NATIONAL PROVISION FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: THE VIEWS OF ENGLISH SPECIAL SCHOOL HEAD TEACHERS AND DEPUTY HEADTEACHERS

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Abstract

Literature on school leadership is mainly generic as is the national development framework for English school leaders, presenting standardised models which cut across all school contexts. Some theorists argue that successful leadership is dependent on an understanding of the values, knowledge and practice identified with specific school contexts (for instance Hersey and Blanchard, 1982; Thrupp and Willmott, 2003). Although every school is different it is likely that the context of the special school is distinct in terms of professional knowledge, internal context and an environment characterised by unprecedented change, complexity, uncertainty and even hostility.

This study aims to ascertain if special school leaders in England feel that the generic leadership programmes offered by the NCSL meet their specific professional development needs within the context of current leadership theory.

A random sample of 50% of heads and deputy heads in English special schools was surveyed by questionnaire in 2001 to seek their views on the value of NPQH, Headlamp, LPSH and other professional development opportunities generating a 38% response. Literature on special schools and on their leaders is extremely sparse and so the findings of this study offer unprecedented insight into a previously over-looked area: the views of special school leaders on the professional development they need to lead their schools through a period of change.

Findings indicate that contrary to contingency theories which locate the development of learning communities in the specific context of the school, half the respondents valued generic professional development over context specific programmes. Leadership development is seen as more important in determining effective headship than management training and much more important than special needs training.

The study concludes that context specific issues cannot be ignored and therefore participants from special schools on generic leadership programmes should be offered additional modules or experiential learning through mentoring, networking and peer learning groups as it is difficult to find common ground when all other participants are from mainstream schools.

Declaration

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

Word count (exclusive of the two thousand word statement, abstract, contents list, lists of tables and abbreviations, appendices, list of references but including footnotes, endnotes and tables) is 39,822 words,

Signed

Rowena Marie Shaw

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Two thousand word statement

In this statement I set out the timeline for the discrete components of my doctoral studies. Aspects of my professional and personal life such as workload and health issues impacted on progress towards completing the degree and these are identified. I then summarise my learning over the programme as a whole, identify links between the programme components and demonstrate how they have contributed to my professional development and knowledge.

Timeline

In October 1996 when I registered for the new Doctor in Education programme, I had recently moved from secondary headship to be Director of Professional Services at the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT). I intended to study the role of the teacher unions and my specialist area was to be policy and management. The institution focussed study (IFS) was to be on the NAHT. When I became Chief Executive of NASS, the National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools, in July 1999 and my professional remit changed to the policy area of specialist schooling alongside freelance work on leadership issues including for the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), I had to rethink the proposed areas of study for the IFS and thesis as I was no longer working directly with teacher unions. I had been closely involved in setting up the London Leadership Centre and so chose that as the subject of my IFS with the consent of the Director of the Centre at that time and her senior managers. Thus in my professional life I have had an ongoing interest in leadership development which is reflected in my choice of focus for the thesis.

Table i: Timescales for the taught component of the programme and the IFS

Date	Taught course	Assignment	Professional life
1996/7	Foundations of professionalism	"Professionalism and the teacher associations"	April 1996-June 1999-NAHT
1996/7	Methods of Enquiry I	"Case study: an exploration of possibilities and problems"	

1997/8	Methods of Enquiry II	Small scale research project to identify the views of headteachers on the value of a mentoring scheme in which they had participated with mentors from the business world.	
1997/8	Advanced Research Methods.	Identifying views of NAHT members on future trends in education using interviews and modified Delphi techniques. First of a projected two part project with Demos.	
1997/8	Education Policy and Management I (Contemporary Education Policy)	"Developing headteachers for the future. A comparison of the national standards for headship and the TTA framework."	
1997/8	Education Policy and Management II.	"Evaluate the contribution that Chaos theory might make to our understanding of educational institutions in the 21st century. Does it enable us to develop new understandings, or is it merely another management fad?"	
			Feb 1999- major neuro-surgery requires 5 months off work and a deferral of one term.
Submitted in February 2000 and passed in June 2000	Institution Focussed Study (IFS)	"At the Leading Edge? An exploration of the relationship between the evolution of the London Leadership Centre and the development of national policy on headteacher development between 1996 and 1999."	June 1999: move from NAHT to be Chief Exec at NASS. Two further operations in 2001 and 2003, one on each hand.

During the period of taught modules I also attended doctoral conferences at the Institute of Education and subsequently attended workshops on the IFS, thesis and on the use of EndNote. In June 2001 and 2002 I gave presentations at doctoral school conferences at the Institute on my work in progress.

Having looked at leadership development in assignments and my IFS, and now working exclusively with leaders of special schools as well as having been responsible for special school issues at NAHT, I decided to research the perceptions of special school leaders on the national leadership development programmes for my thesis. The thesis proposal was approved in June 2000 when I began planning the research. In order to maximise the sample I tried to secure funding from the DfES and NCSL without success but eventually had help with mailing costs from the London Leadership Centre. This enabled me to survey half of all special schools in England. The survey itself and the analysis of data were carried out in 2001.

A first draft of the thesis was ready by September 2002 but health problems and an unprecedented period of policy work in special education at the DfES which increased my professional workload, all caused delay in completing the thesis.

In September 2004 I was able to meet with a new supervisor, Dr. Marianne Coleman, and to submit timescales to redraft my thesis to suit my planned retirement by July 2005. I recast the research questions and underlying hypothesis and redrafted the literature review. There was a further delay caused by a bereavement in April 2005 but having successfully passed two thirds of the degree course I was determined to complete my thesis and eventually after much struggle a second draft was ready for the independent reader by the end of December 2005.

My Learning

Over the lengthy period of doctoral studies outlined above my learning has been very significant in a number of areas.

At the most basic level I was able to read a large number of academic texts and research reports, something which I have always enjoyed, have needed for my work and which in part led me to undertake the EdD programme. There was learning in the interaction with the other students I met on the programme as we were encouraged to share our own experiences, especially during the taught courses, conferences and workshops. I also learned a great deal from both supervisors with whom I have worked in this period, Professor Whitty and Dr. Coleman, in terms of how to organise my research and increase the clarity of my writing.

I found that I did not always agree with the perspective shared with us by teachers and lecturers on the programme, which made it imperative for me to develop my own powers of objective critique and argument, a process which is not easy to find outside the world of higher education and in which I had had little practice.

Through my work on assignments, IFS and thesis, I have also learned about research methods and methodology, of which I was previously largely ignorant. The benefits of this learning for my professional development are given on page 10. Similarly I have learned about the structuring of academic reports through painful and often de-motivating trial and error including the re-submission of at least one assignment, the IFS and thesis proposals and the complete redrafting of my thesis. As my preferred learning style on the Kolb learning styles cycle is Concrete Experience the process of reflection, resubmission and redrafting has been difficult and therefore helpful in moving my learning forward.

On a practical note I have learned how to use the computer programmes EndNote and NVivo and how to carry out literature searches using library and on line resources.

Links between the elements of the programme

As a practitioner or "doer" rather than a natural theorist, I had been particularly attracted to the idea of a professional doctorate which could be informed by my own practice and which would also inform that practice in ways which are illustrated below.

In process terms, the course structure allowed incremental learning and development. Links between the three distinct elements of the course illustrate that cumulative approach. In addition to allowing me to use my own practice as a source of information, the taught course compelled me to examine the theoretical basis of professionalism and even more significantly the taught modules and assignments on methods of enquiry and advanced research methods made it possible for me to carry out the research for the IFS and thesis. For instance reading, lectures and assignments which enabled me to examine and practice different theoretical traditions, research methods, data analysis and report writing on a smaller scale than that required for the IFS and thesis made those two course elements possible as I was able to approach them with some prior learning. Yet on re-reading the IFS my immediate reaction is to want to rewrite it in a clearer and less imperfect form which must indicate a degree of further learning from the process of researching, writing and re-writing the thesis.

The content links throughout the programme are of course related to the study of school leadership and leadership development, from assignments on the teacher unions, mentoring and NPQH, through the IFS on the foundation of the London Leadership Centre and its links to national policy and finally to my thesis on leadership and leadership development in special schools.

Professional development and knowledge

The very wide reading undertaken since 1996 has informed my professional work and overview by increasing my knowledge of several theoretical and policy areas in which I was working between 1996 and 2005 and for which I still carry out extensive consultancy: school leadership, leadership development, especially via the NCSL programmes, and special schools. By the same token the reading has helped my professional development by requiring me to be more critical and objective. This process has been enhanced by the requirement to draft assignments and the IFS to satisfy university standards.

The work carried out on teacher unions in England and the USA was also extremely useful while I was employed at the NAHT especially as, in addition to work with

British unions, I was also able to visit and collaborate with teacher and school principals' unions from across the world in the early stage of my studies.

As Chief Executive of NASS the results of the survey I carried out for the thesis were used by the DfES to inform the report of the special schools working group, on which I served in 2002-3 and also informed the representations I was able to make on that working group. The survey also informed the provision of leadership and professional development that I was able to organise for my members from 2001 to 2005, including with HayGroup. I also successfully lobbied for Non-Maintained Special Schools (NMSS) to be centrally funded for the NCSL programmes and for NPQH to be a mandatory requirement for new heads in NMSS.

Always more inclined towards practice than theory I have been forced to theorise for my assignments, IFS and particularly the thesis, a process which has not been pain free but which hopefully has been developmental. In this respect the need to redraft the thesis substantially has been especially formative.

My knowledge of research methods has improved exponentially since beginning the programme. I am now much more confident in drafting questionnaires, carrying out interviews and also in the use of questioning techniques. An unforeseen benefit has been that this latter skill, including the formulation of open and probing questions, has also informed my mentoring and coaching skills when working face to face with colleagues in my own organisations and with school leaders. Germane to the two professional roles in which I have worked from 1996 to 2005 has been the actual carrying out of research projects: small scale case studies for assignments and the IFS and the large survey for my thesis. From writing the IFS I learned the challenges of carrying out insider research and from the questionnaire survey for the thesis the importance of research methods which are ethical. This has enhanced my understanding of the need to base professional as well as academic judgements on evidence which is valid and reliable.

Conclusion

In this statement I have described the trajectory of my doctoral studies between 1996 and 2006 and how this trajectory has been affected by professional and other considerations which have helped or hindered progress. I have outlined my perceptions of the links between the various elements of the programme and how the programme has enhanced my learning, my knowledge of specific research and professional issues and my own professional development and work with special schools, with school leaders in all phases and providing or facilitating leadership development activities.

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Abbreviations

ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	MLD	Moderate learning difficulties
Aut	Autism	MPhil	Master of Philosophy
BPhil	Bachelor of Philosophy	MSc	Master of Science
Cert. Ed	Certificate in Education	NAHT	National Association of Headteachers
CPD	Continuous professional development	NAIMS	National Association of Independent and Non maintained Schools
CSCI	Commission for Social Care Inspection	NAS	National Autistic Society
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment (to 2001)	NASEN	National Association for Special Educational Needs
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (from 2001)	NASS	National Association of Independent Schools and Non- Maintained Special Schools
DK	Don't know	NCSC	National Care Standards Commission
DNA	Does not apply	NCSL	National College for School Leadership
DoH	Department of Health	NfER	National Foundation for Educational Research
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	NMSS	Non-Maintained Special School
EBSD	Emotional, Behavioural & Social Difficulties	NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
EFL	English as a Foreign Language	NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
EI	Emotional Intelligence	Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
EMS	Education Management Studies	OU	Open University
FE	Further Education	PANDA	Performance and Assessment report
HE	Higher Education	PD	Physical Disability
Headlamp	Headteachers' Leadership and Management Programme	PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
HI	Hearing Impairment	PMLD	Profound and multiple learning difficulties
HIP	Headteacher Induction Programme	QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
HMCI	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools	SEBD	Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector (s) (of schools)	SEN	Special Educational Needs
I(C)T	Information (and Communication) Technology	SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
IIP	Investors in People	SHA	Secondary Heads' Association
INSET	In service training	SLD	Severe learning difficulties
LEA	Local Education Authority	Spld	Speech and Language difficulty
LSA	Learning Support Assistant	SSDs	Social Services Departments
LPSH	Leadership Programme for Serving Heads	TEACCH	Treatment & Education of Autistic & Related Communication Handicapped Children
MA	Master of Arts	TTA	Teacher Training Agency
MBA	Master of Business Administration	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisation
MEd	Master of Education		

Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter describes the rationale and background behind the present thesis. The underlying hypothesis is: if special school leaders perceive their context to be distinct from the mainstream in many significant ways, in relation to professional knowledge, and to environments internal and external to the school, they may therefore find the generic national school leadership development programmes favoured in government policy insufficient to meet their needs. This in turn gives rise to the research questions: what is distinctive about leadership in the context of the special school and do special school leaders feel that generic leadership development programmes meet their professional development needs?

This introduction describes the professional context, what is distinct in the legal and political framework for special schools showing how the political agenda has added to a problematic external environment for them by introducing a period of radical change and uncertainty. Policy initiatives in school leadership development are then outlined.

Chapter 2 contains a review of relevant literature relating to theory and policy on the two areas which cast light on the research questions: school leadership development and special schools. This includes theory relating to organisational context which has strongly influenced theory on leadership including in schools. Chapter 3 sets out the methodology behind the empirical study which, mainly based on a postal questionnaire survey, tested the underlying hypothesis given above.

In Chapter 4 the results of the survey are described and discussed in relation to premises identified in Chapter 2 from relevant theory on school leadership development. Conclusions and recommendations arising from that discussion are offered in Chapter 5 together with an evaluation of how the study advances knowledge, a critical evaluation of the research, a summary of the professional implications for myself and thoughts on dissemination of the findings.

The appendices contain the research instruments used to collect and analyse the data from the survey.

Background issues

The context for the study has foundations in two areas where there have been recent policy changes. The first is special education and the role of the special school. The second is the development of the role of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and its provision of a national framework for headteacher development. There are very few recently published works on leadership and leadership development in English special schools all with limited samples (Rayner and Ribbins, 1999; HayGroup, 2000; Male and Male, 2001; Powers, Rayner, et al., 2001; Attfield and Williams, 2003; Burnett, 2003 and 2005). Porter, Lacey et al. (2002) and Ainscow, Fox et al. (2003) in their reviews of literature on the role of special schools and on leadership and management in special schools for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and NCSL respectively both describe this as a gap in the knowledge. This gap also merits further research, especially at a time when, as Powers, Rayner et al put it: "educational restructuring is changing not only the tasks and behaviours of educational professionals but also the conduct of professional relationships" (2001, p.108). It is also worth noting that neither Non Maintained nor independent special schools nor their leaders feature in any of the previous existing literature or research on special schools (Porter, Lacey et al., 2002, p.77) despite calls from policy makers for Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to work more closely with them (DfES, 2003a; Audit Commission, 2002) .

The findings of this study are intended to be useful and relevant to the DfES and NCSL in planning professional development for special school leaders at a time when the future role of the special school is being examined, and the national school leadership development framework is under review (Kelly, 2004). Indeed they have already been used by the DfES as part of the background to the report of the Special Schools Working Group (DfES, 2003a).

The professional context

My professional knowledge of the two policy areas, special education and school leadership development, is enhanced by previous experience as a secondary headteacher. More recently, my work representing special schools and their leaders and organising professional development activities for them firstly as the second tier official

at the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) for four years and most recently as Chief Executive of NASS, the National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools, has been informed by and has informed the present study. At NAHT and NASS I noticed that conferences organised exclusively for special school leaders always sold out while those for other phases did not. In addition I had often seen how special school leaders have struggled to adapt government initiatives designed for the mainstream to their context. These experiences led to the formation of the hypothesis stated on page 15.

In both roles I also worked extensively with central and local government with the aim of influencing policy on issues covered in this thesis. This work included serving on the Special Schools Working Group (DfES, 2003a).

The literature on special schools provides a wealth of research and debate which highlight potentially negative aspects of special schools as institutions and of their quality and leadership (Alderson and Goodey, 1998; Ainscow, 1991; Tomlinson, 2001; Slee, 1998.). The positive models of special school leadership reviewed in chapter 2, concentrate on aspects of internal culture such as the values and vision held by the headteacher, in particular the high value placed on inter-personal relationships and the importance of the individual including the individual child as well as the leadership styles employed by special school leaders (Rayner and Ribbins, 1999, p. 315; HayGroup, 2000). As part of my professional work I have also noted, through observation and contact with special school leaders, evidence of a distinctive ethos and culture in special school leadership characterised by high levels of emotional intelligence, care, compassion, inter-personal intelligence and a tangible, passionate commitment to meeting the individual needs of the pupils and also of staff. This passion for personalised learning and the social and educational growth of the whole child pre-dates the introduction of the political strategy of the same name (Milliband, 2004).

Also I have much insider experience of theory and practice related to the development of school leadership and management. For instance, I played a part in the establishment of the London Leadership Centre which has been at the forefront of national developments in headteacher training (Shaw, 2000). During my tenure, the NAHT won the contract with HayGroup, also known as Hay McBer, and the Open University

(OU) to develop the Leadership Programme for Serving Heads (LPSH) and also ran the Supported Open Learning sector of the early National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) as well as offering Headlamp courses (Williams, 1998). Other relevant roles include being an LPSH trainer and facilitator, a Headlamp and HIP mentor, an External Adviser to over fifty schools including special schools, a member of the DfES panel for the School Achievement Award for special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) and of the national steering group for regional special educational needs (SEN) partnerships. There is therefore considerable synergy between my professional activities and the focus of this thesis, an issue which has methodological implications, explored in Chapter 3.

Policy initiatives in Special Education

What is distinctive about special schools?

Special schools are different from mainstream schools by virtue of their legal status, the impact that the inclusion agenda has on them and the degree of change and uncertainty in their external environment all of which affect the degree of complexity which their leaders must manage.

A special school is:

> A school which is specially organised to make special educational provision for pupils with special educational needs. Special schools maintained by the LEA comprise of community special schools and foundation special schools, and non maintained special schools are approved by the Secretary of State under section 342 of the Education Act 1996. (DfES, 2001c, p. 270)

A further category, independent schools approved by the Secretary of State to admit pupils with SEN are not legally defined as special schools (DfES, 2002) and thus are omitted from the above definition. This paper uses the term "independent special school" for simplicity even though it is not a bona fide legal category (DfES, 2003a, p. 172).

Since the 1980s the number of special schools has declined (Hegarty, 1994; DfES, 2003a, p.173). By 2002 there were approximately 1098 maintained special schools in England, 63[1] Non-Maintained (NMSS) and about a further 147 were independent

[1] Eight further NMSS were approved during 2002, 2 former maintained schools and 6 independent, while 2 closed

special schools of which 89 were "approved" by the Secretary of State to admit pupils with special educational needs, the others being "registered". In the same year 89,797 pupils were being educated in maintained special schools, 4,670 in NMSS and around 5,760 in independent special schools (DfES, 2003a, p172).

All NMSS are autonomous schools run by small or large charities with roots often in acts of Victorian philanthropy (DfEE,1999a). Many independent special schools are also run by charities and are indistinguishable from NMSS, except for their legal status, while others are on a for-profit basis. Pupil placements in NMSS and independent special schools are funded from the public purse although placement funding is received via fees paid by local authorities rather than via a delegated budget. This differentiates them from other schools not maintained by the State where fees are paid by parents. Since 2001 NMSS have also received significant government funding including capital funding, Standards Fund, headteacher and aspirant headteacher training and other pots of money such as threshold funding and support for ICT initiatives. Despite their pupils being funded by LEAs independent special schools, including those which are charities, receive no extra funding as ministers are understandably reluctant to provide funding for some independent schools and not others. In smaller independent special schools this often restricts access to costly national training programmes.

While the numbers of pupils with statements of special educational needs goes up, pupil numbers in specialist provision has remained relatively stable (DfES, 2003a, pp. 174-5). The term *Special Educational Needs* is itself a blanket and contested term on one hand covering a wide and complex range of conditions and disciplines or on the other representing a pathologised "super-label" (Bailey, 1998; Booth, 1998; Ainscow, 1993, p.5). Most special schools provide for a fairly narrow band of disabilities or needs although as schools have closed and more children who can cope with mainstream are included there is a growing tendency for admissions to remaining special schools to provide for a widening range or combination of more complex needs and pupils who may not previously have attended school at all (Alderson and Goodey, 1998 p. 4; Fish and Evans, 1995; Bowers, 1984a, p. 1). While some LEAs are opening generic special schools catering for all needs (Attfield and Williams, 2003) LEA schools for low incidence SEN and most special schools outside the maintained sector continue to be highly specialised. The changing pupil population requires a constant updating of specialist knowledge. In several ways therefore *special* schools can be seen as

specialist schools with training needs additional to those required for mainstream schools. As an illustration, there is a mandatory requirement for teachers of children with sensory impairment to hold a specialist qualification as a Teacher of the Deaf or the Blind (DfES, 2003c, clauses 6, 7 and 8) in addition to subject specialism and/ or management role.

The impact of inclusion on special schools

In 2001 the Labour government strengthened its policy on the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools (DfES, 2001a and c) with the Special Needs and Disability Act (DfES, 2001b) acting on the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on SEN (UNESCO, 1994). The Act consolidated the right of children with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools, gave parents the right to express a preference for education in a maintained special school and imposed upon LEAs the duty to comply with this preference or to carefully consider parental representations for a place in NMSS or independent special schools. Prior to and after 2001, both as a consequence of the Act and influenced by spiralling SEN budgets, many LEAs reorganised provision closing some special schools, changing the designation of others and announcing their intention to reduce the number of placements in extra authority special schools (University of Manchester, 2001; Hunt, 1994; HMCI and Audit Commission, 2002). Because of these policies some lobby groups such as the 2020 Campaign and the Centre for the Study of Inclusive Education (CSIE) (2020 Campaign, 2005; http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie[2]) as well as some special school heads have begun to forecast the disappearance of the special school albeit each for different reasons. Even if special schools do not disappear entirely, which seems most likely, they are certain to undergo profound and as yet undefined change (DfES, 2003a).

