one who already felt like a member of the school family whereas in **School C** they chose the candidate with whom they believed they could work as part of a *'collective operation.'* These selection criteria are interesting not least because they showed that each group of governors ascribed a different meaning to the notion of 'relationship' and as a consequence had different expectations of the way in which they would interact with their chosen candidate. However, what is more interesting is how the governors came to make the choice they did. This can be discovered by examining the position that their final choice occupied within the entire headteacher recruitment and selection process.

As noted throughout this study, the governors in **School A** focused their requirements almost exclusively on the tasks that needed to be completed in order to get the school open on time. They undertook the process methodically and assessed the candidates against agreed criteria yet they reached a situation where two candidates were judged as equally able to do the job. Consequently, because the governors were unable to discriminate between these two, the Chair made the decision to introduce a new criterion for selection and asked the governors to choose the one they *'felt most*

*comfortable with.*' In this instance, therefore, the criterion that facilitated the governors' final choice was an addendum to the rest of an otherwise co-ordinated process.

By way of contrast, in **School B**, much of the process of headteacher recruitment and selection was undertaken in a disjointed, unsystematic fashion. The governors' requirements were not well-defined, the interview questions were of a general rather than specific nature and there was a lack of clarity regarding the responses the governors should expect. Hence, they introduced a selection criterion that they knew and understood, choosing the candidate whom they perceived as another [school] family member. Whilst this criterion was not arbitrary in that it reflected the governors' earlier emphasis on children and families, the final choice was not made at the end of a co-ordinated process; neither was it made because of the way in which the candidate had undertaken the tasks and responded to the interview questions. Rather, it appears to have been a spontaneous decision that was only loosely connected to the whole process and was based on the governors' assumptions about the candidate's personality rather than her ability to lead their school.

In **School C**, however, the governors approached and executed the process in a more systematic way. Basing their discussions on what they had identified as the needs of the school, and supported by their SIP, they developed clear ideas about the qualities, experience and expertise they were looking for in a new headteacher and conveyed this information explicitly to potential candidates by means of a clear advertisement and a short, straightforward person specification unique to this urban school. Assisted by their Personnel Advisor, they also devised appropriate selection methods to enable them to assess each candidate against their requirements and to record their decisions in a transparent manner. The governors' belief that 'Adam' would work as '*part of a collective operation*' was the ultimate deciding factor. It came at the end of a long, co-ordinated process where every facet of each candidate's

characteristics had been scrutinised and assessed against the governors' requirements as methodically and objectively as possible.

From an initial consideration of these findings, it was apparent that the way in which the process was undertaken in **School C** was more cohesive than in the other two schools. This meant that the final choice of candidate was made on a firmer foundation thereby suggesting that there were elements of effective practice in this school. However before I could confidently use these to generate the ingredients of an 'Effective Practice' model, I needed to validate the emerging ideas by examining what each school did against the relevant academic and empirical literature. For this, I chose to use the NCSL (2006(b)) guidance on recruiting headteachers and senior leaders because it is the major document on the subject that was written specifically for governors. I also chose to use the NCSL (2006(b)) guidance because it is my understanding that the National College believes that by following this guidance, governors will be able to successfully appoint a headteacher for their school.

### **Evaluating the Governors' Activities against the NCSL (2006(b)) guidance**

Because the NCSL (2006(b)) guidance comprises advice based on best-practice rather than legal procedures that should be followed step-by-step, I do not consider it a useful exercise to examine the contents item by item and state whether **Schools A, B and C** complied with them or not. Rather, it is more profitable to look at the guidance as a whole and discuss the schools in relation to the themes that run through it. I have chosen two of these themes for illustrative purposes.

#### ***Theme One***

*The recruitment and selection of a headteacher should be an integral part of the long-term development plan for the school.*

The way in which this theme is treated in the NCSL Guidance is demonstrated in the following sample of extracts:

This guidance ... helps governors to think about recruitment processes as part of longer term planning to ensure that your school has the best leadership for its long-term needs (NCSL, 2006(b): 4)

You also need to look to the future. What ambitions does the school have? (NCSL, 2006(b): 34)

These two extracts are amongst many that encourage governors to look to the school's future development and its corresponding 'longer-term leadership requirements' (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006: 6) when thinking about recruiting and selecting a headteacher. Moreover, in a section entitled 'Key things to consider in recruiting headteachers and senior leaders', governors are encouraged to reflect on the following statement:

...what served your school well in the past may not serve it well in the future (NCSL, 2006(b): 8)

Taken together, these statements imply that the recruitment and selection of a headteacher is best positioned along a time-line that extends from a school's past history through to its future development. I now consider where each case-study school was positioned in respect to its past and future trajectory.

As detailed in Chapters Three and Four, **School A** was a new school that, at the time of this study, existed in name only. It therefore had no history. In addition, the Governing Body had no history because the governors who comprised that body did not know each other and had not worked together before. Hence **School A's** time-line began at the Governing Body's first meeting. At this meeting, the governors launched straight into the headteacher recruitment process and as a result had little time in which to discuss the school's future development more broadly. This meant that they focused their attention on the school's short-term needs. Consequently, **School A's** time-line was short, not only because it had not originated in the past but also because it projected only as far as the school's immediate future.

By way of contrast, **School B's** time-line had begun more than 15 years before the governors had to embark on the process of recruiting and selecting their second headteacher. During this period the school had become successful and even though the headteacher had informed the governors in good time that she would not be returning to the school after her secondment, they were anticipating that the Interim Head would apply for the job. Therefore, in the governors' minds, there was no necessity to think about the school's future as they believed it would be in safe hands. In any case, the Governing Body had little opportunity to discuss the school's future development because the governors' attendance at meetings was reportedly irregular. Thus **School B's** time-line had stalled at the successful position it had reached and showed no sign of looking to the future beyond the new headteacher's appointment.