Part of the uncertainty surrounding the issue of the education of children with SEN is that there are no accepted legal or theoretical definitions of *inclusion* (Farrell, 2001; Low, 1996; Farrell, M., 2000; Fish and Evans, 1995; Croll and Moses, 1999; HMCI and Audit Commission, 2002; Slee, 1998). The topic generates vigorous debate and even polemic with participants often adopting extreme stances. At one end of the spectrum it is taken to mean full *integration* into mainstream school. At the other end of the spectrum it is seen as a process to increase participation in school and society (DfES,

[2] Last accessed January 24th 2006

2001a; Booth Ainscow et. al., 2000, p.12). Inclusion International defines inclusion as "the opportunity for persons with a disability to participate fully in all educational, employment, consumer, recreational, community and domestic activities that typify society" (given in Tilstone, 2000). This latter definition allows for an inclusive framework which is a continuum whereby all children can be educated in settings appropriate to their educational and social needs and their right to choose and which could include a special school for all or part of their school career. Such a flexible system could mean a new approach to admission, liaison and partnership in both mainstream and specialist provision which will impact on the training needs of school leaders and staff in both mainstream and specialist provision.

Concerns about special schools

Leaving aside epistemological objections related to the nature of professional bureaucracies (Skrtic,1991) and ideological concerns that segregated provision militates against normalisation for children with special needs (Alderson and Goodey,1998 ; Tomlinson, 2001), political concerns have centred on value for money, the quality of leadership, education and care and the use of physical restraint in special schools taking pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) and a significant number of special schools, particularly those catering for pupils with challenging behaviour, closed following poor Ofsted inspections (HMCI, 1999). High profile child protection scandals led to the development by the Department of Health (DoH) of minimum care standards for all children in residential settings and a standardisation of the regulation and inspection of the care aspects of residential schools (DoH, 2001, 2002 a and b). Schools which accommodate children for 295 days per year or more are classified as Children's Homes under the Children Act of 1989 and had to register as such from April 2002.

For all the reasons given above: the numbers of special schools being closed or re-designated, the impact of inclusion on the nature of the pupil population, Local Authority policy to reduce placements in maintained and *extra* authority schools, opposition from some lobby groups, uncertainty about the future role of special schools, concerns about quality, value for money and child protection and others listed in Chapters 2 and 4, headteachers in special schools and particularly in residential schools often feel isolated from their peers as well as from mainstream colleagues, with their

practice under scrutiny and their tenure under threat (DfES, 2003a; Male and Male, 2001).

Brief reference has been made above to some debates and issues such as inclusion and the value of segregated versus mainstream provision for children with SEN as part of the background to this work. While all these debates are important and must be acknowledged, they form the context rather than the primary focus of this thesis.

Policy initiatives in School Leadership Development

The present Labour government sees headteachers as crucial to raising school standards in order to create a world-class education system (Labour Party, 2001; Morris, 2001). Consequently, one of the four key principles of the 1998 Green Paper: "Teachers: Meeting the Challenge of Change" was better leadership in schools (DfEE, 1998b). The Green Paper laid out an agenda for improving the quality of school leadership which included strengthening the professional development framework and by 2001 the NCSL was reviewing the Leadership Development Framework (Collarbone, 2001; Newton, 2001, NCSL, 2001). None of these documents considered the issue of school context. A major survey of headteachers and other key stakeholders from all phases carried out for the DfES by the Institute of Education, University of London in 2001 (Earley, Evans et al, 2002) did not ask a single question about the school's context or special circumstances, such as the denomination. All this appears to imply that policy makers see school leadership and management as generic. This thesis seeks to ascertain if special school leaders agree with this implicit premise.

The national framework for headteacher development

The framework was first developed and administered by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), passing temporarily to the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) in the late 1990s and from 2001 being overseen by the NCSL. It contains three main elements: NPQH, Headlamp and LPSH, considered here in chronological order of their establishment.

Headlamp, the Headteachers' Leadership and Management Programme, was launched in 1995 and superseded by the Headteachers' Induction Programme (HIP) from

September 2003[3]. Headlamp was an optional induction fund of £2500 to be accessed within the first two years of the first headship[4]. Developed before the National Standards for Headteachers (TTA, 1995a and 1998; DfES 2004a) were drawn up it was based on a list of leadership and management tasks and abilities. Headteachers were required to spend at least £2000 of this funding on meeting identified development needs through a wide range of registered providers and were expected to carry out a needs assessment often with the help of an experienced mentor. Headlamp was reviewed by Professors Sue Law and Hugh Lawlor in 1998 (Williams, 1998) but this review was never published. Later reviews were published by the NCSL and Ofsted (Newton, 2001, HMI 2002).

NPQH was trialled in 1997 and reviewed in 1999-2000. It became mandatory in 2004 (DfES and NCSL, 2002) for new heads in maintained schools and NMSS[5] and is a qualification to signal readiness for headship based on the National Standards for Headteachers (op. cit.), developed as part of the TTA framework of standards for the teaching profession also including standards for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) and specialist teachers of SEN (TTA, 1998b, 1999). Training and assessment are carried out by regional providers contracted by the NCSL and latterly much of the course of study, particularly at the Access stage, has become web based.

The re-launched NPQH consists of an application and selection process, an Access stage for inexperienced candidates lasting up to one year and a Development stage of between three months and one year. At this stage candidates are allocated a tutor and carry out a school improvement project. Following a school based assessment, candidates proceed to the final stage which includes a two day phase-specific residential and a final assessment (DfEE, 2000b, c).

Originally NPQH involved no phase-specific activities. Senior personnel at the NCSL has indicated [6] that the unpublished 2000 review of NPQH revealed that special school candidates felt that they would derive greater benefit from the programme if they could work in sector groups, rather than or as well as in mixed groups with mainstream candidates. This led to the organisation by the DfEE of additional conferences for

[3] HIP was not available during the period of the survey therefore only Headlamp is described here.
[4] HIP can be accessed during the first 3 years.
[5] During the period covered by the survey NPQH was not mandatory.
[6] Interview with P. Collarbone 30.07.01

special school candidates from November 1999. Also from 2001, the revised NPQH included national two day residential conferences specifically for primary, secondary or special school candidates. This would imply that a wholly generic NPQH programme might have been considered insufficient for the needs of special schools and other phase groups.

The optional LPSH was launched in November 1998 and reviewed in 2003. LPSH serves the needs of experienced headteachers in developing leadership skills, mainly based on the outcomes of HayGroup research into the characteristics of effective headteachers (2002). During the period of this study it consisted of a four day residential programme during which up to 14 participants received the results of 360° appraisals by work colleagues and formulated an action plan based on the results of the appraisal and their chosen school improvement issues. The programme is generic but appraisal data is benchmarked against the context: small, medium to large or special school. Prior to 2003 a fifth follow up day took place after one year when part of the appraisal was rerun.

Regional providers advertise scores of LPSH programmes each year and headteachers apply for a programme on a date and in a venue which suit their requirements. Marketing has been tightly controlled by the responsible government agencies with, in the first instance, no attempt made to secure a balance of phases on each programme which can be heavily dominated by primary heads. Following 2003, when the results of the survey described in this paper were made known to the NCSL, a nominal attempt was made to ensure that headteachers from secondary or special schools were clustered in specific programmes rather than being the only phase representative in a group.

Conclusion

This thesis examines what is distinct about the special school context and whether special school leaders feel that generic leadership development programmes meet their professional development needs. The initial underlying hypothesis, based on practical experience, was that special school leaders do see their leadership role as context specific and would appreciate separate training.

This chapter has explained the background, rationale and context for the thesis as well as outlining the relevance of the study to my professional activities in the fields of specialist education and school leadership development. A factual account of policy initiatives in these two areas has been provided showing briefly some legal, political and environmental factors impacting on the problematic and complex nature of special education and the recent history of national provision for school leadership development which has been largely generic. There has been little research on special schools or their leadership and none which embraces NMSS and independent special schools alongside maintained schools and this study attempts to fill that gap.

While this chapter has outlined factual issues, the following chapter looks at relevant literature and theory on the topics of school leadership development and special schools.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Starting with a brief review of general literature on organisations and organisational leadership as distinct from management, the chapter contains an examination of relevant literature on leadership and leadership development for school leaders including that relating to NPQH, Headlamp and LPSH within both positivist and interpretative paradigms, the former often linked to a managerialist perspective and the latter to a stance which is critical of the national programmes. It is not possible to review all leadership literature here and so the chapter concentrates mainly on texts concerned with contingency theory, contingent leadership and the school context. The issue of context is linked to recent literature on school leadership development and on the nature and transmission of professional knowledge. The second focus is literature on special schools, their context and their leadership, leading to a review of the very few existing small scale studies which consider the professional development of special school leaders. The choice of these two foci derives from the research questions: what is distinctive about leadership in the context of the special school and do special school leaders feel that generic leadership development programmes meet their professional development needs.

As generic leadership development programmes cutting across all school contexts form part of government policy can we find a theoretical basis for this undifferentiated policy in the literature? As this study relates to the views of special school leaders, in what way is the special school context seen to be distinctive in theoretical and empirically based literature and how are the views of special school heads on their professional development represented? This chapter aims to draw conclusions from the literature to aid discussion of the findings from the survey of special school leaders on which this study is based, which are given in Chapter 4.

A significant feature of the literature on leadership is a tension between those authors who espouse generic models, often based on competencies and deriving from business models and those adopting a more interpretative framework who see the former approach as overly dependent on centralised, managerialist, positivist models and thus a

negation or at worst a betrayal of the pluralism associated with the knowledge, skills, values, moral purpose and practice of educational leadership in varied contexts. This tension extends to views on how school leaders should be developed. Early official documents on the professional development of school leaders, usually associated with the first years of the NCSL, or with the national leadership development programmes which preceded the establishment of the NCSL in 2000, tended to concentrate on the rationale for standardised generic programmes closely linked with the impact of the headteacher on student outcomes, a major plank of policy for successive governments. Thus the early versions of the NPQH, Headlamp and LPSH paid little or no attention to the individual school's context. However as new models of school leadership emerged and evaluations of the early programmes were published, the College began to respond to the impact of these texts as well as to the results of their own commissioned or associate research. Later publications by the NCSL as well as revised and new leadership development programmes took on board these new models and began to explore in a small way the importance of professional knowledge and the transferability of this knowledge including through experiential learning. The importance of context in shaping professional knowledge and practice began to be acknowledged (Bush and Glover, 2003).

One particular type of context is the special school. Literature on special schools is famously sparse but a small range of relevant texts are reviewed below. In the current historical period the specific situation of the special school is characterised by ambiguity, uncertainty and even hostility as ideology clashes with pragmatism in determining the future role of the special school within an inclusive education system. In addition the knowledge, skills and practices of the special school are seen to be in some part different from those exercised in mainstream schools, although a core of generic values, professional knowledge and leadership practices is also easy to identify.

The study of organisations and their leadership

Discourse on leadership began with the study of organisations, usually commercial or industrial, in the second half of the twentieth century (Mintzberg, 1979; Handy 1985; Drucker, 1993; Schein 1997). This was often linked to the perceived need to provide a conceptual framework for the responsiveness of organisations to complex societal change or the pursuit of excellence in the context of that change (Peters, 1987).

Theorists presented detailed, quasi-scientific models or paradigms for organisational structures based on taxonomies derived from empirical research or observation.

Others, such as Greenfield felt that an organisational theory truly based on understanding would reject the scientific emphasis on quantification derived from experimental research. Instead he saw the construction of organisational theory as a means of interpreting social reality mainly via a phenomenological paradigm. According to Greenfield, organisations are not real entities with a life of their own but human inventions based on sets of meanings which individuals place upon their actions in order to make sense of the world (Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993, p. 16).

This tension between what are perceived to be positivist or interpretative models of organisational theory can also be found in studies of leadership as I shall show below.

From an early stage, for those who studied organisations, the importance of leadership became apparent as a determinant of effectiveness. Yet organisational leadership is an elusive or "woolly" concept with no accepted definition and a plethora of contrasting literature (Wright, 1996, p. 1; Bennis and Nanus, 1997, pp. 4-5) and it is only possible to identify some of the main trends here. More complete analyses can be found in Wright (1996), Greenfield and Ribbins (1993).

For some, leadership does not exist as a concept discrete from management or administration (Ouston, 1998, p. 117). Nevertheless, for most scholars the distinction is clear. Kotter, for instance, sees management as a set of processes that can keep a complicated system of people and technology running smoothly e.g budgeting, planning, staffing, controlling and problem solving. Leadership, on the other hand, is a set of processes that creates organisations or adapts them to significantly changing circumstances (1996, pp. 25 & 28). Leadership creates vision and strategy while management creates plans and budgets (op. cit., p. 71.) Management is about the status quo while leadership deals with change (op. cit., p. 165.) In other words management is *transactional* and leadership is *transformational.*

Grace defines the difference between leadership and management in education:

> In its influence upon religious, moral and ethical education educational leadership is an important constituent of a society's mores and culture. It is in this larger relational context that educational leadership can be seen to be qualitatively different from educational management.

> Educational management is about achieving organisational effectiveness once the major purposes of the organisation have been agreed by its members or specified for them by an external agency (1995, p. 192).

Early influences on the study of leadership derived from Taylorist concepts of standardised production formulae as a response to the rapid industrialisation of the twentieth century. These positivist models were often based on checklists of managerial competencies or tasks or alternatively clusters of behavioural or personality traits and styles (Mintzberg, 1979; Kotter, 1996; Wright, 1996).

Others sought to analyse the behaviours of leaders in specific situations. Thus Fiedler's Contingency model (1967) stated that the "most effective leadership style is contingent upon the degree to which the situation enables the leader to exert influence over his or her group members." This depended on three factors: the leader's position power, the structure of the task and the interpersonal relationship between leader and members (Wright, op. cit., p. 50). Similarly Hersey and Blanchard's model of situational leadership offered three main interactive components: the qualities of the leader, the nature of the task and the maturity of the followers (1982).

This work developed into explorations of the personality traits which characterised effective leaders, often based on theories of motivation. One of these theorists was David McClelland, founder of HayGroup which developed the LPSH (McClelland and Burnham, 1976; Wright, op. cit., p. 173). McClelland concluded, following extensive research in different types of organisation, that effective leaders were driven by different motivational patterns, depending on their situation or their organisation.

More recently as a response to concerns about rapid and complex change in post-industrial society interest has developed in the concept of self- management and emotional intelligence or EI (Goleman, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000; Goleman and Boyatzis, 2002 a and b; Oldroyd, 2005) and the empowerment of self-managing teams in learning organisations (Peters, 1987; Wright; op. cit.; Bennis and Nanus, 1997, p. 197). As with previous paradigms many of these texts often contain checklists, albeit of behaviours or values, rather than tasks, to be espoused by successful, empowering leaders. Others such as Gardner (1997) have identified qualities which characterise leaders through their personal identity stories and histories. Gardner also defines six constants of leadership as the story, the audience, the organisation, the embodiment, direct and

indirect leadership and expertise (ibid, p. 293). The concept of expertise bears some relevance to the issue of contextual professional knowledge, explored below (p.40.) However for Goleman, technical knowledge and skills as described in curriculum vitae are only threshold qualifications for getting a job, not predictors of performance. EI is synergistic with cognitive intelligence as top performers have both (1999, p. 22) but the more complex the job, the more generic EI traits matter. Fullan also remarks "People have always needed EI but in complex times people need it in spades (2001, pp. 71 and 78).

A further development is the assumption that organisations are both systems in their own right and also the result of the synergy of inter-related human actions. Senge's recipe for the learning organisation is composed of five disciplines: mental models, personal mastery, team learning, building shared vision and the fifth discipline: systems thinking, that is the ability to see the bigger picture rather than the snapshot which relates only to the part of the organisation inhabited by the individual (1997, p. 6). Fullan (2004, 2005) see systems thinking as the key to sustainability in educational leadership. This concept will feature again below.

Key concepts of school leadership

Texts on educational leadership relate mainly to schools borrowing heavily from writings on generic leadership and from the school effectiveness and improvement movements and so do not usually distinguish between school contexts. As with organisational leadership the literature on school leadership and management is "vast", the concepts are contested (Bush and Glover, 2003; Coleman and Earley, 2005; Coles and Southworth, 2005) and characterised by the lack of a single dominant theory (Bush, Bell et al., 1999, p.2). It is only possible to give an overview here, selecting examples relevant to this thesis.

Since its formation, the NCSL has commissioned an increasingly wide range of reviews and research projects on school leadership (NCSL, 2003), some from established scholars and others from practitioner associates seconded to the College. In their review for the NCSL of the literature on school leadership Bush and Glover (2003) identified key concepts in the literature on school leadership drawing on Leithwood, Jantzi et al's (1999) typology of six leadership models: instructional, transformational (also Norris,

Barnett et al, 2002; Allix, 2000), moral (Fullan, 2001), participative, managerial (Wright, 1996) and contingent leadership to which latter I shall return later. Two further categories were added: post-modern leadership, based on Greenfield and interpersonal leadership as well as linking to participative leadership the related concepts of distributed and invitational leadership (Stoll and Fink, 1995; Gronn, 2000; Spillane and Diamond, 2005, p. 49). Bush and Glover point out that there is no agreed definition of post-modern leadership but that it can relate either to theories of democratic leadership, to a celebration of a multiplicity of individual truths as defined by experience or a recognition of the diverse views held by stakeholders (op. cit., p. 20). They also see influence as a major component of leadership along with vision (2003, p. 8).

It will be argued below (page 46 onwards) that the concept of leadership as a moral activity, related for instance to a child's entitlement to the best possible education and care and so linked to issues of social justice and equity resonate with the values of leaders in the special school context where the child is placed at the centre. Learning-centred leadership and distributed leadership can also be mentioned in this respect (Leithwood, Jantzi et al., op. cit., Bush and Glover, op. cit.).

Consonant with literature on leadership in the business and industrial sectors, texts on schools identify leadership, as opposed to management, as the main factor in determining school effectiveness including in relation to student outcomes (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Bell, Bolam et al, 2003 a and b; Bush and Jackson, 2002); the ability of the school to improve (Stoll and Fink, 1995) or to manage change (Fullan, 1992 and 2001; Leithwood, Jantzi et al., 1999; Coles and Southworth, 2005; Fink, 2005).

Definitions of educational leadership in official documents have been less clear but do show an increased acknowledgement of current theory and research into leadership. For example the National Standards for Headteachers do not distinguish between school contexts (TTA, 1995, 1998; DfES, 2004). The earlier versions were managerialist in style and content and, along with the 2004 version, offering checklists of competences which arguably are appropriate for a threshold qualification where technical skills and professional knowledge are a pre-requisite for getting a job although not a determinant of excellent performance in that job (Goleman, 1999, 2000; Gardner, 1997; Bush and Glover, 2003, p. 27). Less helpful was the way in which the two earlier versions of the

Standards failed to distinguish between leadership styles, management skills, professional knowledge and government expectation.

School leadership development and the national programmes

If most writing on the nature of educational leadership is generic it follows that until relatively recently academic texts on the development of educational leaders have also mainly assumed a generic model cutting across all contexts (Barth, 1991; Levacic, Glover et al., 1998; Smith and Bennett, 1998; Bush, Bell et al., 1999; Earley, Evans et al., 2002; Tomlinson, 2001 and 2004).

In addition to the national programmes there exists a range of other generic provision for school management and leadership training and development. Bush and Jackson point out that "in England there were several disconnected initiatives for school leadership and management training during the 1980s and 1990s…." (2002, p. 419) and most of these initiatives still co-exist alongside the national framework, adding to the choice for headteachers and aspiring headteachers in preparing themselves for headship or in extending their skills and knowledge. The main providers of these generic initiatives are LEAs, headteachers' and other professional associations and HE. LEAs have traditionally been local providers of management development and training at the induction stage and beyond induction. This training is delivered sometimes using LEA personnel and sometimes HE institutions. Modes of transmission include the use of competence based approaches, portfolios of evidence, on and off site provision, headteacher exchange, Headlamp provision, mentor or peer support, secondments and open or flexible distance learning (Baker, 1996). The headteacher associations, NAHT and SHA, are also very active providers of generic headteacher training and development as well as of conferences. In addition the NAHT was for a long time the only successful national provider of phase specific training and development for special school leaders across all sectors and specialisms, joined latterly by special school associations such as NASS and NAIMS.

Powers, Rayner and Gunter (2003) refer to further generic forms of headteacher training such as Ofsted training, which could include experience as an Additional Inspector; further study such as Masters and Doctoral degrees and advanced diplomas and certificates or NVQs as well as other HE courses including management courses. Finally they refer to Training for IIP or as a threshold assessor or external adviser and

courses and conferences by other smaller or private providers. Special school leaders also routinely meet in specialist networks run by disability and other specialist charities such as the NAS and NASEN.

In official documents relating to the national framework a similar generic picture applies. Although the Blair government's education policy encourages specialism and diversity between schools (DfEE, 2001d, p.67), the school leadership development framework (NCSL, 2001) barely differentiates between school contexts despite one of its ten propositions being that leadership should embrace the "distinctive and inclusive context of the school".

In fact the first national headship development programmes in England were not only generic, a fact bemoaned by more than one interest group, such as Church schools (Thornton , 2001; Johnson and Castelli, 1999) but also centrally determined according to prescribed standards (Brundrett, 2001; Bush and Jackson, 2002). Nevertheless they signalled the beginning of a higher profile for school leadership and preparation for it.

Early commentators on Headlamp did not consider the issue of context in their evaluations of the programme but looked at needs analysis, quality of training; gender and equal opportunities (Gunraj and Rutherford, 1999; Blandford and Squire, 2000). Only Kirkham (1999) offered the view that providers of Headlamp should pay more attention to context but concluded that this would not be cost effective. Bush and Jackson describe Headlamp as having "... no coherent programme" (2002, p. 422) and Brundrett describes it as a centrally controlled initiative based on a set of generic standards and with inadequate quality assurance (2001, p. 238).

NPQH, the threshold qualification for Headteachers was introduced in 1997. Bush and Jackson (2002) locate the programme within an international curriculum for school leadership preparation focusing on vision, mission and transformational leadership, and incorporating consideration of the main task areas of administration e.g. human resource management and professional development, finance, curriculum and external relations. Other writers are more critical. For Gunter (1999) NPQH represents the supremacy of commercial contracting over democratic notions and practices of the social contract. She sees a centrally determined NPQH as being overlain (sic) on top of pluralist professional development opportunities. Brundrett (2001) sees NPQH as a manifestation of over-reliance on a competency system. For Grace NPQH exemplifies

the growing dominance of a managerial approach (quoted in Bush and Glover, 2003, p. 16.) With some relevance to the present thesis HMI also expressed doubts about the capacity of NPQH to meet a range of needs (2002, p. 5).

LPSH is based on the research commissioned by the DfES in 1997 and 1998 and carried out by HayGroup to produce their Models of Excellence (HayGroup, 2000, 2002). The algorithms used to describe the "tipping point" for outstanding performance by a headteacher are synergistic with Goleman's model for EI (1996, 1998, 1999, 2000) and McLelland's theories of social motivation (McClelland and Burnham, 1976). LPSH is predicated on the theory that adults can learn to change deeply rooted leadership habits.

Despite excellent evaluations from participants (Parsons, Welch et al., 2000; HMI, 2002) there are concerns about the programme with some writers adopting a critical stance. Although McClelland's empirical research is in the public domain (Wright, 1996, p. 173; McClelland and Burnham, 1976) as is that of Goleman to a lesser extent, there remains a lack of trust in LPSH among some academics as the HayGroup research upon which the programme is based is largely unpublished (Levacic and Glatter, 2003 p. 66) (although see Forde, Hobby et al., 2000). Male (2000), indicts LPSH as male dominated and based on competency clusters developed by business consultants so that the notion of the effective school is embodied in politics rather than practice, denying the immediacy of the actual school environment. Brundrett also reported concerns about the provision of a business partner for headteachers rather than an educational partner in the earlier form of LPSH (2001) although HMI saw this as a positive element patchily applied (2002). By contrast, the theoretical model behind LPSH is espoused positively and credibly by Fullan (2001) and Crawford has responded to Male's comments in a spirited defence of LPSH (2000). Most tellingly for the purposes of this thesis HMI found that LPSH did not always "meet the needs of headteachers from a variety of contexts" (2002, p. 5).

Positivist and interpretative views of school leadership and leadership development

These NCSL/TTA programmes are government initiatives linked to the Blair government's Standards agenda (DfEE, 1998b) relying heavily on the concept of the leader's impact on outcomes loosely related to school effectiveness research. As shown above there are substantial criticisms of government policy on leadership development. One such criticism is that policy ignores research evidence on leadership

(Gunter, 1999; Levacic and Glatter, 2003). Similarly in his comparative study of English and American leadership programmes Brundrett (2001) found that in formulating the early versions of Headlamp, NPQH and LPSH the TTA deliberately eschewed theory thus disassociating leadership development programmes from their erstwhile home in Higher Education (HE) in favour of centralised provision.

Thus the two opposing paradigms which define educational management and leadership studies also apply to leadership development: a positivist, managerial and problem solving approach often accused of ignoring social inequalities versus an interpretative, socially critical perspective generally opposed to the national programmes. Among the latter critical theorists Thrupp and Willmott (2003) label those scholars who espouse competency models and "managerial leadership" in order to respond to government initiatives as subtle or overt textual apologists for a centralised system which bleaches out context and other important issues such as equity. They label in this way Caldwell and Spinks (1998), Davies and Ellison (1997) and others as well as the national leadership development programmes themselves.

Grace (1995, 1997), with Whitty, Power et al (1998) sees the tension between paradigms as one of policy science versus policy scholarship. Grace favours a "cross-cultural *scholarship* of leadership which is historically and culturally informed" (1995, p. 6.) rather than a policy *science* approach based on natural science methods, a form of social and educational analysis in which a phenomenon is extracted from its relational context and subjected to close analysis in order to gain an understanding of the phenomenon "to formulate a rational and scientific prescription for action and future policy" (op. cit. pp. 2-3).

Others adopting an anti positivist, anti managerial stance in Greenfield's footsteps (1993, pp. 112, 149) are Gunter (1999) and Bottery (1996) opposing what he labels "New Public Management". Instead, with Greenfield, they feel that we need to understand the personal and subjective dimensions when building a new science of administration (leadership and management) i.e. the context. Anderson and Bennett (2003, p. xvi) describe the government view of the relationship between research, policy and practice as strongly rational, emphasizing generalisability a stance which could be criticized for ignoring the individuality of specific contexts.

These authors argue that education management in managerialist times deprives educators of their professionalism, their ability to exercise their own moral values and ignores or simplifies context by focussing on standardised programmes or drawing parallels with business management (Glatter, 1999). Mintzberg (1979) also held the view that centrally imposed standards are in fact a political control mechanism: "The two most effective means to control an organisation from the outside are (1) to hold its most powerful decision maker, -namely its chief executive officer – responsible for its actions and (2) to impose clearly defined standards on it" (p. 289).

Rather than categorise positivist and interpretative frameworks as opposing and mutually exclusive paradigms others are able to reconcile managerialism as part of a continuum of leadership. For instance Leithwood and Jantzi as we saw above (1999) included managerial leadership in a typology of six leadership styles and claimed that leaders need to adopt a 'bifocal' perspective, management *and* leadership. Leithwood (quoted in Bush and Glover) adds that 'distinctions between management and leadership cannot be made in terms of overt behaviour... most of the overt practices of transformational leaders look quite managerial" (2003, p. 19). In this way Leithwood uses the term "managerialist" in a more neutral sense as a part of a leadership spectrum.

Bush with Jackson (2002) also opined that while leadership and management are practical activities they can be combined with an appreciation of relevant theory and research so that decision-making may be informed by publicly available knowledge about the issue and not constrained by the boundaries of the leader's personal experience. In this way we can relate theory to practice.

Contingency theory and the school context

The research questions which form the basis for this study relate to perceptions of distinctiveness in the special school context and whether generic leadership development programmes are sufficient to support the formation of effective leaders for that context.

Contingency theory originally arose from studies of industrial and commercial organizations (Mintzberg, 1979). In the case of schools, writers have shown that there are multiple dimensions to "context". These can be either external or internal to the school. A growing body of thought asserts that the recruitment, preparation and

development of school leaders cannot be divorced from the context in which they operate (Hartle and Thomas, 2003).

The concept of context is subject to multiple interpretations. It can mean external environmental or social context such as political, national, demographic or cultural factors (Walker and Dimmock, 2005) or other variables affecting outputs and structure. It can also mean internal contextual, situational or organisational issues which affect the nature of professional knowledge and cognition, for instance school denomination, size, phase or sector, pupil ability, the gender or career stage of the school leaders, the nature of the staff group.

As shown above Mintzberg drew together contingency theory from previous authors on industrial or commercial contexts who sought to determine which structural form is most appropriate under a specific set of conditions. These contingency factors are environment (including hostile environment), age and size of organisation, power and technical factors (Mintzberg, 1979).

In their review of literature on leadership carried out for NCSL in 2003 Bush and Glover (p. 21) point out that the contingent leadership model (one of Leithwood's typology of six) recognises the diverse nature of school contexts and the advantages of adapting leadership styles to the particular situation rather than adopting a 'one size fits all' stance. "The contingent model outlines an approach that recognises the significance of situational leadership, with heads and other senior staff adapting their approach to the unique circumstances of their schools. An integrated leadership model needs to start with a contingent approach because a specific vision for the school, a hallmark of the transformational model, cannot be independent of this context" (ibid. p 32). The relationship between the evolution of organisational contexts and the leadership orientations that provide the seeds for their development also stands true for Norris, Barnett et al (2002, p. 46).

Some writers see context as both internal and external (Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993, p. 21; Norris, Barnett et al., 2002). Similarly for Stoll and Fink (1995) context can be either inside the school or the external environment in which it is required to operate. Fidler, quoted in Bush and Glover (2003, p.22) stated in 1997: "the choice of conceptualisation will depend on the situation and on the purpose for which

understanding is being sought". In 2000 he argued that "a contingent approach should take account of both the internal situation in the organisation and the external context in which the organisation operates".

If every school is unique, other factors affect school context, for instance school size (Bright and Ware, 2003). Bush and Glover (2003, p. 29) also list: school type or phase; location e.g. inner city, suburban or rural; socio-economic factors; governance, parents, staffing and the experience and commitment of staff or followers" (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982; Wright, 1996) plus internal cultural factors e.g. values, beliefs, customs and rituals.

Internal culture is indeed a powerful ingredient of school context also listed by Coleman and Earley (2005). For Stoll and Bolam (2005) culture is the "deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs shared by an organisation's members.

A further important contextual factor could also be the stage of headship (Day and Bakioglu, 1996; Weindling, 1999) or career trajectory (Stoll and Fink, 1995; Coles and Southworth, 2005 p. 160). Indeed the NCSL (2001) has based its Leadership Development Framework on five stages of leadership: emergent, established, entry to headship, consultant and advanced. Other contexts are phase or sector such as secondary (Weindling and Earley, 1987; Jones, 1987; Dunford, Fawcett et al. 2000), primary (Southworth, 1999) or tertiary (Lumby, 2003). Others see being in challenging circumstances as part of context (Keys, Sharp et al., 2003; West, Stanford et al., 2005; Crow, 2005) or socio economic or demographic factors (Mortimore and Whitty, 1997; Thrupp and Willmott , 2003). For Coleman gender is an important part of context (2002) and for others the main factor is religious affiliation (Grace, 1995; Johnson and Castelli, 1999) or historical period (Beare and Slaughter, 1993; Grace, op. cit., Thrupp and Willmott, op. cit.).

Studies of context in relation to school improvement (West, Stanford et al., 2005) found that improving schools need to manage tensions and problems related to particular circumstances and contexts as there is no one recipe for improvement. To do otherwise would underestimate the social nature of the way practice evolves in particular schools, particular contexts and at particular times (ibid., p. 80). Wasserstein-Warnet and Klein (2000) conducted research in twenty Israeli schools to identify the characteristics of effective leadership and to assess "whether successful principals act in a situational

manner or whether they adhere to a particular leadership style" (p. 438). Their work shows that "the more successful principals use contingent leadership" (p. 448).

Context and school leadership development

If theory suggests that successful leaders adopt situational leadership styles in the context of their individual school, how should that principle be reflected in how they are prepared and developed?

In 2003 the Ofsted review of Leadership and Management in Schools (HMI, 2003, pp.3, 7) robustly asserted the importance of context in shaping effective leadership and management. Logically the significance of paying attention to school context in designing programmes for leadership development is also increasingly being recognised by academics (Stoll and Fink, 1995; Leithwood, Janzti et al.,1999; Coles and Southworth, 2005; Bush and Glover, 2003; Hartle and Thomas, 2003; Walker and Dimmock, 2005). For these authors, to quote Hartle and Thomas (p. 7) "There is no one size fits all".

The 2002 survey of the state of school leadership in England in all phases (Earley, Evans et al) did not look at context in any meaningful way but did recommend that school leaders should be offered development opportunities both in general and specific to particular roles. Similarly Bush and Glover (op. cit.) note that globalisation has led to simplistic assumptions that leadership styles may be universally applicable. They cite Dimmock and Walker's warning that policies and practices should not be imported without "due consideration of cultural and contextual appropriateness" (op. cit., 2005).

I have shown that in its early years the NCSL did not pay attention to school context in developing leadership programmes, a position inherited from the TTA. For instance the Leadership Development Review (NCSL, 2001) did not contain proposals for phase specific leadership development although it *did* acknowledge the need for sensitivity to different groups, such as newly appointed heads and faith schools (ibid, p.4).

As the NCSL matures more attention is being paid to the issue of school context in its literature and in programmes such as New Visions (Paterson and West- Burnham, 2005) and official documents have become slightly more reflective of research conclusions on the nature of educational leadership. By 2003 NCSL was stating "school leadership is

differentiated by school context, levels of performance, personal and social backgrounds of individual leaders and phase of leadership/headship" (p. 8) and "Leadership is contextualised because one of the most robust findings is that where you are affects what you do as a leader" (ibid, p. 7). The same publication, an annual review of research, devoted an entire page to the importance of context and how the NCSL has apparently adapted its programmes to context, although how this has been done remains undefined.

Professional knowledge

If context is important in shaping leadership and management and if school type, sector and culture can be said to be part of the school context, therefore the nature and importance of professional knowledge in the individual school is related to its specific and distinctive context and how its leaders and potential leaders are developed (Beare and Slaughter, 1993, p. 61; Hoyle and John, 1995; Eraut, 1999; Cordingley, 2003; Hartle and Thomas, 2003).

A complementary but not contradictory view is offered by Fullan (2004, 2005) and Fink (2005) who maintain, drawing on Senge, that in order to produce educational leaders who can deliver real and sustainable change and improvement, they need to understand not only their own context but also be able to see the "bigger picture" related to the local, regional and national education systems and where their institution sits within that picture. Fink calls this a holistic rather than a reductionist view of leadership learning (op.cit., p. 11). Stoll and Bolam suggest that networking between schools is one way of achieving systems thinking (2005, p. 58) and point out that practitioners often form their own networks.

In any case professional learning, the transmission of professional knowledge, is part of leadership development and some studies have identified professional knowledge as one factor determining readiness for headship (Earley, Evans et al., 2002; Bright and Ware, 2003; Male and Male, 2001). Professional knowledge expressed generically and not in relation to context forms a key part of the threshold National Standards for Headteachers (DfES, 2004a).

Eschewing technical rationality as a paradigm, Schön (1987) had introduced the concept of the reflective practitioner. As professional learning is inextricably linked to the

concept of professional knowledge or "knowing in action" (ibid, p. 24) for Schön there were three ways to learn practice: on your own, by serving an apprenticeship and through the "practicum". Recent writers also see the transmission of professional knowledge as inextricably linked to the context in which practice is exercised. Stoll and Bolam (2005) refer to this as "situated cognition", embedding continuous professional development in practical actions. For Norris, Barnett et al (2002) a cognitive view of the acquisition of knowledge examines the complexities of context, the role of people and their feelings and the inter-active relationship between thinking and acting. In their model for developing school leaders, successful transfer of learning has three basic elements: the task (features of the innovation), the learner (how they cope with change) and the context (organisational factors). This correlates with Hersey and Blanchard's model of situational leadership (the qualities of the leader, the maturity of the followers and the nature of the task). Desforges (2003, p. 6) believes that teachers' practices are shaped by their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, correlating with notions of culture. These forge their expertise which determines their practice. Sub-cultural differences between phases and sectors can strike differences in practice. This creates a problem of how knowledge acquired in one setting can be transferred to another.

Andy Hargreaves (2005, p.30) when considering developing leadership for succession, refers to Wenger's trajectories comprising three kinds of context specific leadership knowledge: inbound or knowledge of a particular school; insider or what one knows from experience in the school as a member of the community and outbound or what is needed to preserve and maintain success after one has left. For Beare & Slaughter (1993) professional knowledge should also include a view of futures, possible, probable and preferred, in order to equip schools for rapid change and the capacity to transform in the 21st century.

For many authors the solution to the issue of successful transmission of context specific professional knowledge and learning centred leadership (NCSL, 2003, p.14) is the collaborative professional learning community or community of practice (Norris, Barnett et al., 2002; Coles and Southworth, 2005; Stoll and Bolam, 2005; Paterson and West-Burnham, 2005). Norris et al describe this as both a structure for delivery of course content as in the NCSL's New Visions programme (Paterson and West-Burnham, 2005) and as a laboratory for promoting collaboration and transformational leadership.

For Levacic and Glatter (2003, p. 69) learning also depends on the existence of validated research evidence on educational practices to enable leaders to adopt or modify the findings in their own contexts. Yet as Bush and Glover (2003) commented in relation to the paucity of research on specific school contexts and as I shall show below in relation to special schools, even systematic reviews of school leadership with rigorous validation processes draw generic conclusions rather than examining context specific factors (Bell, Bolam et al., 2003 a and b).

A third route for the transmission of professional knowledge is experiential learning which can be delivered through internship (Crow, 2005) or through coaching and mentoring using either peer coaching or experienced heads as trainers, coaches or mentors (Bush and Jackson, 2002; Hobson, 2003; Paterson and West-Burnham, op. cit.). The NCSL (2003, pp. 10, 11) believes that mentoring and coaching can reduce feelings of isolation often experienced by headteachers, particularly new heads.

However others point out that the effectiveness of mentoring or coaching as a mechanism for learning (Hobson, 2003; Oldroyd, 2005; Crow, 2005, pp. 73-4) depends on the matching of mentor and mentee, the training and qualities of the mentor and the quality of the information transmitted, in that if care is not exercised, this can represent merely the recycling of prejudices and preconceptions held within the peer group or network rather than the formation of new, innovative and challenging knowledge.

Special schools and their context

If a growing number of academics as well as the NCSL believe that leadership and leadership development is linked to school context and if the concept of context can include school phase or sector, what is distinctive about special schools and how far should generic or context specific issues inform the professional development of special school leaders?

Literature on special schools is famously sparse (Male and Male, 2001; Powers, Rayner et al., 2001; Porter, Lacey et al., 2002). There is as I have said a gap in the knowledge (Ainscow, Fox et al., 2003; Powers, Rayner et al., 2001, p. 6) which the current thesis hopes to address.

As shown in Chapter 1 SEN provision in both specialist and mainstream schools is currently undergoing a period of radical change due to proposals in the 1997 Green Paper "Excellence for All" (DfEE , 1997), the subsequent "National Programme for Action" (DfEE, 1998c, p.91) plus major policy documents "Removing Barriers to Achievement" (DfES, 2004b) and "Every Child Matters" (DfES, 2003b).

The government acknowledges that there will always be a role for specialist provision for the small minority of children whose needs cannot be met in mainstream or whose parents choose specialist education (DfES, 2001; Hansard, 2002), although this role is likely to change radically. Some experts also agree that special schools will survive (Hegarty, 1994; NASEN, 2000; Farrell, 2001), a position which forms a strong plank in the policy of the Conservative opposition and which appears to be supported by most mainstream colleagues (Croll and Moses, 1999).

An attempt by government to clarify some of the debates related to special education, the major current official document on special schools is the Report of the Special Schools Working Group (DfES, 2003a) which utilised, with other sources, the research findings forming part of the present thesis and a review of the literature on the role of special schools by the University of Birmingham (Porter, Lacey et al., 2002). The Working Group report focussed on the future role of the special school "within the wider framework of the Government's strategy on inclusion" in order to recommend how special schools might develop. The literature review concentrated on contextual and organisational issues and claimed to identify gaps in knowledge including a need to carry out further research into the specific training needs of staff in specialist provision (op. cit., p. 78).

The issues of rapid and profound change as well as uncertainty about the future role of special schools (Male and Male, 2001; Burnett, 2003 and 2005), which determine their external context and which the working group attempted to address are reflected in academic literature. Other external environmental factors also include ambiguity about government policy as well as uncertainty in the restructuring agenda (Attfield and Williams, 2003). There is a lack of clarity about the meaning of inclusion and how it will affect special schools in the future (Croll and Moses, 2000; Williams and Chapman, 2003, p. 7; Ainscow, Fox et al., 2003). A further issue facing the sector is the growing complexity of the pupil population in special schools (Male and Male, 2001; Burnett,

2005). There are tensions related to the contested nature of special education (Halpin and Lewis, 1996) and the contrast between a climate of support in principle for the inclusion of all children in mainstream and what is perceived as the resilience of the segregated special school provision (Fish and Evans, 1995; Powers, Rayner et al., 2001).

Reference was made above to the contested nature of special education. Many writers do not locate special schools as part of their vision of an inclusive education system, seeing them as administrative or bureaucratic constructs which pathologise disability instead of addressing a need for systemic change which would treat *all* children as special or exceptional (Fish and Evans, 1995; Alderson and Goodey, 1998; Tomlinson, 2001; Ainscow, 1991; Skrtic, 1991). Mintzberg defined the external environment, including a hostile environment, as one contingency factor determining the design and structure of organisations (1979) and English special schools in the last twenty years have been subjected to unprecedented hostility openly articulated by some academics (Alderson and Goodey, 1998; Tomlinson, op. cit.), by some LEAs (Williams and Chapman, op. cit., p. 9; Burnett, 2005, p. 49) and from some radicalised disability groups such as the 2020 campaign which aims to see all special schools closed by the year 2020 (*http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/2020%20Press%20Release%20Mar%2005.pdf*.) For Slee "resistance to reforming special education remains the prerogative of the special education fraternity itself" (Slee, 1991, p. 62; Ainscow, 1991, p. 220). The report of the special schools working group refers to the marginalisation felt by some special school headteachers, (also Halpin and Lewis, 1996; Powers, Rayner et al., 2001). These positions can be counter-posed against the findings of a Leading Edge Seminar for special school leaders held by the NCSL in 2002 of over 50 hand picked special school leaders some from Beacon schools or specialist colleges, of whom all but one were from the maintained sector[7], who were overwhelmingly optimistic about the change agenda with constructive suggestions for the future role of specialist provision (Attfield and Williams, 2003). Burnett (2003, 2005), an ex special school head and research associate at the NCSL has also published thoughts on how leaders in SEN settings are addressing the change agenda and "inventing the future" (2005, p. x).

[7] Established by personal communication with Attfield.

Despite obvious uncertainties, any reframing of the role of special schools within an inclusive education system will mean new ways of working with the mainstream for instance through providing outreach, initial and in-service training, dual pupil placements and other services and resources for schools, parents and the wider community (Hegarty, 1994; HMCI and Audit Commission, 2002; Fish and Evans, 1984; DfES 2003a). Ainscow, Fox et al. (2003) ask how special schools can be re-cultured in order to address the changes.