**School C's** time-line had also commenced more than 15 years before the governors had to undertake the process of appointing a new headteacher. Like School B, the same headteacher had been in post since the school's inception but even though the school had become successful, in this case, the governors were not complacent and saw the headteacher's impending retirement as an opportunity to move the school on. As a consequence, **School C's** time-line extended from the day the school opened through to the foreseeable future and beyond.

Thus it was only in **School C** that the process of the recruitment and selection of the headteacher formed an integral part of the school's long-term development plan and it was, therefore, the only school that conformed to this aspect of the NCSL (2006(b)) guidance.

### ***Theme Two***

*Each school is unique and at any one time has unique needs.*

The way in which this theme features in the NCSL (2006(b)) guidance is demonstrated in the following extract:

Every school is different: what suits another school will not necessarily suit yours  
(NCSL, 2006(b): 8)

Because each school has unique needs, the guidance suggests that each aspect of the process of recruiting and selecting a headteacher should reflect those particular needs and be designed to provide the right candidate to meet them.

In this study, all three schools conformed to this element of the guidance in a small way in that they were clear that they wanted somebody who suited **their** school and chose or designed job advertisements that reflected this idea. However, this notion of the school's uniqueness was not reflected in every element of the process. For example, as recorded in Chapter Four, each school adopted the Job Description that had been copied from the 'Professional Duties of Headteachers' section of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Documents (2008/9). By adopting a generic Job Description that can be used in any school irrespective of size, type or locality without customising it to their own requirements, the governors demonstrated their lack of understanding that considering and potentially adapting the Job Description is part of the process of recruiting and selecting a headteacher for a specific school and as such should focus on the school's unique context and needs at the time. In this respect, therefore, the governors in all three schools diverged from the guidance which states the following:

The Job Description ...needs to closely reflect the job to be done in your school  
(NCSL, 2006(b): 39)

On the other hand, the Person Specifications in **Schools A and C** did conform to the guidance in that they provided details of the abilities and personal qualities that the governors' 'ideal candidates' should possess in order to meet the schools' needs (NCSL, 2006(b): 39). In this way, the governors provided potential applicants with vital information about the posts. They also provided themselves with agreed criteria

against which to assess the application forms and the candidates' responses on the days of the interviews. This was not the case in School B.

The activities undertaken by the governors in **School A** and **School C** also reflected the issues that other relevant academic literature suggested should be considered when the criteria for headteacher selection are under discussion. For example, both gave a clear description of their context as suggested in the work of Ainscow and West (2006) and both gave an indication of the type of relationship they would expect to have with the headteacher as proposed in the work of Ranson, Farrell, Peim and Smith (2005). However, it was only in **School C** that any reference was made to the particular qualities that the relevant literature (e.g. Brighouse and Fullick, 2007; Day et al., 2011; Antaridou and Hopkins, 2012) indicated that headteachers need to possess in order to work successfully in a twenty-first century school within an urban context.

Lastly it was only in **School C** that the governors complied with all the requirements detailed in the relevant Human Resources literature, such as that concerning Equal Opportunities' Policies, Employment Legislation (Runnymede Trust, 1980) and fair and effective selection techniques (e.g. Bratton and Gold, 2007).

Thus having reviewed the governors' activities against the relevant literature, my initial impressions that the activities in **School C** were examples of effective practice were confirmed. Additionally, examples of effective practice were identified from the earlier stages of the process in **School A**. These were therefore drawn together to form a model but rather than calling this a 'Model of Good Practice', I have called it an 'Effective Practice Model.' This is because my model is not definitive as the term 'Model of Good Practice' might indicate. Rather, it is a tool to prompt governors' thinking about key topics relating to the headteacher recruitment and selection process and to guide rather than dictate the way in which the process is enacted. However, because my findings suggest that the process of recruiting and selecting a

headteacher is part of the broader work of the governing body, I am presenting suggestions for the whole governing body and for the selection panel before focusing on the enactment of the process and the 'Effective Practice Model' ingredients.

## **Identifying the Elements of a 'Programme of Readiness'**

### ***Governing Body Preparation***

The key factor in the headteacher recruitment and selection process is **preparation**. This means that all members of the Governing Body need to be prepared for the task, irrespective of their assumptions about how long the present incumbent will remain in post. It involves **succession planning**, not just in terms of looking for and developing future leaders which much of the current literature advocates (e.g. National College, 2010; Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011) but more specifically in terms of governors increasing their knowledge and understanding of the particular features of the school and its community and of becoming familiar with the distinctive needs of urban schools and the implications for primary school leadership (Keys, Sharp, Green and Grayson, 2003). With this knowledge-base firmly established, the Governing Body would need to **discuss at least annually the directions in which they would like the school to progress**. From this they would negotiate and develop a shared understanding about the type of leader the school required which, when the need arose, would be translated into the knowledge, skills and personal attributes that form the bases of the recruitment materials and selection criteria. Thus **a mutual understanding of the school's needs which has been developed and reviewed regularly by the Governing Body is essential**.

As lay-people who are volunteers, it is unlikely that governors will have the time to be able to develop a full appreciation of the school's needs on their own. Moreover, it is unlikely that governors will have sufficient knowledge to be able to do this. Therefore, they should be prepared to **seek guidance and support for all school matters**. This may be in the form of training, if it is available, but training on its own is not sufficient.

What governors need is support from a School Advisor or somebody from outside the school with expertise in school improvement<sup>15</sup> so that they do not have to rely on the headteacher as their sole source of information and guidance. The most important consideration is that anybody who assumes responsibility for supporting a school has a sound knowledge of that school and its community, has built up a working relationship with the governors and has adequate time and expertise to provide the level of advice and assistance that is required.