The internal special school context

The internal context of any school will be partly a response to factors in the external environment. Since Bowers published his key, but now superseded, texts on the management of special schools (1984a, 1984b and 1989) there has been very little study of the internal context in special schools. Ainscow, Fox et al. (2003) have reviewed some recent publications for NCSL many of which are referred to in this thesis but which in no way present a comprehensive picture. Porter, Lacey et al's 2002 review of literature on the role of special schools for the DfES is equally inconclusive.

Firstly, the internal context for special schools, as with all sectors, relates to issues of professional and organizational knowledge. Study of this aspect is sparse. Brown's article on management in the residential special school (1991) concentrated only on generic managerial and transactional processes designed to address government initiatives current at that time. More recently Attfield and Williams state: "Almost by definition special schools are seen as having skills and knowledge that are not available within mainstream settings" but do not elaborate further except to stress the skills of special school leaders in networking (2003, p. 29). A further publication describing the same event concluded: "Leaders of special schools... have unique skills in understanding and providing for a wide range of need. They are skilled in building and sustaining networks across communities, are experienced in working with a wide group of staff and are accustomed to managing complex change in an uncertain world" (Williams and Chapman, 2003, p.7). Powers, Rayner et al. (2001, p. 108) refer to skills in inter-agency working. Rayner with Ribbins (1999, p. 315) mention the self-evident existence of professional expertise and knowledge of specific areas of SEN and, in residential schools, knowledge of the 24 hour or integrated curriculum.

Writers have also looked at issues appertaining to the adaptation of core government initiatives in order to render them useful and practical for implementation in special schools. The extra pressure on individual schools to adapt government initiatives and constantly "reinvent the wheel" is a recurrent theme (Male and Male (2001). Halpin and Lewis (1996) examined the impact of the national curriculum in twelve special schools; Turner (1999) looked at target setting in one special school; Maddison (2002) reported on curriculum development in a new special school. Dawn Male has considered the impact of inspection on a special school (1999) and target setting for children with severe learning difficulties (2000). With Trevor Male she has reported on special school headteachers' perceptions of role readiness (2001). This accords with Porter, Lacey et al.'s finding that most studies of curriculum and assessment in special schools relate to case studies of single schools struggling to adapt the national curriculum to their particular setting and to individual needs (p. 13). They also list as distinctive features: the smaller average size of school[8], teachers having multiple areas of curriculum responsibility, the stability of staff groups including the use of temporary staff, the proportion of peripatetic and outreach staff, lack of familiarity with processes of organisational development and a tradition in some of "idiosyncratic pedagogic and therapeutic methods" (ibid., p. 47).

Leadership in special schools

In relation to leadership, Charlton, Jones et al. (1989) found little difference in the perceptions of primary, secondary and special school teachers in the maintained sector about what makes a good school. However this was before major reforms and restructuring impacted on the education system and before the inclusion agenda exacerbated isolation in and hostility to special schools.

Rayner and Ribbins (1999) have written the only relatively recent major study on this subject and therefore merit a more detailed review here. They produced a phenomenological analysis of personal accounts by ten named leaders in settings providing special education and how these accounts are shaped in the context of their life and professional history enabling general conclusions about leadership in special education to be drawn. The sample was not representative but the subjects were thought to be interesting, with different life experiences and at different career stages. Data

[8] This would relate to pupil numbers and not staff size.

collection consisted of conversations in 1996 between one of the authors and a subject using a semi-structured interview schedule.

For Rayner and Ribbins the leadership context can be defined by two major formative factors not specific to special schools: career stage and the influence of family, friends, local community, early life, schooling, Higher Education and mentors on the views, values, lives and careers of the subjects.

Delving further into the special school context, they found the following distinctive factors: (op. cit., p. 315)

- High value placed on relationships and personal growth with the individual child in the foreground.
- A high regard for curriculum process rather than subject content.
- Good levels of teaching competence.
- Prior experience in mainstream as a prerequisite for effective management (sic) in special education.
- A positive regard for education and its value for children otherwise identified as refusing school or less able.
- The personal and professional values and beliefs held by the headteacher with vision as a central factor.
- Distinctness from mainstream despite the impact of the Salamanca Convention (UNESCO, 1994).
- Complexity and diversity of categories, disabilities, perspectives and related expertise "often expressed in the form of a pervading concern for the individual...".
- An ethos different from mainstream and immediately recognisable.
- Particular types of special school attracting particular types of headteacher.
- The nature of the school day.
- Special schools are all small schools[9] .
- A commitment to integration for pupils with SEN in an inclusive arrangement.
- The administration and assessment of needs dominates the provision.
- The mismatch between need and resource to provide for individual pupils.

Despite this they are equivocal about the distinctiveness of special schools:

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[9] In LPSH special schools are not classed as small schools because of the high adult to pupil ratios and large staffing complements.

> It remains open to debate whether there is actually a case for stating qualitative differences in the nature of headship in mainstream and special education (ibid, p.314).

By contrast HayGroup (2000) built a model of excellence for outstanding special school leadership for use in LPSH which claims to establish a distinctive identity. Despite criticisms levelled at the HayGroup research by some authors (Male 2000) the synergy between this and the work of Gardner and of Goleman on EI is tangible and Fullan has explicitly celebrated this model (2001).

HayGroup's 1998 sample consisted of 40 highly effective headteachers from different phases and types of schools selected through recommendation by professional associations and others (HayGroup, undated). By 1999 the DfEE had realised that there are "differing challenges of leadership in different contexts" including special schools (DfEE, 1999 p. 6) and had commissioned the second study with a sample of 81 leaders from different phases. These samples were purposive rather than representative and were triangulated by Ofsted, TTA and DfEE data and with other stakeholders such as professional associations.

HayGroup's models derive directly from the work of McLelland and trait theory and are related to other Hay empirical studies into effective practice in organisations including schools. They consist of leadership styles and individual characteristics which inter-relate with the requirements of the job to affect the organisational climate. As LPSH and other HayGroup research studies have been commissioned by government agencies the final reports are likely to be influenced by the funders.

The model for highly effective headteachers in special schools (table 1) derives from the research described above and is driven by a core of strongly held and enacted values and a strong sense of identity for the special school head who, as in Rayner and Ribbins (1999), is completely clear about the value of special needs provision and how specialist expertise will benefit pupils both inside and outside mainstream education (HayGroup, 2000, p. 104). This conviction and their emotional intelligence mean that they can withstand challenge and have the resilience to work for the long haul in the face of day-to-day pressures and negative preconceptions about their pupils (HayGroup, undated, 2000, 2002). All the competences are generic although weighted differently in the

algorithms for other school contexts. The models are used to benchmark the results of 360° appraisals as part of LPSH:

Table 1: Characteristics of highly effective headteachers in special schools (DfEE, 2000)[10]

Personal values & Passionate Conviction
• Respect for others
• Challenge and Support
• Personal conviction
• Understanding others
Creating the Vision
• Strategic thinking
• Drive for Improvement
Planning for Delivery, Monitoring &Improving
• Transformational Leadership
• Initiative
• Analytical thinking
• Teamworking
• Developing Potential
Getting People on Board
• Impact and Influence
• Holding People Accountable
• Understanding the Environment
Gathering Information and Gaining Understanding
• Information seeking

Despite the presentation of this model, as what Greenfield and Ribbins might term a "science validated training programme" (1993) HayGroup also provide a narrative explanation of the model which takes specific and distinctive context into account: in working with children who are often labelled as low achievers, outstanding special school heads must have a drive for improvement. They work with a great deal of complexity for which considerable analytical thinking is necessary and were found to use a combination of understanding on-going patterns of behaviour, understanding the culture of the school, systematically gathering information and preparing for future opportunities (initiative) to manage that complexity. Their sense of focus derives from a deep understanding of individuals with special needs and usually long experience of working with the client group leading to depth of knowledge about individual pupils and staff. They have strong self-control and self-awareness and are not thrown by

[10] The headings in italics are descriptors of the model. The 15 bullet points are the characteristics measured and benchmarked in LPSH.

others' behaviour or by complexity of needs or setbacks. They think strategically to determine the identity of the school and decide direction and are ambitious for their pupils, often against others' expectations. They drive for achievement which is often higher than others might think possible, continually pushing for improvement based on an individual knowledge of the pupil and her needs.

In working with others in a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency setting, often with high numbers of para-professionals (also Burnett, 2005, p. 48), highly effective special school heads need to be able to use a combination of leading by example, getting input from others and tailoring their message to the interests of their audience. They act as lead professionals, orchestrating an extended range of other professionals, support workers and external agencies to secure integrated provision for their pupils. They model best practice and add value to the team by ensuring collective and cohesive working, focused on the key actions that will deliver most benefits for pupils. They are politically astute and know how to work with key influencers to negotiate the complementary roles of mainstream and special provision (HayGroup, 2000).

Following their invited NCSL focus group held in 2002, which could arguably be said to be less objective than the previous two studies, Williams and Chapman (2003) found the following distinctive features of special school leadership: increasing links with mainstream; heads involved with on the ground learning and with individual cases rather than with administration and finance; autocratic, hierarchical and presidential styles are inappropriate in special schools which practice devolution of decision making, power sharing with teachers and parents and negotiation

Regarding the future, these leaders felt that (ibid, p. 15) special schools will be amalgamated into wider generic bodies, catering for the full range of specialisms; they will become venues for professional development focussing on training teachers rather than dealing directly with students; they will provide expert learning support workers in mainstream schools. These views are highly reminiscent of those expressed by the special school working group (DfES, 2003a) but contrast sharply with views expressed by Porter, Lacey et al. (2002) who found in the literature they reviewed "**no**[11] evidence to suggest that teachers from specialist provision are able to provide support and training for their mainstream colleagues. (p.57)"

[11] Their emphasis

A background paper produced for the NCSL seminar by Byers and based on a very small survey of a group of heads in Eastern England (Chapman and Williams, 2003, p. 22) also found that special school leaders spend time developing and facilitating professional development opportunities, running training and creatively adapting resources and curriculum through expertise rooted firmly in practice. This group felt that such knowledge and experience is embedded in special schools but government policy has not yet recognised this and so has not taken into account what is required to adapt the mainstream to become inclusive. They also complained that colleagues in mainstream are not always interested in listening to what special schools have to offer.

Leadership development and special schools

Porter, Lacey et al's literature review (2002) highlighted declining numbers of staff attending specialist training and the increasing age profile of teachers in specialist provision; unspecified training needs in relation to a variety of roles for those working in specialist provision including managers, teachers and Learning Support Assistants and a lack of research on this subject (p.57).

By contrast three relatively recent small scale studies have looked at various aspects of the special school leaders' role and their conclusions, while varied, carry some points of agreement. The NCSL focus group held in 2002 reported by Attfield and Williams (2003) and Williams and Chapman (2003) examined leaders' perceptions of the role of special schools and the management of change in the light of inclusion.

Male and Male (2001) report on a small scale survey carried out by semi-structured questionnaire and interview in 1999 to elicit maintained special school headteachers' views on their state of readiness for headship on appointment, about what provision would be beneficial during the first two years of headship and whether the role of special school head posed any distinctive challenges in relation to role readiness. Respondents felt overall that they had been inadequately prepared to adequately prepared (from a 4 point scale ranging from well to not at all prepared) and best prepared in the formation of attitudes and values. They valued mentoring by an experienced headteacher, preferably from a similar type of special school supplemented in the second year by access to support groups or networks.

The professional development needs unique to the special school context were perceived to be the need for greater knowledge, understanding and awareness of relevant legislation and guidance and of other service providers; skills in people management and in curriculum planning and management for pupils with SEN.

Despite these contextual issues, however, and in line with the leaders who attended the Leading Edge seminar described by Chapman and Williams, respondents stated that they wished to remain as part of mainstream training initiatives. One participant stated: "Special schools need to be able to speak the same language as the mainstream. This will help to demystify special schools" (op. cit., p. 18).

This was also a finding in the study by Rayner, Powers and Gunter who carried out a further small scale questionnaire survey of the perceived professional development needs of heads, deputies and senior staff working in special schools, services and units (Powers, Rayner et al., 2001; Rayner, Gunter et al., 2002) an area which they feel is under-researched. Reflecting Gunter's views expressed elsewhere in this paper (p. 33), these authors stated that the introduction of top down initiatives such as the National Standards and performance management would be problematic in special schools where, they feel, the emphasis is on bottom-up approaches, focussing on individual children and on networking approaches.

Importantly, all three studies reported special school leaders' support for generic professional development opportunities but also "revealed a close relationship between the need for contextualised professional development and many of the emerging dilemmas and contradictions in the contemporary world of special education" (Powers, Rayner et al., 2001, p. 108). All three concluded that special school leaders place high value on networking, particularly within their own sector. In official documents there are similar conclusions: the report of the Special School Working Group (DfES, 2003a) later subsumed into the wider document "Removing Barriers to Achievement (DfES, 2004b) called upon NCSL to revise standards for NPQH to "ensure they reflect the emerging new role of both special and mainstream schools and the wider inclusion agenda; to introduce a new module in Headlamp "to equip special and mainstream headteachers with a range of skills which will help them to move forward in their new role;" and called for the development of real time or e-networks to enable special school leaders to "mutually support each other and share best practice" (pp. 9, 30). The Group,

which included several special school headteachers from the maintained and NMSS sectors, wanted to see greater partnership between special and mainstream heads to facilitate movement between the sectors plus an increased consultancy role for special school headteachers (p. 29). Burnett (2003, 2005) sees future direction in the development of partnerships and the increased use of ICT.

Integrating the findings on special school leadership

To summarise, we saw on page 45 how Attfield and Williams concluded that there are contextual skills and knowledge specific to the special school sector (2003, p.29). This is echoed by Rayner and Ribbins in relation to ethos (1999, p. 315). The characteristics seen to be distinctive in the internal special school context by those and other authors and discussed above can be grouped, as in the following table, against Hersey and Blanchard's model of situational leadership (1982): the qualities of the leader, the nature of the task and the maturity of the followers. Hersey and Blanchard's model is chosen because it derives from contingency theory and allies the behaviour of the leader with their situation, including relationships within the organisation, coupled with the overview of tasks to be carried out by each follower. In this way we can identify qualities, professional knowledge or environmental factors which, while in many cases generic to other sectors, can be seen here as a group distinctive to the special school context. In the final chapter the contents of the table will be compared with the perceptions of respondents to the survey carried out for this study in relation to their school context.

Table 2 Summary of characteristics of the internal special school context	Source
THE QUALITIES OF THE LEADER[12]	
Attibutes of the leader • Particular types of special school attract particular types of headteacher. • Autocratic, hierarchical and presidential styles are inappropriate • Emphasis on bottom-up approaches • Prior experience in mainstream is a prerequisite • EI, resilience, strong self-control and self-awareness, not thrown by others' behaviour or by complexity of needs or setbacks	Rayner & Ribbins Williams & Chapman Powers, Rayner et al Rayner & Ribbins HayGroup

[12] Headings in upper case relate to the Hersey and Blanchard model. Headings in lower case are my own derived from the literature review.

The Leader's values • The personal and professional values and beliefs held by the headteacher with vision as a central factor • …core of strongly held and enacted values. a strong sense of identity for the special school head , clear about the value of special needs provision and how (it) will benefit pupils both inside and outside mainstream education	Rayner & Ribbins HayGroup
Drive for improvement • A positive regard for education and its value for children otherwise identified as refusing school or less able • Working with children … often labelled as low achievers, outstanding special school heads must have a drive for improvement. • Strategic thinking to determine the identity and direction of the school. Ambition for their pupils, often against others' expectations.	Rayner & Ribbins HayGroup HayGroup
Commitment to Inclusion • A commitment to integration for pupils with SEN in an inclusive arrangement. • As lead professionals they orchestrate an extended range of other professionals, and agencies to secure integrated provision for their pupils.	Rayner & Ribbins HayGroup
Networking skills of leaders • Skilled in building and sustaining networks across communities • They are politically astute and know how to work with key influencers to negotiate the complementary roles of mainstream and special provision • Increasing links with mainstream • Networking (particularly with own sector)	Attfield & Williams Chapman & Williams HayGroup Williams & Chapman, Powers, Rayner et al, Male & Male
Relationships • High value placed on relationships and personal growth with the individual child in the foreground. • Their … focus derives from a deep understanding of individuals with special needs and usually long experience of working with the client group leading to depth of knowledge about individual pupils and staff. • Heads involved with on the ground learning and with individual cases rather than with administration and finance • Skills in people management • Focussing on individual children	Rayner & Ribbins HayGroup Williams & Chapman Male & Male Powers, Rayner et al
THE NATURE OF THE TASK	
School size • Special schools are all small schools • The smaller average size of school	Rayner & Ribbins Porter, Lacey et al

Management of change, complexity and uncertainty • Unique skills in understanding and providing for a wide range of need, … accustomed to managing complex change in an uncertain world" • They work with … complexity for which …analytical thinking is necessary and … use a combination of understanding on-going patterns of behaviour, understanding the culture of the school, .. gathering information and preparing for future opportunities (initiative) to manage that complexity • Need for greater knowledge, understanding and awareness of relevant legislation and guidance and of other service providers • Complexity and diversity of categories, disabilities, perspectives and related expertise	Williams & Chapman HayGroup Male & Male Rayner & Ribbins
Feelings of isolation • Isolated from mainstream and government	Male & Male Special Schools Working Group (see chapter 1) Byers
Multi agency working • Skills in interagency working • Working with others in a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency setting.	Powers, Rayner & Gunter HayGroup
Specialist SEN knowledge • Professional expertise and knowledge of specific areas of SEN • … diversity of categories….and related expertise "often expressed in the form of a pervading concern for the individual..." • The administration and assessment of needs dominates the provision. • ….a tradition in some of "idiosyncratic pedagogic and therapeutic methods	Rayner & Ribbins Rayner & Ribbins " Porter, Lacey et al.
Resourcing • Mismatch between need and resource to provide for individual pupils.	Rayner & Ribbins
Curriculum knowledge • Knowledge of the 24 hour or integrated curriculum • A high regard for curriculum process rather than subject content • Time spent developing and facilitating professional development opportunities, running training and.. adapting resources and curriculum through expertise rooted in practice. • Skills in curriculum planning and management for pupils with SEN • Teachers having multiple areas of curriculum responsibility • Good levels of teaching competence	Rayner & Ribbins " Byers (in Chapman & Williams) Male & Male Porter, Lacy et al Rayner & Ribbins

THE MATURITY OF THE FOLLOWERS	
Staffing/ people management • Experienced in working with a wide staff group • Stable staff groups including … temporary staff, the proportion of peripatetic and outreach staff, • Working with high numbers of para-professionals ….They act as lead professionals, orchestrating an extended range of other professionals, support workers and external agencies... • Skills in people management	Williams & Chapman Porter & Lacey HayGroup also Burnett (2005,) Male & Male

Conclusion

The choice of literature reviewed above was determined by considerations of school context and contingency theory which could be thought of as a driving force for the professional development of school leaders.

We have seen that leadership, as opposed to management, is a "woolly concept" with no single dominant theory. Study of school leadership and leadership development has been carried out within two epistemological paradigms. The positivist, rational or policy science perspective is seen by its critics as managerial, competency based and related to generic business models. Despite high level of participant satisfaction, the school leadership development programmes are seen by many to be located within this paradigm and thus as centrally prescribed, a means of control by government on schools and devoid of theory although more recently there is evidence of attempts to relate the programmes to research including on school context.

The interpretative or policy scholarship perspective rejects a scientific emphasis in favour of the importance of individual meanings related to social action within a particular setting. Those who work within this paradigm express fears about policy on school leadership eschewing the results of research and of "bleaching out context".

Some writers try to reconcile the two paradigms or see them as part of a continuum. Leithwood sees value in the transactional and practical aspect of managerial leadership coupled with moral leadership which concentrates on learning, is participative and transformational as well as relevant to context (1999, also Bush and Glover, 2003). Fullan and Fink have come to believe that systems thinking, the ability to see where one's own institution fits into the bigger picture, is as important as contextual knowledge in delivering sustainable systemic improvement.

Contingency theory, which relates to the degree to which the situation enables the leader to exert influence over her group members, or how school leaders adapt their approach to the unique circumstances of their schools is increasingly influencing the study of schools. Context can have a variety of meanings including internal culture and external environment. For the purpose of this thesis context can relate to sector, that of the special school but that is not to reject a compelling body of theory related to different forms of context.

Therefore if context is seen to be important in framing leadership styles and actions this should also impact on the formation and learning of school leaders because professional or "insider knowledge" cannot be divorced from context, a fact recognised by both Ofsted and NCSL. Professional knowledge can be transmitted via experiential learning, communities of practice or professional learning communities such as peer learning sets, networks, mentoring, internship and the deployment of consultant heads and school leadership development is beginning to adapt to these forms of knowledge transmission.

Answers to the research questions from the literature are summarised below.

In what way is the special school context seen to be distinctive in theoretical and empirically based literature?

The literature on special schools was found to be scant and inconclusive with only one major relevant policy document, the report of the Special School Working Group, which is descriptive and does not draw upon current theory although it was informed by the findings of the survey carried out for this thesis (DfES, 2003a). In brief, contradictory views expressed in texts on special schools reflect the contested nature of specialist provision and of the meaning of inclusion.

In the external environment there are generic issues facing all schools in relation to government expectations of headteachers and, like all educational settings, special schools must manage the impact of cumulative government initiatives. In addition there are environmental issues specific to special schools: the prospect of huge but undefined future change, hostility from several quarters, ambiguity about government intentions,

lack of support in adapting the curriculum and other initiatives to individual needs so that schools are constantly "reinventing the wheel" and uncertainty about inclusion, its meaning and its impact, leading to feelings of isolation and marginalisation which have been recognised both in policy and academic texts.

Internally, special schools are seen by most, but not all writers, to hold specialist knowledge not available in but valuable to the mainstream and to deploy different skills and ways of working. These obviously relate to specialist therapies applied to the different categories of need and also to dealing with complexity for instance in terms of legislation and guidance, pupil population, multi -professional staff groups and the management of relationships across a range of agencies and stakeholders including parents. Special schools are found by researchers and school leaders alike to place high values on relationships. They are seen to be person centred whether in relation to the individual child, parent, staff member or other partners. Some feel that curriculum process has a greater importance in special schools than subject content.