On a more practical level, it is also unlikely that governors will be fully conversant with the policies and legislation relating to Human Resources issues. As a consequence, they need **support from a professional who is able explain to governors what their responsibilities are** and advise them when their practices may be open to question or in contravention of the law. Ideally, this would be a normal constituent of the work of the Governing Body so when they needed to embark on the process of recruiting a new headteacher, their relationship with and confidence in their Human Resources provider would be well established. In summary, therefore, I would suggest that **the initial prerequisite for the effective enactment of the process of headteacher recruitment and selection is a context where the Governing Body has built up a shared understanding of the school's current needs and future development and has established an effective working relationship with a School Advisor and with a Human Resources provider.**

### ***The Selection Panel***

Within the context discussed above, the second prerequisite for the effective enactment of the process of headteacher recruitment and selection is an **effective selection panel**. In this connection, I put forward the following suggestions:

- Optimally, **at least annually, the Governing Body would nominate or elect a group of governors who would be willing to serve on such a panel** so that they would be prepared in good time if they were needed.

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<sup>15</sup> The role of School Improvement Partner (SIP) is being phased out by Local Authorities. Hence SIPs are not included in my suggestions of those who could support schools.

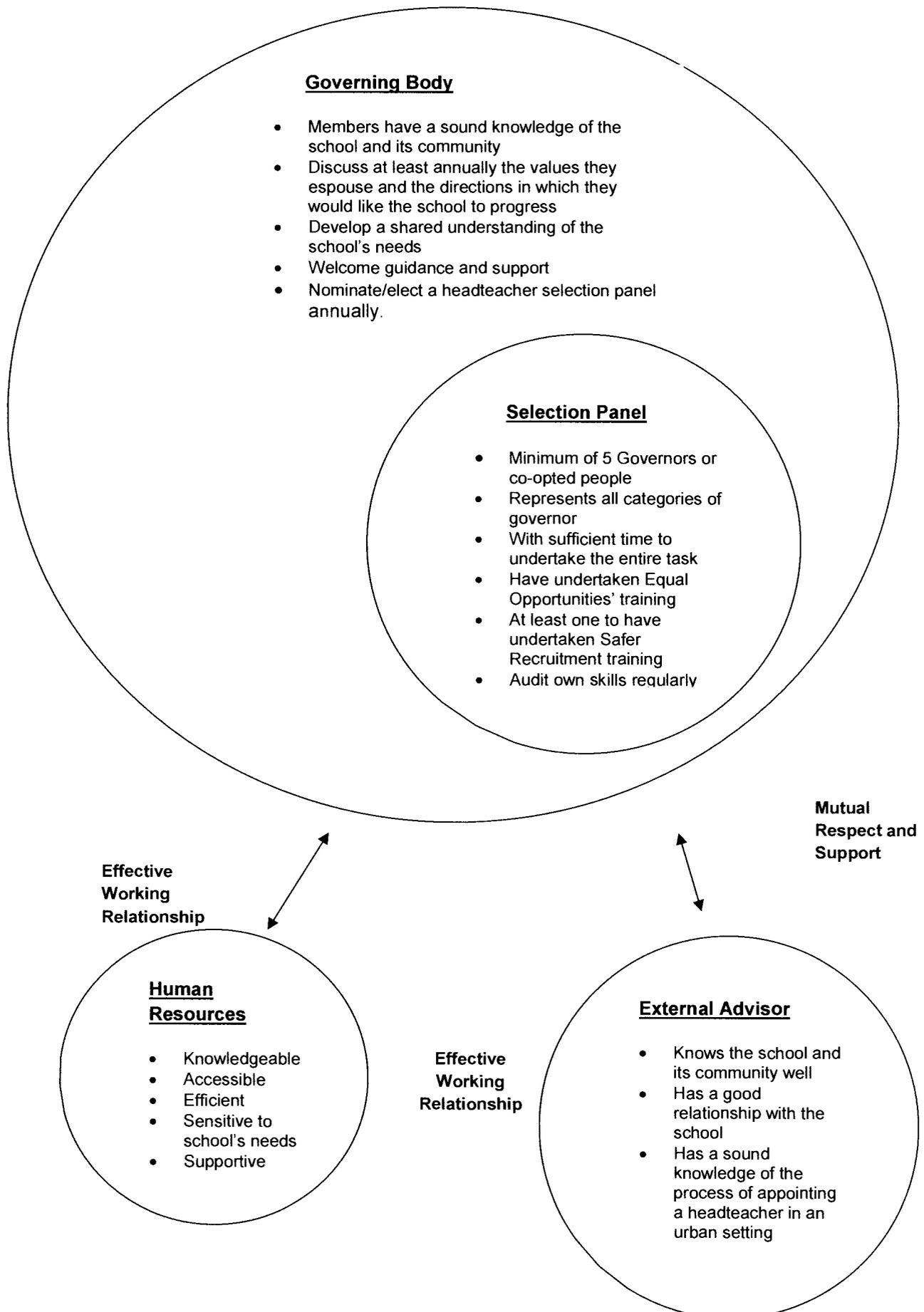
- The **Selection Panel should consist of a minimum of five governors**, not three as the NCSL (2006(b)) guidance states, as three is too small a number to guarantee that all the required activities will be undertaken in the best possible way.
- The **Selection Panel should represent all categories of governor** to ensure that a cross-section of stakeholders is represented.
- **Where there are too few governors who are able to participate in the entire process, the Governing Body should co-opt other suitable people** such as headteachers or experienced governors from elsewhere, this being endorsed by the Ministerial Working Group Report on Governance (2011)<sup>16</sup>. However, whilst this is better than not having enough panel-members, it is not ideal because people from outside the school do not have the same level of shared understanding about that school as the governors themselves.
- Those who comprise the Selection Panel should **undertake Equal Opportunities' training** regularly so that the majority are prepared if the headteacher post becomes vacant.
- **At least one governor must undertake Safer Recruitment Training** (DfES, 2007(a)) at the earliest opportunity. This is a mandatory requirement.
- Members of the Selection Panel should **audit their own skills regularly and be prepared to purchase professional support for specific activities such as creating an advertisement.**

The responsibilities and activities that I have discussed in the two sections above are crucial elements of the headteacher recruitment and selection process and are important precursors to its effective implementation. Together, they constitute what I have termed a 'Programme of Readiness.' The main elements of this 'programme' are laid out in the following chart in a way that could be understood by all governors, its purpose being to steer the work of the governing body so that they are prepared in the event of their headteacher leaving.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.education.gov.uk/00000177/00000177.shtm>

**A 'Programme of Readiness' in the event of a headteacher vacancy**



## **Process Enactment**

Having presented a 'Programme of Readiness', this discussion now considers the activities that need to be undertaken by the governors between the time that a headteacher submits their letter of resignation until their replacement is appointed.

Whilst I had originally hypothesised that it would be impossible to generate a model to support all governors in the headteacher recruitment process because of the contextual differences between the schools, in the light of my findings I have been able to identify the ingredients of an 'Effective Practice Model.' As discussed above, in contrast with a 'Model of Good Practice', this is not a prescriptive model and its purpose is not to tell governors precisely what to do. Rather, its purpose is to guide governors' thinking towards using the ingredients that have been shown to be effective and in compliance with the relevant legislation to create a model that suits their unique context.

The ingredients for my model are presented in eight steps that follow a logical sequence. They are written in plain English that would be comprehensible to all governors, including those in urban schools whose facility with the English language may be limited. As the steps cover just one sheet of A4 paper, paper copies could be sent to schools annually so that those governors who do not have access to a computer or may not have the time or the skill to access the relevant information can be fully conversant with what they will need to do if they have to appoint a new headteacher. This will facilitate the engagement of all governors within this crucial element of their responsibilities. It should be noted that whilst part of Step One in this model is specifically related to urban schools on account of the focus of this study, this could easily be related to other specific contexts such as rural schools by replacing the reference to literature concerning headship in urban schools (Rodger, 2006) with similar literature concerning headship in rural schools (e.g. Cambell et al., 2006).

**The Ingredients of an 'Effective Practice Model'**

<p><b>Step One</b></p>	<p><b>Write a crisp, clear Job Description that is relevant to your school.</b> Consult relevant documents e.g. The National Standards for Headteachers in Focus: Urban Primary Schools (Rodger 2006) and the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions document (revised annually). Ask the Local Authority or your School Advisor for guidance.</p> <p>Answer the question: Which aspects of a headteacher's job are particularly important in our school?</p>
<p><b>Step Two</b></p>	<p><b>Create a straightforward Person Specification that is relevant for your school.</b> Identify the qualities (abilities and personal characteristics) required in a new headteacher to suit your school's present and future needs. Consider external and internal constraints and demands and internal desires. Consult relevant documents as above. Ask for guidance as Step One.</p> <p>Answer the question: Who is needed to undertake this job effectively?</p>
<p><b>Step Three</b></p>	<p><b>Use the results of Step One and Step Two to create your own advertisement.</b> If necessary, ask a commercial company to help with the format.</p> <p>Answer the question: Why would headteachers want to come and work at our school? How can we help potential applicants decide if the post at our school would suit them?</p>
<p><b>Step Four</b></p>	<p><b>Use the results of Step One and Step Two to Identify Short-Listing criteria and adopt a systematic approach to assessing and recording the information written on Application Forms.</b> Use a grid to record your criteria and your assessment of each candidate. Ask the Human Resources Department for guidance. Short-list those who meet your criteria, whatever the number.</p>
<p><b>Step Five</b></p>	<p><b>Select relevant selection techniques to assess the candidates' abilities and personal qualities.</b> Consider which characteristics can be assessed through a formal interview (a statutory requirement). Consider other selection methods, e.g. simulated activities that mirror your school's situation and needs. Ask the Local Authority, your Advisor or Human Resources for examples of tests that have been used effectively in your area.</p> <p>Answer the question: Which methods of assessment are most likely to help us identify and judge the particular characteristics that we have decided that our new headteacher needs?</p>
<p><b>Step Six</b></p>	<p><b>Decide upon success criteria.</b> Ask for guidance as Step One.</p> <p>Answer the questions: What would be a 'good' answer or response in the light of our school's needs? What would distinguish successful candidates from others? Would we be prepared to look at qualities we had not previously thought of?</p>
<p><b>Step Seven</b></p>	<p><b>Adopt a systematic approach to recording responses to the tasks and questions.</b> Use a grid as Step Four above. In addition, make provision for governors to record any other observations or reservations they may have about each candidate.</p>
<p><b>Step Eight</b></p>	<p><b>Make a 'good' appointment.</b> Ask for guidance as Step One.</p> <p>Answer the questions: Do we have enough evidence to show that one particular candidate suits our present and future needs? Can we work with this person as our new headteacher?</p>

### ***The most important ingredient***

Within the ingredients of my 'Effective Practice Model', the most important element is the repeated phrase 'Ask the Local Authority or your Advisor for guidance.' For the purposes of this discussion, because many schools are now moving away from Local Authority control, I have used this as an inclusive term for all the people who work in an advisory capacity to support schools with matters of school effectiveness and school improvement. The suggestion that external guidance should be sought is highlighted because it was the SIP's advice and support in **School C** that made the difference between the way in which the process of headteacher recruitment and selection was undertaken in that school compared with the other two schools.

The SIP's advice to **School C** had two effects. Firstly, because she provided the governors with all the information and guidance they required, they were able to undertake every stage of the process systematically and thoroughly and select the candidate who demonstrated the ability to lead their school in the direction in which they wanted it to progress and according to the values they espoused. Secondly, because she had made sure, together with the Personnel Advisor, that the governors undertook the task of recruiting and selecting their new headteacher in accordance with Employment Legislation and Equal Opportunities' Policies, she provided an element of safeguarding within the process. Through her involvement, therefore, she provided suitable checks and balances to steer the governors away from taking undue risks concerning the appointment they made.