Nevertheless for some writers we have seen that these findings are insufficient to prove the existence of a distinctive leadership framework for special schools and policy on schools including on the curriculum rarely takes into account sector differences.

How are the views of special school heads on generic or context driven professional development represented in literature?

The few studies which have sought the views of special school leaders seem to agree on their perceived recognition of a core of generic and generalisable leadership skills and values, including those linked to the management of change and futures thinking although perhaps weighted differently for their context.

This does not preclude their clearly stated desire to remain within mainstream generic, standardised and centralised professional development (Powers, Rayner et al., 2001) in contrast to the views of those theorists who strongly criticise such programmes. School leaders surveyed for published research appear to believe that generic programmes should be supplemented by professional development activities related to their specific contexts, in line with contingency theory, what Fink would call a holistic rather than reductionist perspective (2005). Their preferred learning activities were found to be

experiential and practice based: mentoring by expert professionals and via networks and learning communities to enable the sharing of best practice.

Contrary to theories which question the transferability of knowledge from one setting to another (Walker and Dimmock, 2005), special school leaders were found to believe that not only does this enable the exchange of views and the clarification of similarities and differences between mainstream and specialist settings as well as taking the inclusion agenda forward but it enables special school leaders, and those in mainstream, to see "the bigger picture". In this way the understanding of national and regional systems, combined with local sector or specialism specific contextual learning is linked to the theory of systems thinking. If Fullan (2005) and Fink (2005) are correct this is indispensable if there is to be sustained improvement in education.

In the following chapters these conclusions from the literature are compared with the findings from the survey of special school leaders carried out for this study. This includes an examination of whether the characteristics distinctive of the special school external context identified in the literature as well as those defining internal context (table 2) concur with views expressed by leaders in the survey about their context. Secondly, in relation to generic or context specific development, special school leaders surveyed in published studies (Powers, Rayner et al., 2003; Male and Male, 2000) articulated a desire to remain within the generic framework for national school leadership development as long as they can have access to additional modules, experiential learning, learning communities or mentoring which are specific to the special school context. In Chapter 4 this view is compared and contrasted with the perceptions of special school leaders in the survey about professional development for their context.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter describes methodological issues informing the empirical study carried out for this thesis. The two research questions are: what is distinctive about the special school context and do special school leaders feel that generic leadership development programmes meet their professional development needs? The questions derived from the underlying hypothesis that if special school leaders perceive their context to be distinct from the mainstream in many significant ways, both in relation to professional knowledge, and to environments internal and external to the school, they may therefore find the generic national school leadership development programmes favoured in government policy insufficient to meet their needs.

The chapter contains sections on epistemological issues surrounding the exploration of theory on school leadership, leadership development and special schools, the choice of method; the questionnaire; methodological and ethical issues; the survey samples and the analysis of data.

Epistemological approach

The thesis embraces two key theoretical areas: school leadership and leadership development in the context of special education. In both cases there are divergent views which are taken into account in the theoretical context for this study

Theories on school leadership and leadership development

There is a wide and diffuse body of work on school leadership, of which only a selection could be reviewed for this thesis but they fall into two distinct traditions.

Some theories claim a traceable line of cause and effect between the personal qualities and experience of the individual and their effectiveness as a leader. Thus the HayGroup models of excellence for headteachers combine elements of a positivist, scientific paradigm (HayGroup, 2000 and 2002), sometimes based on psychological principles with some use of qualitative methods. This is largely the stance that underlies the leadership development courses that are the subject of this enquiry.

Other writers advocate a more critical, interpretative approach based on a form of sociological enquiry, which Grace calls policy scholarship (1995), embracing a wider historical, cultural, economic and political context (Thrupp and Wilmott, 2003). Rayner and Ribbins' study of leadership in special schools (1999) draws on the use of personal accounts or life histories based on Greenfield's phenomenological theories of the study of leadership or "educational administration"(Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993).

Despite mainly reflecting different traditions of enquiry, the studies by both Rayner and Ribbins and HayGroup indicate contextual differences in the leadership and management of special and mainstream schools which could further impact on the professional development of all school leaders in preparing for inclusion (see also Powers, Rayner et al., 2001, Male and Male, 2001; Attfield and Williams, 2003, Burnett, 2003 and 2005).

Theorising special education

Clark, Dyson et al (1998) describe the problematic nature of theory regarding special education, pointing out that the development of any theory inevitably reflects a particular socio-historical context (p.156). The current, socio-historical context for special education, presenting many challenges, has been described in Chapter 1. For Clark theories of special education fall into two broad categories. Firstly the positivist, psycho-medical paradigm takes a rational approach to the identification of and intervention in specific needs with a view to amelioration or cure. Secondly, newer positions see special education as a social product arising out of discourses around categories of need and the functions of social institutions which are oppressive and discriminatory in that they generate failure and provide a rationale for special education as a remedy for that failure (Tomlinson, 2001). This school of thought sees "need" arising not out of the characteristics of the learner, but out of the social context, which determines what is a "need" and also what should be seen as "special" or not "ordinary". With different discourses, social structures or types of schools such socially produced constructs as "special education" might simply disappear (Booth, 1998; Clark, Dyson et al., 1998; Ainscow, 1991).

Theories reflect the assumptions that individuals deploy when considering a particular phenomenon, based on their own experiences and prejudices. At the same time Clark points out: "we…direct our attention away from certain other phenomena, issues and problems" (op. cit., p. 157). In this thesis I acknowledge my own bias below, a bias probably shared by most special school leaders and which obliges me to attempt to view other, critical approaches to special schools more objectively. Inevitably therefore this thesis may contain uncritical assumptions, omissions or value judgements about special schools and their leaders which may not be shared by others with a different background. This topic is developed further below.

The epistemological framework for this thesis

From a theoretical and philosophical perspective therefore this study on special schools as "special" in the sense of "different" from "ordinary" schools lies within the psycho-medical, positivist tradition. The methodology used also falls within a deductive, positivist paradigm in that the research study attempts to test a hypothesis. Data were collected using a postal survey, a mainly scientific method, in which the researcher can quantify clear and unambiguous concepts from which generalisations can be inferred (Pring, 2000; Bell, 2005). It is hoped that findings from this study can be generalised to special schools as a population and possibly to other, inclusive schools.

While another researcher might see the use of positivist methods as a deficit model or might prefer a different perspective meant to deconstruct special schooling in favour of wider societal reforms, many authors including Clark, Dyson et al (1998) see the tensions and arguments between the two paradigms as circular and sterile (p. 173). A broader perspective should see tensions between two traditions as creative dilemmas rather than unhelpful "either/ or" alternatives. Pring also calls the dichotomy between the positivist and interpretative traditions a "false dualism" (2000, p. 44) as there can be no evaluation of data, however independent or unambiguous they may seem, which can be divorced either from the individual construction of meaning by the respondent or the values of the researcher. He sees the survey as a method which evades the apparent difficulty of reconciling objective fact and subjective meaning in that it "calls upon the views of those who matter in a way that leads to generalisation" thus inter-connecting the so called positivist and interpretative paradigms (op. cit., p. 37).

The survey mainly used closed, quantitative questions typical of an objective, positivist approach aiming to show a replicable relationship between variables such as career stage, gender and perceptions of leadership development but also included open ended qualitative questions more often identified with a subjective, interpretative approach where I wanted to probe respondents' perceptions of development more deeply. Hammersley cites the use of qualitative methods to document the world from the point of view of the people studied rather than of the researcher (1992, p. 165). Mixed method can also be used, as it is used here, where the context of the research justifies this (Watling, 2005). Bryman (2004) describes the increasing use of qualitative or mixed method in leadership studies where a qualitative approach is used mainly to look at leadership behaviour in context and a quantitative approach tends to look at the generic aspects of leadership (pp. 752, 762).

Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability can be enhanced in different ways, but in positivistic research it can be done through maximising the response rate, design of the research instrument, pilot studies, elimination of bias and internal and external triangulation of data (Bush 2004).

Having established the positivist epistemology for this study, albeit using mixed methods to collect data, the choice of instrument was also influenced by time and other resource constraints so a structured postal self completion questionnaire to seek the views of headteachers and deputies in English special schools on the research questions was used as the principal research instrument (Appendix 1) and was seen as most appropriate for reaching a useful sample. As one aim was to influence the development of policy, this would enable me to generalise to a wider population. Cohen and Manion point out the advantages of postal questionnaires in reaching a larger sample and in producing fairly reliable data in a cost effective way (1997, p. 272). May has shown how a questionnaire is a useful tool for collecting factual and attitudinal data as well as for explaining the relationship between attitudes and behaviour as in this case (May, 1997, pp.82-3). Bush describes how a structured questionnaire survey can yield more reliable data than semi structured interviews (2002).

Efforts were made to increase validity and reliability in the design of the questionnaire. Different response formats help control for bias and enable triangulation of responses from those questions which seek the same information in different ways in order to aid reliability and construct validity (Powers, Rayner et al, 2001, Bryman, 2004, Busher, 2004, pp. 84, 86). Thus attitude questions were interspersed with factual questions in order to hold the attention of the respondent (Cohen and Manion, 1997, p.96).

Both closed and open questions were used. The former are easier to code as quantitative data and should, in theory, be easier to answer as well as more reliable, although possibly at the expense of validity (Bush, 2002, p.65). Qualitative responses to open questions provided richer data for the final report, including quotations used to illuminate certain points, and also could be triangulated against quantitative responses to similar questions, thus increasing reliability and construct validity. Care was also taken with the order of the questions, in an attempt to follow a logical sequence, and the type of response required e.g. tick boxes were preferred to YES/NO answers.

The strategies to increase validity and reliability through maximising the response rate were partly successful as all but 32 respondents completed all relevant sections. They all indicated that they had undertaken at least one of the programmes at question 14 but did not go on to the relevant section/s: C, D or E. Some indicated that they had only recently or partially accessed the programme or scored through the sections, proving that they had seen them but others gave no reason. Non-respondents can skew the representative balance of the sample. Several ways of maximising responses, as the larger the response the more valid and reliable the data, were explored in addition to the size of the sampling frame described below. For instance because of resource constraints the idea of a pre-survey letter was rejected (Cohen and Manion, 1997, p. 98).

The use of incentives can help maximise response rates (Cohen and Manion, 1997; May, 1997, pp. 89-90). A box of luxury chocolates was offered to the respondent whose name was to be drawn out of a hat, if they met the deadline. Only one respondent commented adversely on this incentive and several commented favourably.

Consideration was given, after the pilot, as to whether all the questions were necessary so as not to deter potential respondents. This led to some editing of the questionnaire. However, as noted by Cohen and Manion (ibid), length seems not to be a deterrent

where the nature of the research topic could mean that a short questionnaire trivialises the issue in the eye of an interested audience. In this case some respondents expressed pleasure that someone was taking an interest, given, as we shall show, that special school leaders suffer greatly from feelings of isolation and being under-valued. Although complaining of lack of time and workload, many respondents gave full and helpful answers. Conversely it could be argued that as I was known to many respondents their answers might reflect what they thought I wanted to hear rather than what they truly believed, thus affecting the reliability of responses (Hammersley, 1992, p.164).

Although Cohen and Manion suggest that the use of prestigious "signatures" does not affect response rate, I gave information about the London Leadership Centre, myself and my supervisor in the covering letter. Many special school leaders know me through my work and some wrote greetings in the space provided for further comments. My supervisor at that time also had very a high profile. Finally the one page covering letter pointed out that the results would be used to influence national policy and more than one respondent indicated that this impelled them to respond. These factors may have had a positive impact on the good response rate, and thus on the validity of the findings.

Anonymity can enhance the size of the response and validity of the data collected but in this case, to aid follow up of non respondents, subjects were asked to identify themselves, a cover letter promising confidentiality. Separate stamped addressed envelopes for the head and deputy were enclosed in order to guarantee confidentiality at school level. Around 30 people did not identify themselves. It is not possible to tell whether the response would have been larger with anonymous data.

Bush points out that main source for invalidity in research is bias (2004, p.66).
Bias can be introduced into the research process at various levels: in the selection of topic, the formulation of the hypothesis and research questions, the selection of method and sample and in the interpretation of results. Due to my own professional engagement with the two topics of leadership development and special education the potential for bias in each of these areas is great. My personal position might well have influenced my choice of topic, survey questions and interpretation of the data, a process

in which my own values will have played a part. In order to minimize the impact of any bias, efforts were made to maintain neutrality when phrasing the questions.

Nevertheless while researchers in the positivist tradition would aim for maximum objectivity, those who follow an interpretive, realist or post-modern paradigm would accept that an individual's engagement with a topic has meaning and value which cannot be devoid of subjectivity and that even scientific methods are influenced by personal interpretation (May, 1997).

In relation to external validity or reliability, the findings were very similar to those of smaller studies on the professional development of special school leaders (Powers, Rayner et al., 2001; Male and Male, 2001; Attfield and Williams, 2003), correlated with the findings of the pilot, were acceptable and recognisable to individual and groups of special school leaders, including respondents, who read the report or saw the findings at conferences and meetings and thus one can reasonably assume that they can be generalised to the wider special school population.

Design of the questionnaire and the pilot study

The questionnaire was designed to elicit data about special school leaders' perceptions of aspects of their context and professional development experiences. It would provide factual information on the leaders, their professional formation, career patterns, views on professional development including national programmes and other issues which might affect those views, to establish how they felt the national programmes could be improved to suit their context. Although not asking directly whether they saw their context as distinct, it was hoped that answers to questions about measurement of leadership impact and professional concerns would cast light on this question

A pilot questionnaire was sent out to chosen special school headteachers (see below) with a covering letter and a brief set of questions about the questionnaire to test the design, clarity and order of the questions. Based on the pilot and on the experience of transcribing and coding the pilot questionnaires, amendments were made to the layout and contents of the substantive questionnaire which helped maximise clarity of layout, instructions and language to facilitate completion of the questionnaire and enabling individuals to omit sections irrelevant to them. For instance as a result of comments by

pilot respondents question 22 was added to the questionnaire, seeking views on the major professional concerns of respondents. This question was answered at great length by most respondents yielding very rich and interesting data directly relevant to the research questions. The questionnaire used for the main study is presented in Appendix 1.

Section A: Personal characteristics

This section asked factual questions about the respondents and their schools. Responses could be coded as both quantitative values and qualitative text to enable interrogation of responses to establish whether views on and patterns of professional development were influenced by variables such as age, gender or type of school. Lists of NVivo document sets, attributes and nodes are found at Appendices 2A, B and C. Individual attribute values coded in NVivo related to categories given in tick boxes on the questionnaire. Appendix 2D is a model showing how attributes inter-relate with nodes for data analysis across and within sets.

Section B: Professional formation

Factual and attitudinal questions in this section related to Gardner's theories on the attainment of expertise in domains by potential leaders (1997, p. 29) and on Barth's (1991, p.66) views on the pre-service training of principals. The questionnaire was also designed to establish how career stage influenced perceived development needs, (Rayner and Ribbins, 1999; Weindling, 1999; Day and Bakioglu, 1996) as well as ascertaining which prior experiences respondents had found most helpful.

Data about prior experience, professional formation, training and qualifications, were also coded into discrete categories. This enabled comparison of individual career and professional development patterns as well as showing trends across the cohort.

This section also contained attitudinal questions about other phenomena which may have impacted on perceptions and leadership behaviour such as the usefulness of training experiences, ways of measuring impact, main issues of professional concern. or potential offerings from the NCSL. Answers to all these questions could provide insight into how far special school leaders entertain views about their context.

Respondents were asked to rank in order of importance generic or phase specific management or leadership training or specialist training. This enabled the identification of apparent associations between perceptions and attendance at any one of the national programmes, or any other factor such as gender or career stage which might impact on leaders' perceptions.

Sections C, D and E: NPQH, Headlamp and LPSH

These optional sections, for those who had undertaken the programmes, opened with factual questions including about dates and providers. Respondents were asked in what way the programmes had helped them in their role, whether and how they had impacted on their practice and school and how they could be improved to suit the special school context.

NPQH candidates were asked if they had attended one of the residentials for special school candidates. It was hoped to compare their views with those of candidates who had not attended a phase specific residential as well as cross checking against their perception of special school leadership as generic or context specific.

A question about Headlamp funding was intended to establish the views of special school leaders on the programme and to identify which courses they buy when given a choice. It was also intended to see whether career stage impacted on perceived needs early in their headship and if these needs were different from those of more experienced special school leaders. This data were then compared with respondents' views on the usefulness of activities funded by Headlamp.

Other questions

It was originally intended to hold follow-up interviews with some respondents in order to triangulate responses and enhance the validity of the data. Leaders were asked to indicate whether they would be willing to participate in an interview although in the event these did not take place due to time constraints. They were also offered two opportunities for further comment about the training and role of special school leaders as well as on the training programmes.

Ethical issues

Busher (2004, p. 75) indicates that ethical or moral issues can arise in relation to the nature of the project, the context of the research, the research procedures adopted, the data collection methods, the type of data collected and what is done with the data, which must be presented in a way which is not misleading..

In this case my insider status as a leading professional in the world of special education could be seen as symptomatic of a power relationship with the subjects although hopefully not as an abuse of power as school leaders enjoy their own authority as professionals and therefore the power differential between researcher and subjects and so the potential for causing harm was minimised. It could be said that the perceptions that many of the subjects had of me through personal contact and knowledge of successful campaigning on their behalf on which I was engaged increased the degree of trust that they had in me and that this helped maximise the responses and so the validity of the findings. Respondents will have been aware that my professional position and work in support of special schools implied that I would take their views seriously (Finch, 1993), have their well being at heart and was using my identity and position of power to further their collective interests rather than to cause harm (Busher, op. cit., p. 81).

The intention to make research findings as valid and reliable as possible is an ethical issue. I have discussed issues of data collection in relation to sampling, validity and reliability above. The covering letter which accompanied the questionnaire gave potential subjects a choice to respond or not and also guaranteed confidentiality if not anonymity. Names were changed in the report where necessary. Thus every attempt was made to protect respondents' dignity and privacy (Pring, 2000).

The ethical researcher is accountable to her respondents to disseminate research findings which are trustworthy in ways which can further their collective interests and well being. The findings were checked and commented on by individuals and groups of special school leaders to enhance reliability and were presented to the ministerial working group on the future role of the special school (DfES, 2003a) in order to positively influence policy. Further dissemination through publication of the findings to

a wider audience in a peer referenced journal will follow in order to acknowledge the debt owed to respondents for their participation in this project.

The Samples

The pilot sample

This consisted of eleven special school heads, eight males and three females, known to me personally. Ten led NMSS or independent schools and one worked in the maintained sector. Two had experienced LPSH and one NPQH. Four had further degrees and /or specialist qualifications and so could comment on the sections of the questionnaire that relate to those programmes. Follow up telephone calls to non-respondents resulted in 8 questionnaires being returned. Reasons for non-response are not known. Comparing results of the pilot and main studies also helped check reliability of the data.

The main sample

Before deciding on the questionnaire design, the nature and size of the main sample was considered.

The sampling frame is heads and deputies in all English special schools, maintained, non-maintained and independent totalling over 1300 at the time. Deputies were included in order to comment on NPQH. Various sampling options were possible.

A survey of the entire sampling frame was considered and rejected as too ambitious. A 50% or 25% sample, stratified according to category would reduce costs and make data analysis easier. May (op. cit., p. 85) and Cohen and Manion (op. cit., p. 87) suggest ways in which probability samples can be randomised and stratified to reflect proportions in the population as a whole. For special schools this requires knowledge, not only of the status of the school, but also the specialism and whether it is day or residential. An enquiry to the then DfEE proved that this information was not available without writing to every LEA, an option which was rejected on time grounds. In fact, as soon as data analysis began and the highly diverse nature of the schools in the sample emerged, the impossibility of constructing strata of statistical neighbours among English special schools became apparent.

An alternative was to ask regional NPQH and LPSH providers for a list of special school candidates. It would be harder to track down Headlamp candidates in that way but not impossible via the administration unit. HayGroup did not have a list of special school LPSH participants other than those in their research samples and the pilot group. There are two disadvantages with this method of selecting a purposive sample: it may contravene data protection requirements and it excludes those who had not undertaken national programmes but who should be included in order to identify any relationships between personal or professional characteristics and reasons for non- take up.

One further way of reducing the number of questionnaires would have been to concentrate on one programme only. This would produce a more manageable sample, reduced and more realistic costs and a more focussed study but it would also provide a less comprehensive study in terms of the training continuum and it would have given a very small sample.

Financial support from the London Leadership Centre at the Institute of Education, University of London influenced the eventual decision to choose a 50% sample which was achieved by using alternate mailing labels purchased from an educational mailing company for each category of maintained, NMSS and independent, therefore a degree of proportionate stratification was achieved. It was felt that a 50% sample, rather than a smaller sample, would ensure that data gained would be representative and valid.

The eventual sample, allowing for school closures, duplications and other errors was 1352 individuals in 685 schools (684 heads and 668 deputies). Numbers do not correlate as some schools had leadership vacancies at the time of the survey or more than one deputy.

The first mailing yielded a 30% response: 146 deputies and 266 heads, from 332 schools. In June 2001 a follow up mailing was sent to the head and deputy in 50% of the schools from which there had been no respondent, again choosing alternate labels.

The total eventual response was 513 questionnaires, 38% of the sample, completed by 188 deputies and 325 heads. There was a good response rate from heads at 47.5% and 27.5% of deputies also responded.

It is difficult to ascertain reasons for non-response. Some respondents complained of time constraints and excessive paperwork. A few took the time to write to me, returning blank questionnaires and citing lack of time, insufficient experience either in post or of the training programmes, school closure, senior vacancies, new appointments, impending inspections and workload.

Analysing the data

Qualitative responses were transcribed and imported into NVivo. Quantitative data were imported as attributes. The time-consuming transcription of qualitative data was off set by the rapid coding, modelling and analysis facilities afforded by the use of computer assisted analysis.

Initially nodes were constructed in accordance with the questionnaire structure, i.e. one node for each open-ended question. This had been planned as the questionnaire was being constructed and greatly facilitated the process of coding. Other nodes were added at a later stage as interrogation of the data progressed and were derived either from search results or from analysis of the data against theoretical propositions.

Document sets were derived from categories useful for analysis and search operations. This enabled further sorting of the data to facilitate interrogation across categories or to detect patterns of cause and effect with the respondents' personal or professional characteristics and their attitudes. Some data was subjected to simple statistical testing to establish degrees of significance.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the main issues related to the choice of methods for the empirical study and some methodological issues. The theoretical and epistemological frameworks for the study are primarily in the positivist tradition. This is a deductive study treating special schools as individual entities distinct from the mainstream and which tests a hypothesis using a postal survey with the aim of generalising to a wider population of special and inclusive mainstream schools. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected consonant with a growing tradition in leadership studies

(Bryman, 2004). Methodological issues have been explored: validity, reliability and triangulation as well as sampling, the design of the questionnaire, the analysis of data and ethical issues including those arising from my own insider status. The findings are given and discussed in the following chapter and the study is evaluated in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

Survey findings and discussion

Introduction

Based on the research questions: what is distinctive about leadership in the context of the special school and do special school leaders feel that generic leadership development programmes meet their professional development needs, the survey reported in this chapter sought the views of special school leaders in maintained, independent special schools and NMSS on their professional context and on their professional development including the national leadership development programmes.

The chapter begins with factual information about the respondents: role, gender, age, qualifications and type of school and then lays out the main results of the survey under two main headings: the special school context and perceptions of professional development and compares them with conclusions from other studies.

The respondents

In this section descriptive attributes of the sample are given and compared with the attributes of samples in other studies on special schools.

From a random sample of heads and deputies in 50% of English maintained, NMSS and independent special schools there were 513 respondents: 188 deputies and 325 heads. This is a larger sample than any published study on special schools with the largest group of respondents. Rayner and Ribbins (1999) interviewed ten headteachers in the maintained sector who were known to them and involved with special education, not all in special schools[13]. The number of special school leaders in the two HayGroup samples is unknown but totalled 121 leaders from all phases in maintained schools. Powers, Rayner at al (2001) had responses from 34 heads, 25 deputies and 49 others such as senior teachers and heads of units. The NCSL Leading Edge seminar was attended by "over 50" invited leaders from special and primary schools, all but one from the maintained sector (Chapman and Williams, 2003, p. 4). Male and Male (2001) used a random 10% sample of all maintained special schools in England with a total questionnaire response from 148 heads followed by focus group interviews with 36

[13] Other settings included a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and a community college

respondents. Burnett (2003 and 2005) reports on an opportunistic sample of 12 school leaders from England (seven interviews) and Australia (five school visits) and one LEA adviser.

The gender breakdown for the present survey is shown in table 3. 51% of respondents were female compared to 48% in Male and Male and 66% in Powers, Rayner et al. (op. cit.). It is not possible to identify reasons for this difference.

Table 3: Gender of respondents

	Heads			Deputies		All
	Female	Male	Not given	Female	Male	
Totals (N)	160	164	1	102	86	513

12% of respondents were aged under 40, 88% were over 40 and 35% were over 50. Powers, Rayner et al. (2001) also reported that more than 80% were over 40 but Williams and Chapman reported that 60% of special school leaders are over 50 (2003, p.10). This survey does not present such a bleak picture but still points to the possibility of a potential recruitment issue to headship in special schools in the short or medium term.

Qualifications

508 respondents gave their qualifications. 66%[14] were graduates. Where specified the degree was usually a specialist B.Ed. 44% had at least one further degree with one respondent reporting three further degrees and five reporting two further degrees, mainly Masters. Eight further degrees were described as specialist while others were in management. Of nine BPhil degrees, six were listed as specialist. Three people had completed doctoral studies in their specialist field. 44% also had a specialist qualification, mainly diplomas or certificates related to SEN. An overlapping 47% also had followed a further advanced course and 9% were qualified teachers of the deaf or the blind.

[14] All percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest decimal point therefore some columns in tables may not total 100%.

13% had first degree and/ or teaching qualification only with no further academic study. Of these 64% were female and 39% were deputies. Half of this group had undertaken a national programme.

Respondents' schools

Responses related to school category and pupil provision (tables 4, 5 and 6) illustrate the diversity and complexity of the English special school sector.

Table 4: School categories

Category	N	%
Community	394	77
Foundation	14	3
Non-Maintained	33	6
Independent	39	7
Secure unit	1	.03
Category not given[15]	32	6
Totals	513	

Very few respondents worked in denominational schools: "Christian", five; Church of England, three; Roman Catholic, three; Methodist, one; Jewish, one; interdenominational, one. Three of these 14 schools, described as Christian or Church of England, are maintained and the remainder NMSS or independent.

Table 5: Pupil age range and provision

PUPIL AGE RANGE	SCHOOLS (N)	PUPIL PROVISION	SCHOOLS (N)
Early years	4	Weekly Board	8
Primary	36	52 week residential	16
Secondary	78	38 week residential	11
Tertiary	2	Day	371
Early years to 19	176	Day & residential	59
Early years to 16	42		
Primary & secondary	76		
Early years & primary	41		
Secondary & tertiary	8		
Unassigned	50		48
Total	513		513

Table 6 shows that 57 variations of *main* SEN specialism were catered for in respondents' schools with learning difficulties (MLD, SLD or PMLD) the most frequent provision in various combinations. A tiny minority catered for one specialism only, most having very diverse pupil populations. This fragmentation would be compounded

[15] Where the category was not given, further enquiry identified the school as maintained.

if the subsidiary specialisms were also included in the computation as special school populations become increasingly complex. The implications of this complexity are discussed below (p. 82).

Table 6: Main SEN specialisms

Main specialism catered for	Number of schools	Percentage of total (N= 509)
MLD	84	17
SLD/PMLD	75	15
EBD	72	14
SLD	70	14
PD	28	6
MLD/SLD/PM	26	5
Aut	15	3
HI	15	3
Spld	12	2
Generic	11	2
MLD and Aut	10	2
Schools with 1 to 6 statistical neighbours in terms of specialism	68	13
Schools with no statistical neighbours in terms of specialism	23	5

Thus the factual data about the respondents given above indicate that this is the most comprehensive study on leadership development in special schools to date comprising both heads and deputies and the only one encompassing all types of special school catering for all SEN specialisms in the maintained, NMSS and independent sectors. The following sections report findings related first to the respondents' perceptions of the special school context and secondly to perceptions of professional development experiences.

WHAT IS DISTINCTIVE ABOUT LEADERSHIP IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS?

How Special School Leaders Measure Their Impact

One of the two research questions underpinning the study asked what is distinctive about the special school context. Models of situational or contingent leadership referred to in Chapter 2, page 34, give the leader's behavioural response to contextual factors as crucial to organisational effectiveness and the quality of school leadership is also

strongly linked to perceptions of school effectiveness. For instance Wasserstein-Warnet and Klein (2000) found that "the more successful principals use contingent leadership".

In our survey an open question asked how respondents measured their success or impact as a leader and 96% answered. Of these 15% misunderstood the question answering that it was too early to say, giving no clear outcomes or answers ranging from self-congratulatory via modest to vague:

> "highly successful"
> "it runs well and everyone is happy"
> "satisfactory to developing".

Most understood that the question sought to establish what standard outcomes they used and gave examples which could equally apply in mainstream schools but the extraordinary range of answers illustrates the complex task of norming success in leadership across the special school sector where standard measures of success such as PANDA benchmarks, value added figures, examination or test results simply do not apply across all schools. Thus only four people mentioned PANDA data.

Many said that they relied on feedback from stakeholders such as parents and governors (163), staff (101), senior managers (21), pupils and schools councils (32), colleagues external to the school such as other heads or deputies, visitors or critical friends (36) and outside agencies (15). Formal and structured feedback from parents and governors was often given via questionnaires at annual reviews or in relation to observation of practice. 15 respondents said that they measured impact via LPSH appraisal data which are benchmarked against others in the LPSH database. A few referred to NPQH benchmarking against National Standards, had been seconded to rescue schools in crisis or referred to their own promotion.

145 referred to inspection judgments or the award of beacon status while 81 mentioned LEA monitoring, inspection and feedback. 145 referred to measures of pupil academic progress while 18 mentioned pupils' social development including outcomes considered at annual reviews.

Many referred to other standardised external evaluations: Investors in People (33), School Achievement Award (nine)[16], other DfES feedback or approval (seven) and other awards such as Chartermark, Quality Mark and Sportsmark (12) or British Quality Foundation (one). Six people referred to judgements of External Assessors and Advisers.

Other measurable outcomes listed were pupil behaviour, incidents or exclusions (13), staff mobility (26), professional development or empowerment (48), value for money (two), community links (96), staff absence (four), pupil numbers (27), inclusive activities or integration into mainstream (five), leavers' destinations (two), the success of new initiatives (11), pupil attendance (10), curriculum entitlement or opportunities for pupils (seven), pupil safety (one), fundraising (one), lack of graffiti (one). 15 people simply stated that they used measurable benchmarks and outcomes. 111 referred to targets, goals or objectives such as those used in whole school target setting, performance management and school development planning. 29 mentioned raising standards and school improvement. 44 referred to school self evaluation procedures.

A very small minority mentioned less tangible outcomes, but which could still be the subject of legitimate comment by Ofsted, feature in LPSH feedback or in school self evaluation: the quality of relationships with stakeholders (6), motivated and committed staff (71), change management (10), school ethos (38), the quality of teaching and learning (12) or the local reputation of the school (15).

Only a small minority of the 491 could not refer to clear, specific outcomes. 15% said it was too early to tell or mentioned no outcomes while 24 referred only to "happy pupils".

The impact that this complexity has on defining the special school context is discussed below (p. 82).

Major Professional Concerns

The literature review demonstrated how the external environment for special schools is characterised by uncertainty, ambiguity and even hostility leading to feelings of

[16] The Award was given from 2001to 2003 inclusive.

isolation experienced by many special school leaders and the internal environment by complexity in a range of arenas such as staffing, multi agency working, pupil population, therapies and the adaptation of curricular and other initiatives designed for the mainstream (Halpin and Lewis, 1996; Turner, 1999). This was reflected in the survey. Respondents were asked in an open ended question to list their major professional concerns. 96% answered this question, often at great length. At one extreme a respondent replied: "Everything!!! Sinking fast." Answers show a remarkable similarity overall reflecting concerns felt across the sector, most particularly about the effects of inclusion on their pupils and staff and uncertainty about the future role of special schools. Fears about the lack of resource to make inclusion work: to support, train and prepare staff for change and for the growing complexity of the pupil population were very widespread indeed. Many respondents had misgivings about the SEN policies of their LEAs and the government as well as about the level of expertise in LEAs. One head of an outstanding independent school spoke of "mindless idiots in some LEAs". The head of a maintained EBD school was more eloquent: "The ideology of special education is in disarray."

The difficulties of recruiting suitably qualified staff in all categories were keenly felt across the board as were worries about the number, range and implementation of government initiatives. At the time of the survey target setting, performance management, benchmarking, modifications to the curriculum and literacy and numeracy strategies were major issues especially for children with severe learning difficulties. Table 7 shows the major concerns. Most respondents listed several so the total exceeds 493.

Table 7: Major professional concerns

		Mentions N= 493
External context	Management of inclusion	**189**
	LEA SEN policies including on parental choice, school reorganisation, expertise	**83**
	Uncertainty over the future role of special schools	83
	Lack of appropriate training for all staff	73
	Multi agency working/ lack of joined up thinking	27
	Ofsted/ HMI/ understanding and expertise of inspectors	22
	Feeling isolated	16
	Pace of change	11
	Own school reorganisation	9
	Status and image of SEBD	8

	Role of NMSS & independent sector	7
	Litigation/ legal issues	6
	Government policy/ interference	6
	Layers of accountability	5
	Lack of early intervention	4
	Care standards	4
Internal context	Recruitment and retention of qualified staff	128
	Workload	106
	Funding/ budgets/ resources	105
	Whole school target setting	77
	DfES initiatives, their relevance, keeping up	77
	Developing a curriculum for a range of needs	74
	Change in pupil populations/ increasing severity of need	54
	Teacher stress/ motivation/ morale/ personnel issues	52
	Benchmarking/ assessment & reporting/ appropriate indicators	48
	Performance management/ pay	41
	Behaviour management/ physical intervention	33
	School improvement/ teaching & learning/ raising standards	24
	Lack of career structure/ training/ supply of LSAs/ Care staff	18
	School self evaluation	15
	Numeracy, literacy & Key Stage 3 strategies	14
	Buildings & assets	13
	Multi-tasking in a small school	13
	Post 16 care progression & opportunities	11
	Health and safety/ manual handling	11
	Monitoring & evaluation	10
	Managing an all age school	9
	Staff absence/ quality and supply of supply staff	9
	Governing body	9
	(Generic) leadership/ vision/ values/ principles	9
	Complexity of own role/ absence of middle managers	9
	Supporting parents	7
	ICT/ New Opportunities Funding	7
	Equal opportunities for pupils	4
	52 week provision	4
	Providing for pupils with ASD/ SLD	3
	Pupil attendance/ exclusion	3

What is distinctive in the special school context?

Data from the survey show that the vast majority of special school leaders see their practice being affected by wide ranging internal and external contextual issues often overlapping and which are more concentrated than in the mainstream.

Despite this some respondents took pains to point out that special schools are *not* distinct from mainstream emphasising the generic nature of leadership. As will be shown below most respondents believe that their leadership skills are generic and therefore should apply equally to mainstream and that preparation for headship should

address generic issues such as the management of change and of stress. One head said that to ask for anything else would represent an "unhealthy preciousness" as special education simply presents a wider focus demanding "special talents". For another head LPSH confirmed that: "In all school settings the issues the teachers need to deal with are the same". Several respondents pointed out that in some special schools expectations of pupil outcomes, including GCSE, should be the same as in mainstream schools.

In the main, special school leaders identified a wider range of contextual issues than those found in literature on special schools to illustrate their perceptions of what is distinctive about special schools. The issues fall under three broad headings: complexity, uncertainty and isolation.

Special schools deal with greater complexity than mainstream schools

The themes of complexity and diversity of the special school context acknowledged by authors reviewed in Chapter 2 was expanded in the survey. Complexity impacts directly on management tasks and leadership behaviours in a headteacher role which is becoming increasingly stressful and multi-layered. Sari (2004) outlined the impact of stress and burnout among Turkish special school headteachers and Male and Male (2001, p. 163) found that English special school heads often feel "disadvantaged and under-prepared." In our survey nearly 10% felt they had had no adequate preparation for their role (table 8).

Complexity in the internal and external context relates to pupil age range and special need, type of school provision, the range of agencies and other relationships which the school has to work with plus staff profiles.

Respondents frequently referred to the increasing diversity and complexity of the pupil population in special schools even within so-called specialisms. This has been recorded elsewhere (HMCI, 1999). As also identified by Rayner and Ribbins (1999) one fifth of survey respondents referred to lack of resources to meet pupils' needs as one of their greatest concerns and one third mentioned the difficulty of training staff and amending the curriculum to suit.

In addition to the 57 combinations of main specialism shown in table 6, the all age pupil intake catered for by a majority of special schools adds to their complexity. Over half of schools in the survey catered for more than three key stages and one third catered for every key stage from foundation to tertiary. Several respondents mentioned this as a major challenge (table 7). All age schools are required to have expertise in the whole curriculum across all age ranges and to digest all the accompanying documentation. This also applies to legislation over and above that applied to mainstream schools plus those initiatives designed for mainstream with any amendments for specialist education an afterthought or non-existent. Respondents mentioned target setting, the literacy and numeracy strategies and benchmarking as examples of how each school has to amend initiatives for its own use, often for pupils with severe or profound learning difficulties (QCA, 1998; HMCI and Audit Commission, 2002, p. 3). This constant need to amend government initiatives adds considerably to workload in special schools. This has been also been noted by Male and Male (2001), Ainscow (1991, p. 216), Halpin and Lewis (1996).

As special schools are by definition child centred, geared to the assessment of and provision for individual needs this necessitates structures and practice which differ from mainstream (Powers, Rayner et al, 2001; Rayner and Ribbins, 1999). As an example the duty of care for day and residential special school headteachers, towards staff and pupils, is more complex than for their mainstream counterparts. Almost all respondents mentioned staffing issues as a concern, as illustrated in the variety of staffing related concerns listed in table 7.

28% of schools represented in the survey had residential provision, not part of maintained mainstream schooling (table 5) (Morris and Abbott, 2002). Residential provision in itself has complex structures in relation to the type of placement: 38 week, 48 week or 52 week, with five or seven day boarding and funding arrangements can be bi- or tri-partite. Boarding carries with it additional inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)[17], the application of rigorous minimum care standards from April 2002, and the employment of care staff often in larger numbers than teachers. Residential special schools also provide a 24 hour or integrated curriculum for the whole child (Rayner and Ribbins, 1999; Morris and Abbott, 2002) with learning

[17] The National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) at the time of the survey

and social activities provided out of normal school hours. 3% of schools in the survey accommodate children, often looked after by the Local Authority, for 52 weeks per year which imposes on them the duty to register as a children's home under the Children Act 1989 (table 5) . This brings additional regulation and an even more rigorous set of minimum care standards (DoH, 2001, 2002a and b).

All schools are involved in multi agency working but the range of agencies that the special school has to work with far exceeds that of mainstream being much more fundamental to the education and care of all the pupils. These agencies include social services departments and social workers, primary care trusts and health professionals, therapists of different types, psychologists and psychiatrists, the SEN and Disability Tribunal, national bodies representing teaching and support staff, higher education for initial and in service training and mandatory qualifications, various statutory inspecting and regulatory bodies. These agencies each have their own view of special education and unique structures (Fish and Evans, 1995). Due to the specialist nature of the schools, special school leaders often liaise internationally to establish and share good practice and research. It is accepted that multi agency working is difficult to achieve (Fish, 1995; DfES 2003b) as different agencies work to different definitions and requirements. Often the headteacher of a special school feels that s/he is held accountable for the work of professionals from agencies over which s/he and the governors have no control. In the survey 27 respondents gave the "lack of joined up thinking" as a major concern.

Staff cohorts in special schools are much more diverse than in mainstream and with many more adults per child. For this reason the survey confirms the HayGroup model that special schools are *not* small schools as Rayner and Ribbins assert. Often in special schools the teachers as a staff group are in a minority outnumbered by therapists or by low paid staff such as learning assistants or care staff all accountable to the head. The lack of proper career structures and training for classroom assistants and care staff is a major concern for special school leaders in the survey (Sebba and Fergusson, 1991, p 211). However like small primary schools, the shortage of teaching staff with leadership roles means that the head and deputy have to fulfil many more teaching, management and leadership functions than colleagues with equivalent posts in medium to large primary and secondary schools (table 7) (Porter, Lacey et al, 2002).

Retaining and recruiting sufficiently qualified staff is a major concern for special school leaders. In the survey many talked of an ageing teaching staff and an acute shortage of specialist teachers to replace them as specialist initial training and in service training have “dried up”. Unlike in mainstream the special school head has to recruit teaching staff not just with subject specialisms, but also with specialist SEN training, perhaps also with a mandatory qualification as teacher of children who are deaf, blind or with multi sensory impairment and also has to plan and provide professional development over all these areas for all the different staff groups in her school in order to maintain their expertise (Fish and Evans, 1995). This includes manual handling and physical intervention, managing increasingly challenging behaviour as the school population changes and learning to use specialist equipment, aspects which do not apply across the board in mainstream.

Special schools also have more compound relationships than mainstream schools. The frequency and depth of liaison relationships both inside and outside school, the numbers of stakeholders with varying or contradictory perspectives on specialist provision and the demands these engender exceed those experienced by mainstream heads and multi-agency working was frequently mentioned as a concern (table 7).

In special schools the needs of the individual child must be kept in the foreground, a point made strongly by school leaders and in the literature (HayGroup, 2000; Rayner and Ribbins, 1999). The special school leader must work with and provide support for parents, carers and pupils often dealing with distressing issues such as the impact of a complex or multiple disability on family life or the death of a child or the management of very challenging behaviour (table 7). The Code of Practice for SEN (DfES, 2001) defines how heads must work with parents, carers and pupils as do the minimum care standards for residential special schools and children’s homes (DoH 2002a and b). The Code of course also applies to mainstream schools, but in a special school all the children are statemented.

Many special schools, especially those for low incidence SEN or not maintained by LEAs have a national intake spanning many regions, LEAs or SSDs all requiring close liaison in the interests of the child (NASS, 2002). This professional relationship embraces the assessment process, statementing, annual reviews and other key life events even sometimes including providing information or advocacy at the Tribunal when a parent challenges an LEA ruling about provision for the child. Most special schools

also have strong links with a range of mainstream schools to support inclusion. As early as 1994 the NfER reported that up to 83% of special schools had such links (Hegarty, 1994) rising to 89% in 2000 (Fletcher-Campbell, 2001). Yet special schools particularly those not maintained by LEAs often find it difficult to liaise with mainstream and other special schools (Fletcher-Campbell, op. cit.).

Finally, special schools are subject to more inspection than mainstream schools: by Ofsted, HMI, CSCI if they are residential (formerly SSDs until April 2002) (DoH, 2002 a and b) and by any LEA placing a child in that school. Special school heads expressed concern about the expertise of some inspectors. Equally many respondents to the survey mentioned the fear of litigation and a need to have support in understanding the law. All schools are subject to litigation including for child protection issues, but in special schools the potential for investigations and prosecutions is increased due to the vulnerable pupil population and 24 hour or 52 week residential regimes.

Special schools are more isolated than mainstream schools

Isolation can be geographical, statistical or metaphorical (Alderson and Goodey, 1998, p. 45). 16 respondents including some from inner city areas specifically listed feelings of isolation as their major concern (table 7).