Within the current educational milieu these issues are becoming increasingly significant. As a result of decentralisation that came into effect with the Education Reform Act 1988, and more recently with the introduction of free schools and academies, educational institutions have become autonomous units that tend to operate in isolation from the Local Authority and from each other. Also, as a result of

the marketisation of services, schools are free to choose which external services they purchase. As a consequence, there is a tendency for schools to become inward-looking and rely on their own expertise without seeking outside support which might not be perceived as apposite or cost-effective. This is particularly pertinent for this study because, acting on their own, school governors may be unaware of their lack of relevant knowledge or as the SIP in School C remarked, *'They don't know what they don't know.'* Hence, if governors do not receive the appropriate level and quality of support that they need when seeking to recruit a new headteacher and if they do not have any comparators against which to judge their own effectiveness, they may flounder and the school's 'espoused improvement journey' (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009(a): 382) may be placed in jeopardy. This therefore provides a strong case for a knowledgeable advisor from outside the school to provide rigorous checks and balances to prevent the process from becoming victim to governors' serendipity and ad-hoc decisions, however well-intentioned.

As noted earlier in this chapter, there are many possible transition points within a school's institutional history, the appointment of a new headteacher being an especially important case. My enquiry has the potential to refocus school effectiveness and school improvement on to such transition points and to see them positioned within the institution's longer term history and development. My advice has been developed with this prospect in mind.

### **And finally ...**

Within this study I have traced the recruitment and selection of headteachers in three primary schools in different urban areas. My research findings have highlighted the fact that policy implementation is not a straightforward process of following prescribed steps in a prescribed way. Rather it is, in the words of Scheurich (1997:164), 'deeply and fundamentally contextualised.'

The three schools had many features in common. For example, they were all within the five per cent most disadvantaged political wards in England.<sup>17</sup> They were, or were planned to be, of similar size and, except in the case of School A, which had not yet been built, were judged by Ofsted as 'Good.' Yet, in spite of these similarities, each school's governing body formulated different understandings of the process of the recruitment and selection of a headteacher and undertook the process in a different way. This gives a strong indication that Scheurich's statement cited above refers to factors other than the school's location or its level of success in Ofsted terms. It can, therefore, be concluded that the word 'context' is an inclusive term that embraces all the people within or associated with a school and its community. In other words, 'context' has a social meaning and, by implication, the recruitment and selection of a headteacher is largely a social process.

In these examples, the governors' ideas about what a headteacher's job entailed and what qualities were required to lead a school successfully derived from a number of sources, ranging from their own experience as children and their views of the current head to the perceived needs of the school both at that time and in the future. Because governors were unaware of any of the research and literature relating to successful urban leadership (e.g. Rodger, 2006) and because they are human and therefore likely to construct rather than discover meanings (Crotty, 2003), they all approached the task of recruiting and selecting a headteacher from the perspective of what was familiar and important to them.

The governors' approach to the task was also determined by their individual and collective knowledge of the process of recruiting and selecting a headteacher. As documented above, the governors were unfamiliar with the official advice as represented in the guidance (NCSL, 2006(b)) and the majority had not undertaken

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<sup>17</sup> Census 2001

relevant training; hence they relied on the knowledge they already had or could obtain from elsewhere.

The most significant difference between the schools was in the level and quality of support they received from their respective Local Authority Advisors or SIPs. Because of the variance in support, the process was enacted with differing degrees of structure and transparency and was moderated by differing levels of checks and balances.

Therefore it can be concluded that the relationship between a school and Local Authority personnel or other relevant bodies should be professionally robust since the available system of support acts as a 'facilitator or repressor' (Deem, Brehony and Heath, 1995: 134) to the effective enactment of the process of headteacher recruitment and selection within that school. More broadly speaking, the relationship between all schools and competent outside bodies should be professionally robust to ensure that 'effective quality standards and best practice' (Grieves and Hanafin, 2004: 28) are secured across our current disparate system of education.

The above points have a significant implication for policy. As representatives of the local community, governors should be well placed to know and understand a school's needs. Consequently, there could be a case for arguing that it was perfectly right for them to have been handed responsibility for recruiting and selecting a headteacher. However, as amateurs, all that they can do is the best that their circumstances allow. Hence they need professional support and guidance to undertake the process effectively, particularly in schools within urban contexts because of the difficulties associated with governance in those areas. This provides a strong case for an amendment to the legislation to shift sole responsibility for the appointment of headteachers away from governing bodies towards a wider group that comprises advisors and recruitment specialists as well as governors. This would enhance rather than diminish governors' contribution to the headteacher recruitment process.

The above points also have significant implications for research. Since an ever-increasing number of schools are moving outside the control of the Local Authority and the powers of Local Authorities are being reduced per se, the questions are, who is going to support schools, and who is going to provide the checks and balances? To find answers to these questions, research is needed to examine and evaluate the experiences of well-established institutions outside the control of the Local Authority both in England and further afield in order to identify examples of effective practice that could be shared with schools that are planning to change their status. These could also be disseminated to Local Authorities to enhance the quality of support that is provided to those schools that remain within their control. Additionally, because more traditional forms of accountability are being eroded, Action Research is required to develop a system of checks and balances that would contribute to the development of a 'culture of quality' (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011: 29) both within individual educational institutions and the public system of education as a whole. This would serve to improve all aspects of education, including the process of headteacher recruitment and selection which is such an important facet of the school effectiveness and school improvement agenda (Wilshaw, 2012). In addition, because of the potentially crucial role that headteachers play in creating educational success in challenging environments, this would make a contribution to addressing the continuing gap in educational achievement between pupils in urban areas and other young people (Lampl, 2011). This is their right and must surely be our responsibility.