Special school heads feel that they are overlooked by central government when it comes to planning their professional development (also Powers, Rayner et al., 2001, p. 111). One respondent said:

> "I feel special school leaders are ignored for the most part. Yes, we do want to be trained with mainstream colleagues and many issues around leadership are generic. However the distinct needs of special school heads are not addressed e.g. running schools which cover Key stages 1-4 and FE, raising levels of staff expertise etc."

The application of major initiatives to special education is widely seen as an afterthought. One head of an SLD school spoke of: "inappropriate initiatives from government and LEA which target mainstream schools and are meaningless to us". Another said:

> "If the special school is to do what Mr Blunkett et al wish … much more consideration needs to be given to training leaders for that role. In my experience the majority of training has 'Special' as an add-on never as an integral element. This is particularly the case for 'SLD' schools. There is usually the expectation that the special school leader will 'adapt' to suit, therefore … the message to mainstream colleagues is that the significance of special education is lesser - it can make do."

Special school heads also feel marginalized by those participants in the inclusion debate who see their schools as theoretically unsustainable (Alderson and Goodey, 1998, Tomlinson, 2001).

There is also geographical isolation. Residential schools are often located out "in the sticks" with no nearby schools. Indeed for leaders in NMSS and independent schools this isolation is usually compounded by not being part of a local authority and often being ignored or excluded by the LEA in which they are physically situated. One independent head listed as her main concern: "A feeling of isolation from LEAs and other special school heads".

Many maintained school heads, even in densely populated LEAs with other special schools, complained of severe feelings of isolation, feeling like "a square peg in a round hole". Often for maintained heads there is no special school head group in the LEA, only primary and secondary meetings. Even where there is a referent group special school leaders, especially in remote residential settings, find it hard to leave the workplace for meetings

Frequently there is no SEN expertise in the LEA and therefore no peer or supervisory contact and from LEA personnel a lack of understanding of the nature of their role and workload (table 7) (HMCI, 1999, p.31).

There can be little expert help with adapting mainstream initiatives and little opportunity to work alongside mainstream heads within the LEA and not at all for heads in NMSS and independent schools. Some special school heads also feel that mainstream heads have low expectations of them. Equally, heads feel that they receive little support from Health Authorities and Social Services Departments even though often the head has to fulfil some of their functions such as applying medication.

The wide range of special school type (tables 4, 5 and 6) underlines the difficulty of benchmarking special schools as testified by the generic PANDA produced by OfSTED and therefore in one way serves to differentiate special school leadership from that in mainstream where statistical neighbours are easy to find. When asked to list professional concerns, many mentioned problems of target setting, benchmarking and comparing data with other schools. It is hard for special schools with few or no statistical or geographical neighbours to share good practice and this at a time when their practice and outcomes are being closely scrutinised yet they can be criticised for not working to clear outcomes (Alderson and Goodey1998, p.8).

Finally, where heads and deputies cannot or do not wish to access national training, this compounds their isolation and as we shall see, affects their view about the nature of leadership. In the survey two thirds of deputy respondents and nearly half of headteachers had not accessed any national programme.

Special schools deal with more uncertainty than mainstream schools

The issue of uncertainty in the special school environment is linked to responsibility for the management of undefined change by special school leaders. One head of a NMSS said his major concern is: "Our future. Where is the government bringing us?" 189 respondents referred directly to uncertainty about the management of inclusion, 90 to their uncertainty about the future role of special schools including a positive role for NMSS and independent schools and a further 89 to uncertainty about the nature and tenor of central or local government policies on SEN. 11 felt left behind by the pace of change and three were involved in the reorganisation of their schools. This accords with an Ofsted review carried out in 2000/1 which found that about one third of LEAS had unsatisfactory strategies for inclusion and had failed "to define a clear and appropriate role for special schools" (HMCI and Audit Commission, 2002).

DO SPECIAL SCHOOL LEADERS FEEL THAT GENERIC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES MEET THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS?

The second research question underpinning the study asked whether special school leaders feel that generic leadership development programmes meet their professional development needs. This section gives and discusses findings related to their perceptions of preparation for leadership, prior experience, professional formation and experience of and views on the national programmes and compares them with findings from other surveys. The respondents' perceptions of their most valuable professional development experiences are shown, as well as their views on generic versus context specific professional development. We have seen that school leadership development programmes are criticised by some authors as centrally prescribed, a means of control by government on schools, devoid of theory and bleached of context (Thrupp and Wilmott, 2003) although recent developments have attempted to relate the programmes to research on leadership theory and context specific professional learning (Coles and Southworth, 2005; Bush and Glover, 2003).

Preparation for leadership

At the time of the survey inspections identified one in twenty special schools suffering from poor leadership compared to one in twelve in primary and one in seventeen in secondary (HMI, 2002, p.5). As professional development is aimed at improving effectiveness the issue of prior learning and experience is germane.

In this survey, when stating how they had prepared themselves for leadership respondents could tick as many boxes as were relevant from a choice of 10 and could add a further comment (Appendix 1).

Table 8: Preparation for leadership

	Activity	Total (N)	Comments[18]
Experiential Learning	Deputy headship	352	
	Mainstream experience	137	
	Experience outside schools	86	Incl. industrial placement, voluntary work, inspection, commercial experience
	Having a mentor	51	Generally own headteacher

[18] Mentions total more than 515 as respondents could tick more than one box

	Work shadowing	50	
Study or	Academic study	268	Including management diplomas
Training	Training	215	Incl. NPQH, management experience or courses, "on the job"; meeting other special Heads; industrial placement.
	Reading	240	
Other		120	See below
No relevant preparation		55	"

"Other" activities described were: a period as a middle or senior manager or in an acting post, working in the LEA, in a range of special schools or with a good or a poor head; practical experience as a head, governor, inspector or Higher Education (HE) tutor, or networking with mainstream heads. One former primary head had become a special school deputy after 30 years in mainstream and one honest respondent said that he had prepared himself for leadership "mainly by criticising others."

55 respondents, 10.5 % of the total including 30 heads, felt that they had had no relevant preparation for leadership although almost all had also ticked other boxes in this question and many were highly qualified. This is a smaller proportion than the 20% reported by Powers, Rayner et al as having had no professional development (op. cit., p. 109) but whose survey does not appear to have included on the job learning as part of professional formation. A long serving group, 42% had held their current post for 11 years or more and a further 28% for between six and ten years. 60% of this group were male and 73% were over 45. Many took up their present posts before the national development framework was put in place. 38 were in maintained schools, five in NMSS and six in independent schools[19]. One NMSS Head commented on the difficulty for schools outside the LEA sector in accessing support. This was to be a recurring theme.

Long serving headteachers also commented on the lack of formal preparation when they took up their headship, typically: "In 1986 when I was first appointed life was a little easier. The low level of support and training I received then would not be suitable for today's conditions." Possibly some older respondents had also reached the career stage categorised by Day and Bakioglu as "Disenchantment" (1996). This does not mean that these leaders are not learning as they all reported a range of professional development activities. A possible interpretation could be that more formative

[19] The remaining 6 did not give their school category.

professional development is available now for younger leaders with the national framework having some impact on perceptions of readiness.

By contrast 90% of respondents including younger leaders and those with national training *did* feel prepared for leadership through "a breadth and depth of experiences in formal and informal environments" (Rajan and Parfitt, 2000). They placed great value on practical work experience. 30% had either or also worked outside schools including as LEA officers, mainly in SEN or behaviour support as managers, psychologists or advisers. 54 respondents indicated experience in the private sector with eleven having been managers. 22 people had worked in HE or FE in this country and abroad. Others had worked in the caring professions or public service: police, Social Services, civil service, youth work or treatment, health, therapist or medical worker, charity work or voluntary service including abroad, research, examination board, the armed forces, prison education or as a librarian.

Respondents also place significant value on the national programmes, on networking and having a mentor or role model. Half indicated that professional reading has formed part of their preparation.

Male and Male (2001) surveyed readiness for headship, using a four point scale ranging from well prepared to not at all prepared, against 28 activities grouped under development of skills, formation of attitudes and values and increase of knowledge. Their respondents felt overall that they had been inadequately to adequately prepared in all three main areas but best prepared in the formation of attitudes and values. Perceptions of readiness were not influenced by factors such as gender, prior experience nor qualifications. Mentoring by an experienced headteacher was felt to be the most appropriate support during the first two years in post, preferably from a similar type of special school supplemented in the second year by access to support or referent groups or networks. 10% of my respondents indicated that being mentored had been a significant part of their preparation and a further 10% referred to workshadowing.

For Rayner and Ribbins prior experience in mainstream is a prerequisite for effective special school headship (1999, p.315). A minority of this sample, 29%, had only worked in special schools.

Ongoing Professional Formation

In Powers, Rayner et al's survey 46% had accessed HE courses compared to the 52% in our survey who accessed HE courses as part of their leadership preparation and 16% who accessed them as part of continuing professional development. In Powers' survey 54% had accessed other short courses compared to 41% in our survey who accessed them as part of their preparation for leadership. Answering a supplementary question about other training 66% of our respondents had accessed LEA courses, 7% had accessed HMI courses and 22% referred to other courses such as those provided by NAHT, Ofsted, IIP and other school improvement professionals.

Experience of national programmes

Gardner (1997) saw the best preparation for leadership as learning about leadership. National programmes are the main national vehicles for this although a few other programmes featured. Powers, Rayner et al found that only 15% of their special school sample had accessed national training, including Ofsted training. In this much larger survey the comparable figure is 54% not including Ofsted training. Insufficient information is given by Powers, Rayner et al to be able to explain this difference except that it is tempting to assume that the larger sample is more representative of the total population.

Tables 9-11 show take up of national programmes by school type, respondents' age and experience at the time of the survey. 64% of deputies and 46% of headteachers (54% overall) had not accessed any national training programme.

Table 9: Take up of national programmes by type of school

Category %	Heads: None	NPQH	Headlamp	LPSH	LPSH& Headlamp	NPQH& Headlamp	Deputies: None	NPQH
N=	*149*	*21*	*65*	*69*	*10*	*14*	*129*	*56*
Community	72	76	91	88	90	79	70	63
Foundation	4	0	2	2	0	14	1	7
NMSS	8	5	5	7	0	0	7	7
Independent	15	19	0	2	0	0	8	4
Unassigned	1	0	2	1	10	7	14	19

Table 10: Take up by age

Age %	Heads: None	NPQH	Headlamp	LPSH	LPSH& Headlamp	NPQH& Headlamp	Deputies: None	NPQH
N=	*149*	*21*	*65*	*69*	*10*	*14*	*129*	*56*
25-35	1	10	2	0	0	0	8	13
36-40	3	19	11	2	0	14	12	11
41-45	11	29	29	19	30	50	24	38
46-50	24	5	37	39	60	21	29	32
51+	60	37	21	39	10	14	25	6
Unassigned	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0

Table 11: Take up by experience

Years in current post %	Heads: None[20]	NPQH	Headlamp	LPSH	LPSH& Headlamp	NPQH& Headlamp	Deputies: None	NPQH
N=	*149*	*21*	*65*	*69*	*10*	*14*	*129*	*56*
0-2	19	75	20	10	0	50	33	25
3-5	15	10	54	12	70	50	25	45
6-10	2	5	14	44	30	0	21	16
11+	40	10	11	33	0	0	21	14
Unassigned	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0

Take up

Powers, Rayner et al felt that government funded training was not attracting or is not targeted at SEN professionals (2001, p. 111). 36% of deputies in this larger survey and 54% of heads had undertaken at least one national programme. There are no national figures with which to compare take up of national programmes in the survey with the whole special school population nor with mainstream or by gender, type of school or specialism. These issues merit further research. For instance more women than men in the sample took up the programmes overall, although it seems that more men with NPQH go on to be heads. Similarly very few leaders in denominational special schools seemed to have accessed the programmes.

Newton reports that 85% of new heads take up Headlamp of whom 5% are in special schools (2001, p.3). In this survey 34% of eligible heads had accessed Headlamp. None were in independent schools and 64% were women. This suggests that fewer special school heads than in other phases access induction, particularly if they are male.

According to the NCSL review (Collarbone, 2001, p.11) a total of 7426 heads in all phases had completed LPSH between 1998 and 2001, a figure expanded to 8000 by the

[20] 51 of this group were in their second or third headship

Times Educational Supplement (Revell, 2001) which also reported that a further 1000 were signed up for 2002. The review does not say what percentage of the total population this represents but regrets that overall uptake has been lower than expected (op. cit., p. 15).

An unpublished Ofsted evaluation of LPSH quoted in the Collarbone review (op. cit., pp.8-9) is said to have lamented the lack of small, secondary and special school take up. Collarbone's response is not specific: "The number of special schools in the country is small and likely to become less as the new SEN and Disability Act 2001 begins to take hold. They remain very important, however....there is an ongoing issue with regard to marketing." The marketing issue will be addressed in the conclusion.

Non take up

Ainscow believes that "the traditions of special education have tended to cut its practitioners off from sources of knowledge that are perceived as being outside its boundaries of interest. Thus the perspective has been narrow, leading to limited possibilities for development and, as a result, low expectations of improvement" (1991, xii).

The reasons given by respondents who had not accessed any national programme did not overtly include resistance (Slee, 1991, p.62; Whitty, Power et al, 1998, p. 59):

- lack of time
- other commitments e.g. other training or school pressures
- no desire to be a Head (NPQH)
- settling into a new post or not ready
- age or pre-retirement
- workload
- no interest
- lack of support by employers (NPQH or Headlamp)
- Headlamp is seen as inaccessible, irrelevant or "hopeless"
- lack of funding for NMSS (before 2001), independent schools or other institutions e.g . PRUs where previous service was carried out.

Age also seems to be a factor as 60% of heads who had not attended a national programme were over 50. 83% of heads and 56% of deputies were over 45.

Many were just about to embark on one or other of the programmes and just over 10 people, usually in the independent sector, indicated that they did not know about specific programmes.

The NCSL review gives the following reasons for low national uptake of LPSH by all phases (op. cit., p.15). These results are not consonant with the findings of this survey which would indicate that further research on reasons for non take up would be useful:

- multiple initiatives in schools
- introduction of performance management (but as this dates from September 2000 it cannot have affected take up before then)
- poor marketing and lack of knowledge of the programme
- unwillingness to take time out of school
- unwillingness to face the 360° appraisal
- problems with dates of the programmes
- LEAs are under-informed about LPSH.

Perceptions of national programmes

a) NPQH

35 heads and 56 deputies had accessed NPQH representing 18% of respondents overall. Of these 29% of deputies had graduated compared to 49% of the heads. 14 heads had also accessed Headlamp. Most had experienced NPQH prior to the launch of the revised version in 2000 and many heads will have been deputies when undertaking NPQH.

Table 12 shows the gender breakdown:

Table 12: NPQH take up by role and gender

	Heads NPQH only %	Deputies NPQH	Heads NPQH/ Headlamp	All
Women	38	48	64	52
Men	62	52	36	48

This compares to an overall division of 49% men and 52% women respondents[21]. Male heads with NPQH significantly outnumber females although fewer men then access Headlamp.

84 of the 129 deputies who had not accessed NPQH gave reasons, some giving more than one: lack of time, commitments such as other training or school pressures, no desire to be a head, settling into a new post, "too old", not ready, workload, no interest. Five indicated that they did not know what NPQH is, had been advised against applying or turned down. Individuals said they would only do it full time with supply cover; timings were not suitable, the application process was too complicated, they had missed the deadline or were leaving teaching. Twenty-one were about to start the programme.

This was the youngest group with 23% of the total NPQH cohort aged 40 and under, and only 15% over 50. This group was also relatively inexperienced (table 11). Of the 35 headteachers, three were in their second headship at the time of writing (no indication of their status when undertaking the NPQH) and almost 80% of deputies had been in their current post for five years or less. Only eight deputies had been in post for eleven years or more.

20% of those who ticked against NPQH in question 14 did not answer Section C, two heads explaining that they were short of time. This omission inevitably has an impact on the validity and reliability of the data that follows.

Twelve of the NPQH group said they had attended a conference for special school candidates in 1999, 14 in 2000 and three were to attend in 2001. 42 said they had not attended any conference and 20 did not respond making it difficult to draw conclusions about the impact of the conferences.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses of NPQH

Of the 91 in the group, 24 heads and 35 deputies said how NPQH had helped with their role. Five deputies indicated that it was too early to say.

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[21] One head did not give gender.

Nine respondents said that it had not helped them at all. Seven respondents said that the focus was too mainstream or that discussion of relevant issues was inhibited when the individual was the only special school candidate in the group. One lamented: "Throughout my training the group was split into "primary", "secondary" and "What shall we do with George[22]?""

Three heads had dropped out because there were no other special school candidates in the group or because of poor quality and irrelevant delivery and materials. A fourth who completed and then accessed Headlamp said of NPQH: "Some aspects were a waste of time and the written tasks were irrelevant."

Others found these aspects helpful:

Table 13: Helpful aspects of NPQH

	Heads	Deputies
Specific management issues	10	16
Clarified vision	6	2
Personal reflection/confidence building	5	5
Networking/ sharing with colleagues	4	3
Clarifying personal/professional goals	2	1
Overview/ background to issues/ info/ focus (incl. generic & mainstream)	3	6
Support and challenge	2	0
Preparation for interview for first headship	2	0
Specific programme components	3	4
Awareness of Head's role and responsibilities	1	3
Other	2	2

Perceptions of the impact of NPQH

Asked if NPQH had had any impact on their practice or schools a third of NPQH respondents did not answer. Some deputies did not know or said it was too early to tell.

Despite this well over half of the NPQH group indicated positive impact both on their practice and their schools with only 12% feeling there had been little or no impact.

There were some slight differences between heads and deputies. Heads who had also accessed Headlamp presented a a more positive emphasis from those with NPQH only.

[22] Name changed

Respondents were invited to specify the nature of this impact. Firstly the negative comments: five people said that NPQH had no impact on their practice with one head saying that it made him "very angry". Another had not completed NPQH once appointed to headship. One deputy complained that the programme did not cater for special schools, the tutors were not practising leaders and too much evidence was required. Two deputies said that it was too early to say and one said that any impact had been limited by their current headteacher. Regarding the impact on schools one head said that NPQH was "interesting but not changing (sic)". Four respondents said it had no impact because of lack of time or pressure of work.

Positive responses are shown below and are mainly related to generic aspects of NPQH.

Table 14: The positive impact of NPQH on practice

Number of mentions	Heads	Deputies
Use of theory/ research to guide practice	0	5
Built confidence/ reinforcement	4	5
Insight into generic/ mainstream issues	1	3
Reflection on own leadership/ principles	3	3
Development/ strategic planning	3	3
Candidate challenged to assume specific responsibilities	1	0
Became more analytical	0	2
Networking at the residential	1	1
Improved leadership/management	3	0
Specific management skills	1	4
Information on the bigger/legal picture	2	1
Other	3	2

Table 15: The positive impact of NPQH on schools

Number of mentions	Heads	Deputies
New/ revised structures and procedures	5	3
Impacted on leadership/ management styles	1	3
Strategic management/planning	0	4
Developed specific curricular subjects	2	0
Impacted on vision/ values/ideas	4	0
Other	10	6

B) HEADLAMP

Of the 89 individuals, 27% of headteacher respondents, who had accessed Headlamp funding, ten had also accessed LPSH and a further 14 had undertaken NPQH. One substantive deputy had accessed Headlamp during a period of acting headship and her responses are included here. 64% of the Headlamp group were women and 36% men, a lower take up by men than that of NPQH.

Respondents who were eligible to access Headlamp but had not done so gave the following reasons: time, circumstances or workload; the programme is inaccessible, irrelevant, "hopeless" or not needed; lack of funding for NMSS[23], independent schools or PRUs[24]; new in post; no information. Two said that they were not supported by their employers and one had begun a Masters degree. A further four had just started Headlamp or had accessed some modules.

Take up of Headlamp by school, age and experience is shown in tables 9, 10 and 11. Eight people said that they were not in their first headship although they may have been when they accessed Headlamp. Seven said they had been in post for over 11 years although they may have been aggregating deputy and acting headship posts.

Eleven people who ticked Headlamp in question 14 did not answer Section D which affects the data which follow. Percentages apply to the group of 89.

Headlamp funding

Comments about Headlamp funding are interesting because they should show how heads choose development activities when given a free hand. 82 people indicated how the funding had been spent. Twelve had not accessed the full £2500 although this may also apply to others as no question asked if all the money had been accessed. Reasons given for non-use of funding included complaints about the bureaucracy involved in accessing it and the ineligibility of certain kinds of courses or professional development. Some respondents were still accessing the funding.

One head said: "Access to the funding was only possible if you used recognised trainers. Local business links were invaluable but not on the list. …I was very unimpressed with the system."

Another said: "Not able to spend all the money on appropriate training and did not actually claim money spent on needs analysis with NAHT."

[23] NMSS began to receive funding for leadership development from April 1st 2001.
[24] Where previous service was carried out

In addition, the head of a NMSS, not eligible for Headlamp funding until 2001-2 was initially financed by his governing body, who subsequently recouped their expenditure when funding became available to NMSS. One headteacher had been persuaded to spend part of her Headlamp funding on registering for NPQH which she had soon given up as "a waste of time". She did go on to access other courses which she found more useful. One head complained bitterly that the National Autistic Society (NAS) was not a registered provider (£500 of the £2500 could be spent with non-registered providers) and that this had prevented him from accessing their courses while, by way of contrast, another reported spending his funding on an NAS TEACCH course.

Others spent Headlamp funding as shown below. As some respondents used the funding to finance more than one activity the total number of mentions exceeds 82. As one head said: "When I could I debited courses I attended to Headlamp." In fact while, as we have seen, some respondents were put off by the conditions attached to the funding, a majority have used it to engage in a range of activities. The Headlamp training plan should derive from a needs analysis, but very few respondents explicitly stated that this had been part of their "package". In some LEAs there seems to be pressure to spend the funding locally: "Little option but to spend funding with local provider- (named) LEA in conjunction with (named) University."