The work I have presented in this study demonstrates the fact that I share a concern with other writers in the field of school effectiveness and school improvement about improving outcomes for all children. I also share a concern about the quality of a school's leadership and I am particularly exercised about the many difficulties faced by schools in challenging circumstances. My contribution to these fields has been to look at an area that is often ignored – the role of governors in contributing to school

improvement. Most of those writing in this area have been concerned to track the changes in powers handed to governors by policy makers or explore the potential of promoting community involvement and cohesion through the appointment of local people to the governing body. However, far less has been written on the way in which the role of governors impacts upon a school's leadership and even less on what the governors' role might be in helping schools manage transition points. My study shows the benefit of paying attention to what may be a rare occurrence – the appointment of a headteacher – but it is an event with huge significance in the life of a school. My study has been able to demonstrate that those elements of school governance which the work on urban education highlights, namely the challenges schools in such areas of disadvantage face in finding effective governors, really matters in the headteacher appointment process. The wider significance from my work to the field of academic research is in re-focusing work on leadership to the wider institutional context of the school, its longer history and the guardianship of the school that governors provide.

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## Appendix 1

### Questions for Interviews with Chairs of Selection Panels

Thanks for talking with me. I'd like you to take me through the process of appointing a headteacher for the new school.

- First of all, how many were on the selection panel?
- How were they chosen?
- What was the first thing you did to initiate the recruitment process?
- Did anybody have experience of appointing a head?
- Did you use any guidance such as that produced by the LA, NCSL, NGA etc?
- How did you decide what qualities you were looking for?
- Can you remember who said the most during the discussions?
- Did you agree with each other or have to negotiate?
- What methods of short-listing did you use?
- What selection methods did you use?
- How did you know if the candidate possessed the qualities you were looking for?
- Did any of the candidates offer additional characteristics that interested you?
- How long did it take you to decide who was the preferred candidate?

Thank you very much.

## Appendix 2

### School B – Pupils' Letter to Prospective Candidates

Dear reader,

We the pupils of School B, love our school and are very proud of it. We are therefore looking for the most fantastic Head Teacher ever, who will be perfect for our school.

We would like someone who is:

- Creative with a good sense of humour to keep us smiling and to ensure that our learning stays fun.
- Loving and kind and always willing to listen to us when we have a problem that we need sorting out.
- Able to keep us reaching for the stars and maintain the high School B standard for work and behaviour.
- Able to keep celebrating our success through things like: the star awards, lining up points, tree house points and Friday assemblies.
- Able to keep up the after school clubs, healthy and delicious school dinners, fund raising events and concerts.

If you think that you have these qualities, then we would be very happy and would love to have you to be the new Head Teacher of School B.

The School Council of School B

## Appendix 3

### School A - Advertisement

The advertisement features a dark, textured background with a still life arrangement of school supplies. On the left, a large, light-colored, textured bucket is tipped over, spilling several bright green balls. To the right, a collection of items is scattered on the surface, including a soccer ball, a cricket bat, a cricket ball, a cricket stumps set, a cricket helmet, and various other school-related objects. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the objects against the dark background.

**Put all your experience into building a new school.**

**Head teacher Group 2, L18-24, required for January 2009**

Become the first head teacher of a brand new community school in [REDACTED]. This is a rare opportunity to be involved in the development of a school from the design and construction stages all the way through to hiring the staff and enrolling the first year of pupils. Creating a new school to your own standards will be the defining moment in your career.

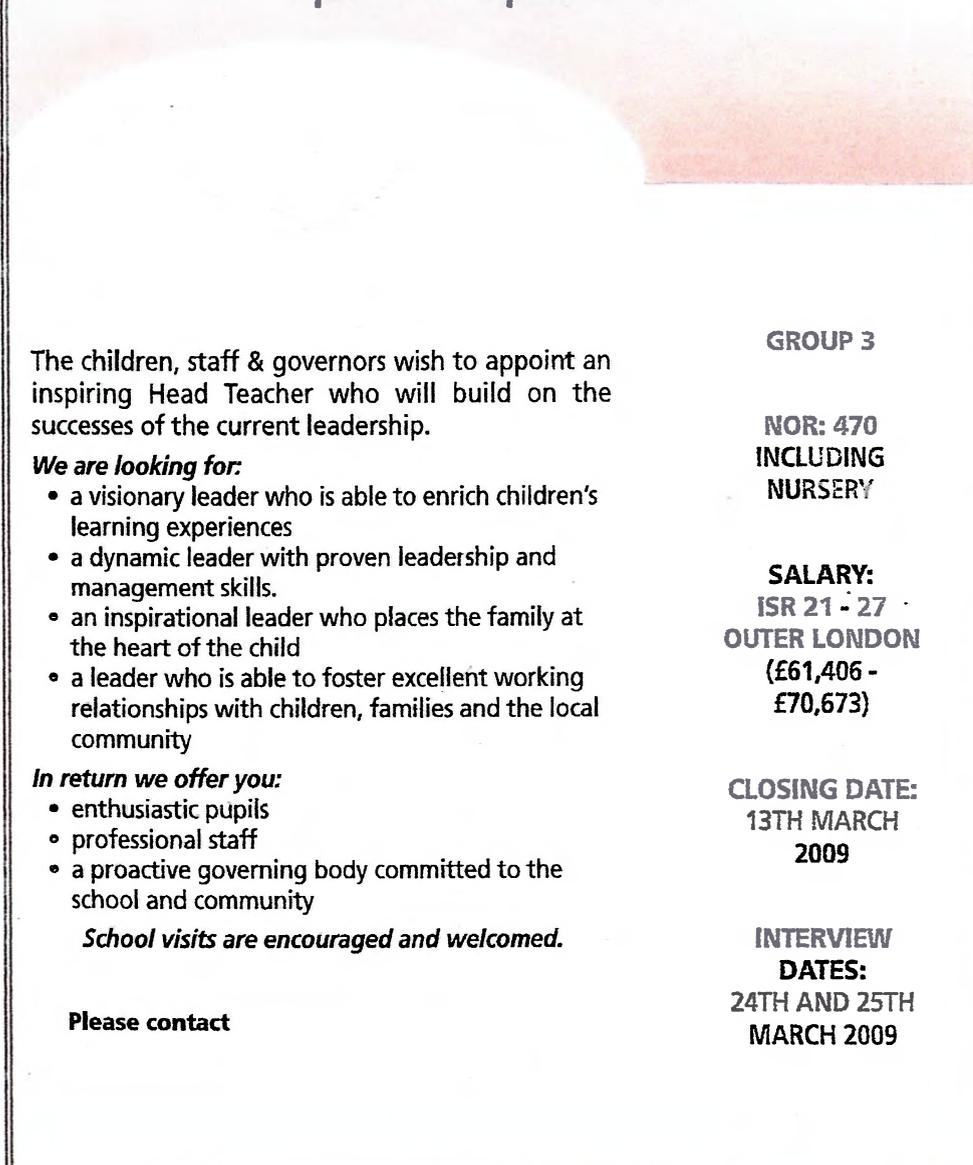
To find out more, please visit [www.buildanewschool.co.uk](http://www.buildanewschool.co.uk)

## Appendix 4

### School B - Advertisement

# HEAD TEACHER

**required for September 2009**



The children, staff & governors wish to appoint an inspiring Head Teacher who will build on the successes of the current leadership.

***We are looking for:***

- a visionary leader who is able to enrich children's learning experiences
- a dynamic leader with proven leadership and management skills.
- an inspirational leader who places the family at the heart of the child
- a leader who is able to foster excellent working relationships with children, families and the local community

***In return we offer you:***

- enthusiastic pupils
- professional staff
- a proactive governing body committed to the school and community

*School visits are encouraged and welcomed.*

**Please contact**

**GROUP 3**

**NOR: 470  
INCLUDING  
NURSERY**

**SALARY:  
ISR 21 - 27  
OUTER LONDON  
(£61,406 -  
£70,673)**

**CLOSING DATE:  
13TH MARCH  
2009**

**INTERVIEW  
DATES:  
24TH AND 25TH  
MARCH 2009**

## Appendix 5

### School C - Advertisement



We are searching for a new Headteacher who will lead our highly regarded, successful and popular school to even greater success.

School C is an inclusive and happy school with a clear school development plan and a strong commitment both to academic standards and the individual growth of each child. We have a modern building on a large site with the probability of a new build Arts Centre which will help carry forward our creative curriculum which is one of the school's strengths.

We are looking for an exceptional leader who will inspire our outstanding team of teaching and support staff and who will deliver a school development plan focused on sustaining improvement in standards and attainment, while building on our culture of inclusivity and a holistic view of children's achievements in and out of the classroom.

If you have a strong track record in primary school management, either as a Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher, and you are excited by the prospect of leading a confident school that has achieved a great deal in recent years and is poised to achieve even more in the future, then we should like to hear from you

For an information pack and application form please email  
[headteachers@localauthority.gov.uk](mailto:headteachers@localauthority.gov.uk)

To arrange a school visit or if you have any difficulty with any part of the application process, please contact Ms. Smith at  
[admin@SchoolA.sch.uk](mailto:admin@SchoolA.sch.uk)

Closing date: Noon, Friday 23rd January 2009.

Selection dates: 9th and 10th February 2009.

## **Appendix 6**

### **School A – Formal Interview Questions for Candidates**

#### **Chair**

Please give us a précis of your written task and the thinking behind it.

In the worst case scenario the building may not be ready on time.

What are the possible issues and how will you address them?

#### **Governor A2**

How would you ensure a broad curriculum taking into account the particular challenges of a new school?

#### Supplementary Questions

Our expectation is to have a good reputation for high standards like other local schools. How would you achieve this?

How would you thread the concept of sustainability through everything we do?

#### **Governor A3**

How would you encourage and develop the idea of parents as co-educators to participate in their child's education?

#### **Governor A1**

How would you ensure a balanced workforce and encourage a strong team ethos taking into account that all staff will be new appointments?

#### **Governor A4**

How do you maintain a good work/life balance?

## Appendix 7

### School B – Formal Interview Questions for Candidates

1. What experiences have led you to apply for the headship at School B?

Answer Pointers:-

- No prompts but you would expect them to have a good knowledge of School B and speak enthusiastically about being head!
- Answer rooted in experience - examples

2. No school can remain static – how will you maintain and build on the success of School B?

Answer Pointers:-

- Some indication they have visited the school
- Reading of last Ofsted report
- Not change for change sake
- Take time to identify key strengths/ weaknesses
- Open discussion with staff, governors and parents
- Action planning – based on existing School Development plan
- Quality of ideas for improvement

3. What do you think will be the key issues you will have to address as a new leader?

Answer Pointers:-

- Ability to articulate a strategic vision
- Some understanding of School B context
- Change management strategies
- Establish credentials through actions
- Engagement of all stakeholders
- Understanding of leadership rather than management

4. What do you believe is your leadership style and how will you ensure that leadership is supported throughout the school?

Answer Pointers:-

- Self knowledge – own strengths and weaknesses
- Evaluation of dominant leadership style
- Understanding of what constitutes good leadership – respect, loyalty, capacity to listen, effectively communicate, patience, understanding of each other's capabilities and limitations etc
- Clear vision and high expectations
- Distributed leadership - can't do it alone – empowering others
- Use of a range of leadership styles according to situation
- Sensitive to needs of all – takes problems seriously, can keep a confidence etc
- Recognises and acknowledges good practice and hard work

- Values everybody's ideas
- Emphasis on CPD to further school's development
- Balanced with individual development needs
- Regular and rigorous monitoring
- Feedback – coaching – follow up
- Performance management – professional development – SMART targets
- Sharing good practice, using strengths within staff as well as outside support
- Knowledge/experience of formal procedures – support leading to capability
- Ensure clear and regular channels of communication with all groups
- Treat people fairly, equitably and with respect
- Create a positive and trusting culture by being honest, fair and consistent
- Share leadership, decision making and welcome initiative
- Regularly review both personal practice and views of others

5. What do you see as the key role of the governing body in school improvement and how will you support them in their role?

Answer Pointers:-

- Understanding statutory roles and responsibilities
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Corporate identity of Governing Body
- Communication and information flow
- Protocols and policies
- Financial management
- Providing information in a clear concise and timely manner
- Head teachers' termly report supporting governors' role
- Holding school to account
- Information on pupil attainment / achievement
- Training -performance management, salary reviews etc.

6. How would you recognise strong leadership in the school – how would you support and develop it?

Answer Pointers:-

- Difference between leadership and management
- Regular and rigorous monitoring
- Feedback – coaching – follow up
- Performance management – professional development –SMART targets
- Sharing good practice, using strengths within staff as well as outside support
- Knowledge / experience of formal procedures - support leading to capability
- Work cooperatively/collaboratively
- Ensure clear and regular channels of communication with all groups
- Treat people fairly, equitably and with respect
- Create a positive and trusting culture by being honest, fair and consistent
- Promote a culture of high expectations for self and others
- Share leadership, decision making and welcome initiative
- Regularly review both personal practice and views of others

7. How will you encourage pupils to take responsibility both for their learning and their behaviour?

Answer Pointers:-

- Encourage pupil voice
- Pupils know targets and next steps to achieve them
- Personalised learning
- Use of IT to keep track of their progress
- School council – involved in decisions
- Circle time
- Responsibility given to pupils for specific tasks
- Clear expectations of behaviour
- Clear rewards and sanctions
- Involvement of parents
- 'golden rules' – actions and consequences

8. What do you see as the key drivers for school improvement in the coming few years – and how will you manage them?

Answer Pointers:-

- Curriculum review
- Area Partnerships
- Extended services
- Self managing schools
- Workforce reform
- SDP – linked to LA's plan
- Children's Plan - Increasing rôle of parents
- New models of leadership
- New Ofsted framework
- Trusts/ Federations
- Personalisation of learning
- All initiatives evaluated for impact on learning
- Ability to say 'no' to some initiatives

9. What do you understand by an inclusive school and what would it look like in practice at School B?

How would I recognise your equal opportunity policy in action?

Answer Pointers:-

- Definitions of inclusion, equal opportunities and groups
- Data analysis to identify underachievement and strategies to target support
- Target setting at pupil and group level
- Curriculum entitlement
- Monitoring and evaluating inclusive teaching
- Role of wider staff teams, e.g. Learning support
- Links built over time with parents and communities
- Mobility factors and induction processes

- Parents involved with children's profiles and assessments
- Challenging stereotyping, tokenism and discriminatory practice
- Legal requirement to report incidents
- Staff development
- Role of governing body
- Targeted provision and funding
- The overall effective management of special needs
- Knowledge of The Race Relation act and racial equality
- Access of all families to school through strategies such as the use of translators, use of outside agencies such as Educational Psychologist and school nurse
- Keeping attendance a priority and monitored closely
- Education plans for any children in public care
- Child protection
- Differentiation in classroom teaching for all abilities i.e. Less able, average and more able children - personalisation
- Providing a welcoming and friendly ethos, sensitive to all community groups
- Recognition of all groups (SEN, higher attainers, ethnic groups, gender, new arrivals)
- All equal – but need different support
- Equality monitoring of staff
- Good attendance and punctuality and systems to secure it
- Strategic role of the governors

10. How will you successfully develop links with the whole school community?

Answer Pointers:

- Communications systems, openness
- Seek community involvement
- Questionnaires, surveys
- Provide opportunities for significant involvement
- Home/School Agreement
- Reference to SEF, SOP, previous Ofsted, SIP reports
- Community links: neighbouring schools, transition work, local church etc
- Importance of learning networks
- Promoting the school
- Role of governors - building on strengths they have, community links etc

11. Why should we appoint you?

Answer Pointers:-

- Confidence
- Self awareness
- Honesty
- Understanding of role

## Appendix 8

### School C – Formal Interview Questions for Candidates and Matrix for Recording Judgments

PRESENTATIONAL QUALITIES TO BE ASSESSED	1	2	3	4
<p>How would you maintain and establish strong relationships with parents and the local community?</p>				
<p>How can you guarantee curriculum entitlement for all pupils?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic v. vocational streaming</li> <li>• Social engineering</li> <li>• Setting of ability groups – SEN – gifted and talented</li> <li>• Impact on school costs</li> </ul>				
<p>What strategies would you use to help recruit and retain staff during a time of recruitment difficulty and high staff turnover? Also to maintain a strong leadership group in our school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching and support</li> <li>• Proven leadership style</li> </ul>				
<p>As you have had the opportunity to walk round our school, what impressions, 2 positive and 2 negative would it leave of the school and its ethos?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour, demeanour, good manners and discipline of staff and students</li> <li>• Litter, maintenance of site and buildings</li> <li>• Timekeeping and display of purpose and energy</li> <li>• Posters, notices, artwork</li> <li>• Welcome – security</li> </ul>				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusion – interest groups and societies (drama, music, art, debating, sport, community involvement)</li> </ul>				
<p>What personal traits do you possess that you feel would assist you in meeting the challenges and/or opportunities of being the headteacher of our school?</p>				
<p>What issues need to be considered for our school to best utilise the money we have been allocated to build the Arts Centre?</p>				
<p>What strategies would you put in place to help maintain and raise the standards of provision of services and levels of achievement at the school for our pupils and staff?</p>				
<p><b><i>Do you have any questions for the panel?</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Are you still a firm candidate if you are offered the position?</i></b></p>				
<p><b>Total Score</b></p>				

Please note any substantive other qualities about the candidate.

Please note any substantive reservations about the candidate.