Table16: How Headlamp funding was spent

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF MENTIONS
Various short courses/ modules	19
LEA courses for new heads	18
NAHT courses /special school residentials	13
HE consultancy and Headlamp courses (may include mentoring)	12
Personal mentoring (by special or mainstream heads)	7
1:1 Consultancy/ specialist input e.g. British Quality Foundation	6
ICT training	4
NAHT needs analysis	4
Further degree	4
Cover and resources	4
Industrial Society or IIP course	4
Ofsted training	2
Special school residentials - networking	3
Other-unspecified	5
Other-phase specific	3

Respondents were not asked whether they had spent Headlamp funding on generic or context specific activities but it can be deduced that a majority of the activities were generic. However three factors militate against placing too much credence on this finding. Many seem to think, incorrectly, that they have to spend Headlamp funding in

the LEA where some modules were of variable quality or were irrelevant while SEN courses which are possibly more relevant for them can be found elsewhere. Secondly the level of bureaucracy and the restrictions associated with accessing the funding seemed to cause much irritation and to deter many from making full use of it. Thirdly the result may be due to the lack of eligible SEN specific activities on which Headlamp funding could be spent.

Context specific activities included an imaginative six week secondment to USA looking at the inclusion/ segregation of the SLD population, a TEACCH course, residentials including NAHT conferences, the Special Schools' INSET and possibly some of the unspecified courses.

One head reported: "Bought (named) LEA Headlamp 'package'. It became clear that mainstream colleagues had different issues/ concerns than Special School heads. I was able to persuade the LEA that my attendance at the Annual South-West heads of Special Schools could assist me more. LEA agreed to fund this as part of the 'package'".

Around one fifth of Headlamp candidates had spent funding on opportunities to network with other special school leaders, for instance at NAHT conferences (table 16). Others seemed to have spent their funding on imaginative activities such as the visit to the USA and TEACCH course, both appropriate but in breach of Headlamp funding requirements. An early evaluation of Headlamp suggested that more could be done to recognise the uniqueness of the situation of each new headteacher (Kirkham,1999) and this would concur with the findings of this survey which suggest that funding arrangements or their interpretation by LEAs militate against induction for the specific context. Some relaxation of the rules surrounding Headlamp funding would have made it more appropriate to the needs of heads in specific settings[25].

The Newton review of Headlamp suggested a different approach: a more tightly structured programme but with an entitlement to the support of a mentor and access to a learning network including a virtual network (Newton, 2001). The call for tighter structure is of course understandable when taking into consideration value for money and quality issues but calls for a more systematic approach to mentoring with appropriate expertise and real and virtual networks, while entirely suitable, presuppose

[25] HIP rules have not addressed this issue

that action will be taken to recruit specialist mentors and set up phase specific real and virtual networks.

Perceived strengths and weaknesses of Headlamp

62 people explained how Headlamp had helped with their role, some providing more than one issue, therefore the total mentions exceed 62. Four heads stated that they were still accessing their funding and so it was too early to say. 15 % who had spent their funding on NAHT, LEA or regional staff college courses indicated that Headlamp had not helped them with their role or had only helped in a limited way. Problems included: complicated bureaucracy, too much theory, excessive time out of school needed. Individuals had found the bureaucracy for accessing funding too difficult or had bought ad hoc courses such as Investors in People training or residentials.

Yet others found the courses or activities they purchased variable. One respondent who bought in LEA support said: "(it) offered me the opportunity to meet with people in a similar situation in my area (although not new special heads)". Another who also used the LEA package said: "It helped to meet other new headteachers. There was little of the course context that I can honestly say has improved the way I work". The head who persuaded her LEA to permit her to attend a special school heads' residential instead of attending all the LEA package for new heads wrote: "I still feel that I did not receive my/DfEE's money's worth! (Named) LEA had no SEN Inspector at that time!"

Many did think that Headlamp had helped especially with the acquisition of specific management knowledge and skills and the opportunity to network and share information with other new heads.

Table17: How Headlamp is seen as helpful

Perceptions of how Headlamp helps with the head's role	Number of mentions
Management information and skills	17
Meet/ network / share information with other new heads	14
Bought provision for the head without affecting school budget	10
Time/ space for reflection	3
Mentoring	3
Clarified values/ philosophy	3
Understanding of leadership styles	2
One to one consultation	2
Other	13

Headlamp's impact

While a substantial majority agreed that Headlamp had impacted to a greater or lesser extent on both their own practice and their schools, slightly more heads agreed with the former premise than with the latter. A head who had also accessed NPQH did not feel that had any impact, while rating Headlamp highly. In general heads who had accessed both programmes described cumulative and differentiated benefits of each.

48 people described how Headlamp had impacted on their practice.

Ten people had gained greater knowledge of or insight into areas of leadership; others mentioned help with planning related to finance, strategy or vision (ten), the formation of networks (four), sharing ideas with heads in the same position (three), gaining confidence in their own decision making (three). The following issued were each mentioned by two people: gaining insights into basic requirements, working with governors, preparation for Ofsted, receiving support and advice, learning about LEA procedures, giving time for reflection in the first hectic months of headship, time and paper management.

One head complained that the programme purchased had been too primary focussed and another said that little of the course context had helped. A third who had accessed an LEA package declared it "totally irrelevant".

40 people commented on how Headlamp had impacted on their schools. 14 said that it had impacted through improvements to the head's efficiency, confidence or management skills or style. Others said that it had improved planning, had an impact on performance management, Ofsted preparation or results or the school development plan. Others mentioned school self-evaluation, the generation of new policies, target setting, staff development and vision statement.

c) LPSH

78 individuals, 24% of headteacher respondents, had undertaken LPSH. A former mainstream head, now a special school deputy, had also undertaken LPSH as a head

giving a total of 79. Ten had also accessed Headlamp funding but none were NPQH graduates

The gender balance in the LPSH only group was more or less equal but women outnumbered men by 40% in the Headlamp and LPSH group pointing to a higher take up of Headlamp by women.

Logically this group was slightly older than the other cohorts (table 10). All but one were aged over 40, with 39% over 50.

LPSH is available for heads with at least three years' experience in the role. All those who had also accessed Headlamp and 54% with LPSH only were in their first headship at the time of filling in the survey (table 11). The LPSH only cohort tended to have been in post longer, with one third having been in their current post for over eleven years. NPQH and Headlamp were not available when most of this group were preparing for headship or in their first two years in post.

The analysis by school type is shown in table 9. Despite the lack of government funding one head from an independent school and five from NMSS had undertaken the programme, one having accessed funding in a previous post in a maintained school.

Heads who were eligible for LPSH but did not undertake it gave the following reasons:

- In the relevant period NMSS and Independent schools were not funded (6)
- Lack of LEA funding (2)
- Time or workload (35)
- Not needed/ relevant (16)
- Committed to other courses (10)
- Age/ pre retirement (21)
- School or personal circumstances (8)
- Had no information (6)
- About to do the programme (22)
- Other (3).

Strengths of LPSH

Three respondents who ticked LPSH at question 14 did not answer Section E but are included in the following figures. This has some effect on the validity of the data. As in other evaluations respondents were overwhelmingly supportive of LPSH. When asked which aspects of LPSH had helped them with their role, it is worth noting that they cited generic features of the programme.

Table 18: Perceived strengths of LPSH

	Number of mentions
Quality time out of school to reflect, restructure key initiatives	26
Feedback from staff and parents/ 360° appraisal	22
Reassurance about leadership styles and information about characteristics and their impact on climate	21
Modelling tools for strategic thinking/ use of data/ prioritising/ school improvement/ team building	7
Extended networking	5
Greater self awareness/ self evaluation	9
Confidence building	5
The business partner: a different perspective	3
Materials and reading lists	3
Other	5

The impact of LPSH

In this survey 80% of respondents were confident about the positive impact on their own practice but less sure of the impact of LPSH on their school although still rating this at 72%:

Given the opportunity to specify how LPSH had impacted on their own practice and on their schools, respondents often gave similar answers to both questions, which is not surprising as LPSH is geared to identifying how the leader impacts on the school climate.

Approximately one third of the LPSH group mentioned reflection on their leadership styles or practice. This was by far the most frequently mentioned aspect of the impact of LPSH on practice. One former mainstream head had decided on a "professional change of direction" after LPSH, becoming a NMSS deputy.

Table 19: LPSH impact on practice	*N*
Reflection on leadership styles	22
More confidence in tackling school and LEA issues	8
Time management/ ability to prioritise	5

Clarified school development needs	4
Reflection on practice	3
Strategic thinking/ vision for the school	3
Improved planning/ target setting	3
Better delegation	2
Improved ability to support others in their leadership roles	2

Issues where LPSH was felt to have impacted on the school were closely linked to the above and like issues of practice were all generic. As one head said:

> "I really enjoyed LPSH which had a major impact on my analysis of situations and I enjoyed the generic aspect and mutual discussions."

Table 20: LPSH impact on the school

	N
Improved management/ leadership style sometimes linked to specific issues such as Literacy or Numeracy strategies	7
Restructuring of leadership and management/ roles/ accountabilities (6)	6
Head more receptive to staff needs therefore relationships improved	5
Improved action / development planning	4
Improved delegation	2

The only head to relate this impact in some way to his special school context said; "I felt empowered to restate the aims of the school to staff, parents and governors. New focus on (pupil) independence".

Perceptions of how the national programmes could be improved to suit the special school context [26]

Over one third of the NPQH group, one quarter of the Headlamp group and 10% of the LPSH group did not answer this question but, overall, there was an equal balance between those who felt they could have been improved and those who did not.

The most frequent criticism of all three programmes was of the mainstream focus which made much of the NPQH programme, in particular, irrelevant, according to some, for special schools. One NPQH respondent said: "Some mainstream tasks I've had to adapt - but that is life in Special Ed." Another complained: "Special school staff were just accommodated and not provided for."

[26] Survey mainly covered the period prior to the launch of the revised NPQH

Nine people indicated that they were the only special school candidate in their NPQH group, feeling isolated during discussions about practice. Three would have liked more SEN specialist tutors and three wanted more focus on EBD and SLD. Three more said that NPQH should be a forum for good practice in both special and mainstream schools and another complained that the residential focussed excessively on inclusion, for which his school already has good systems.

Those who praised specific aspects of NPQH were all deputies. They mentioned the revised ICT site, the opportunity to network, supportive tutors and the generic model.

Regarding Headlamp, the exclusively generic nature of provision was also the single largest issue.

Table 21: Views on how Headlamp could be improved

How Headlamp could be improved to suit the context	Number of Mentions
Too mainstream/ needed more insight into SEN issues	23
Modules of variable quality/ irrelevant	6
Insufficient special heads in group for identification and sharing of good practice	6
Difficult to access funding/ too many restrictions	4
Funding should extend into 3rd year	3
Would have liked a mentor (mainstream -1) (special –2)	3
Excessive time out of school	3
Too ad hoc. No help/ mentor available to construct training plan/ needs analysis	2
Should include monitoring and evaluation/ use of data in the special school context	2
More identification of individual needs at the start	2
Specific SEN training e.g. statutory requirements for annual reviews, managing all-age issues	2
More input on management issues e.g. budgeting, admin. Less on leadership theory.	2
Other	12

Of the 38 individuals who said that LPSH could be improved, 22 said that either they could not find common ground with the other mainstream heads, with primary, secondary and small schools all being described as having a different context or that they would have preferred to be with a group containing at least three special school heads or consisting entirely of special school heads. Reasons given include different staffing structures and all-age intake. One head commented, "It was sometimes difficult to find common ground with primary heads with four to ten staff when I have 62."

Despite this general appreciation of phase specific activities, LPSH respondents recognised explicitly that there are generic leadership or management issues common to all heads and said that they enjoyed working with mainstream, while at the same time stating a preference for a larger number of special school heads in the group. One said:

> "... I welcome the chance to have a range of perspectives but having other special school colleagues would also have been very interesting. I was the only special school head on my LPSH."

Only one respondent displayed real misgivings about LPSH saying: "LPSH does not seem to be worthwhile and is very expensive. Having said this the requirements of a special school headteacher provided by LPSH was (sic) very accurate....". It is assumed that this relates to the HayGroup model of excellence (table 1).

For all three programmes other suggestions were made about improvements not related to the special school context.

Most Valuable Professional Development Experience

To probe further into perceptions of generic versus context specific development, respondents were asked an open question about their most valuable professional development experience.

*Table 22: Most valuable professional development activity **

	Activity/	NPQH cohort	Headlamp cohort	LPSH cohort	No prog cohort
	N=	91	89	79	278
	Number of mentions				
National programmes	LPSH	DNA	6	38	DNA
	Headlamp	3	12	0	DNA
	NPQH	38	7	DNA	DNA
Experiential learning	On the job experience incl. in acting post, middle management, teaching	29	26	21	95
	Talking/ networking/ focus groups/ role models/residentials with peers[27]	15	20	12	67
	Working with an effective or ineffective head	20	16	8	48
	Mentoring or supervision by an experienced practitioner (incl. Chair)	9	5	8	26
	Own performance management/ appraisal	1	0	3	1
	Management (or other) experience outside school	2	1	3	4

[27] Mainly special but mainstream was mentioned several times

	Having a business partner/ industrial links	0	2	3	2
	Preparation for Ofsted inspection/ action plan	1	4	2	10
	Experience in a range of schools including mainstream	2	9	2	2
	Writing statements of SEN	0	1	1	0
	Work with outside agencies	1	1	0	5
	Whole school INSET	0	0	0	5
Other generic	Management course/s incl. Ind Soc or NVQ V	8	6	10	30
courses	Training as or being an Ofsted inspector	1	2	6	11
	Other leadership courses including those run by Hay/ Pacific Institute	5	2	4	6
	Investors in People	1	4	2	6
	Counselling course	0	0	2	0
	School Improvement courses/ projects	2	2	1	6
Academic	Masters degree or other further study	6	5	7	19
Study	OU course	1	3	0	1
	Reading/ keeping up to date	0	0	1	7
Specialist	Specialist training	2	1	0	8
	Special Schools leadership course[28]	1	0	0	0
	NAHT courses/ support	2	8	4	7
	Courses by NASS/ NAIMS (NMSS & Independent sector)	1	1	0	0
Other	Psychoanalysis	0	0	1	2
	Other	1	1	1	7

* 24 respondents feature in two cohorts and their answers feature in two columns.

87 of the NPQH cohort, 74 respondents in the Headlamp cohort and 71 respondents in the LPSH cohort answered this question. 13.5% of the Headlamp group, 42% of the NPQH group and 53.5% of the LPSH group rated the respective programme as the most or one of the most valuable professional development experiences they had undertaken.

As the NPQH group included deputies, with fewer opportunities to be outside school than heads, the emphasis differs slightly from the other cohorts. There was a good level of satisfaction with NPQH, particularly the compulsory module, despite reservations about the mainstream focus.

One respondent said:

> "LPSH course was the MOST USEFUL INSET I have accessed since my initial teacher training (1966-9?). Excellent teaching and learning style- components brought together aspects I know and extended theoretical background a little. Data useful." (sic)

Another said:

[28] Norham Centre for Leadership Studies, Oxford

> "Parts of LPSH offered (my) only opportunity for reflection. Other than two past appraisals".

The opportunity to reflect and also to network and share problems with other heads on the LPSH programme was quoted by several other respondents.

By contrast in the Headlamp cohort one Head of an SLD school in an embattled inner city area said:

> "... hard to pinpoint- it feels like I've had to scrabble around picking up bits of advice and some training while managing a school operating in an isolated and unsupported context."

In all groups great value is placed on "on the job learning", the lessons learned from working with good or bad heads or other experienced practitioners and the opportunities to meet and discuss with one's peers, whether from special or mainstream schools. As one respondent put it:

> "My experience as a deputy has been my most valuable asset- it provided me with an understanding of and an insight into the particular challenges of a special school which was very much lacking in NPQH."

Networking with special and mainstream colleagues also received a high number of mentions.

Professor John West-Burnham is the only individual to be named several times in all groups as providing memorable professional development, with John Yates also featuring to a lesser extent. Both provide generic leadership and management training, often but not exclusively, for the NAHT.

For those individuals who had not accessed any of the national training programmes the emphasis on "on the job experience", networking and meeting with special and mainstream colleagues, and the influence of mentors and colleague headteachers also predominated and was logically slightly more pronounced than for respondents who had undertaken national programmes. Nor had this group valued Higher Education courses in different proportions than groups who had undertaken national programmes. In short, the same kinds of activities were listed with the addition of some in school

experiences and local activities reflecting the focus of development undertaken by these respondents as middle managers. They did however ascribe more value to "*management* training" than those who had accessed national programmes.

As with other groups, this cohort greatly appreciated "Quality dialogue with other professionals with common focus." Therefore, leaving aside the issue of the national programmes and a focus on management rather than leadership, there was little qualitative difference between the views of this group and others on the value of professional development for shaping effective special school headship.

How Important Is Context Specific Training to Special School Leaders?

Respondents were asked to rate generic or phase (context) specific management or leadership training or development and specialist SEN training on a five point scale. The two tables below show distributions of highest and lowest ratings given by respondents across categories:

Table 23: The relative importance of generic, phase specific or specialist training by programme take up

Least important %	With national prog	No national prog	All
Generic management	9	18	14
Generic leadership	5	8	6
Context (phase) specific management	5	3	3
Context (phase) specific leadership	0	3	2
Specialist training	63	52	57
Unassigned or DK	18	16	17
Most important %			
Generic management	20	13	17
Generic leadership	35	23	29
Context (Phase) specific management	14	24	19
Context (Phase) specific leadership	21	25	23
Specialist training	4	7	5
Unassigned or DK	5	8	7

Table 24: The relative importance of generic, context specific or specialist training by role, gender, age and experience

Least important %	Heads	Deps	Male	Female	25-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51+	First post	Not first post
Generic management	13	15	15	13	9	12	17	12	14	14	14
Generic leadership	6	6	6	7	5	5	5	8	6.2	7	4
Context specific management	3	3	3	3	5	2	3	4	2.8	4	2
Context specific leadership	2	3	2	2	9	2	2	2	1	2	2
Specialist training	57	57	59	55	68	59	56	55	58	56	62
Unassigned or DK	18	16	15	20	5	19	17	19	18	18	17
Most important %											
Generic management	20	11	15	19	5	14	18	20	15	18	14
Generic leadership	31	24	27	30	14	29	29	25	34	27	34
Context specific management	15	25	22	16	23	17	19	22	17	19	22
Context specific leadership	19	29	24	22	50	31	24	19	20	24	19
Specialist training	6	5	5	5	9	2	8	5	4	6	4
Unassigned or DK	8	5	6	8	0	6	3	9	10	7	8

Generic or context specific?

Asked to rank development for generic or context specific management or leadership, and for the SEN specialism, one sixth did not ascribe a value to some or all of the variables but those who did were able to distinguish between leadership and management. Some respondents ticked boxes rather than apply the 1-5 scale and some only identified the one or two most important values. Some did not answer the question at all.

Differences of opinion can be detected in what special school leaders see as *more* important. What they see *as less* important is remarkably similar across categories. A majority (52%) saw leadership development as more important than management training (36%) although this response is weighted differently depending on career stage as described below.

The different ratings for generic or phase specific development, aggregating leadership and management courses, for respondents with (55% and 35%) or without national programmes (36% and 49%) were analysed using chi square. The value of χ^2 was found to be significant at the 0.001 level and so we can conclude that there is a significant difference between the views of respondents with or without national programmes on whether development should be generic or phase specific (Appendix 3). Therefore

attendance at the national programmes appears to impact on perceptions of whether professional development should be generic or context specific.

Taken overall the responses showed an almost equal balance between those who saw leadership and management as generic (46%) and therefore that training should be generic and those who thought they were context specific (42%). However most respondents did maintain that management in special schools is affected by certain context specific issues, listed below, which differ from mainstream settings. As one head said: "leadership is generic, but management is different in (the) range of operations present". The survey also shows that whether generic or context specific, the nature of leadership does not eliminate the need for special school leaders to have the opportunity to share common concerns and good practice related to their own phase. Powers, Rayner et al (2001) also suggested that practitioners greatly value both context specific training *and* contact with leaders in other phases but without any clear trend towards either generic or phase specific training being apparent.

Career stage and experience also seem to impact on whether leadership and management development should be viewed as context specific or generic. A majority of deputies see leadership and management as context specific while for heads the opposite is true. Table 24 shows how views are modified by experience and between the first and second leadership posts: from context specific to generic.

Being male also has a slight impact perhaps because more women seem to take up the programmes, as does working in the independent sector, where 18 out of 39 see their leadership and management as context specific, or in an SEBD school (35 from 72). Perhaps these groups are less likely to access national training and meet mainstream peers which accentuates their isolation, although for differing reasons.

Chapter 1 described how independent special schools receive no government funding for training despite their pupils being funded from the public purse. Heads in SEBD schools do meet together within their own association and many also seem to meet with mainstream as the proportion of SEBD leaders *not* accessing national training was not hugely different from respondents overall. By contrast 60% of respondents from EBD schools were male, compared to 49% of all respondents. Both official agencies and

critics of special schools do single out SEBD and/or independent provision in relation to quality issues (Alderson and Goodey, 1998, pp. 42, 57-9; HMCI, 1999).

Research by Rayner and Ribbins (1999, p. 315), Gardner (1997, p. 293) and HayGroup (2000) found that, while leadership is generic, some technical expertise and practical experience within the domain is necessary in order to have credibility and to exert influence over followers. A very small number of respondents did see training for the SEN specialism as the most important preparation for headship in a special school, a minority preference which appears to decrease even further with subsequent experience (table 24). Conversely training in their SEN specialism is overwhelmingly and consistently seen by special school leaders as the *least* important aspect for the leadership role. This accords with Goleman (1999) that specialist skills, knowledge and technical expertise are qualifications needed to get the job, but they do not impact on one's ability to do it well. It is generic emotional intelligence, the understanding of self and others, which forms the basis of effective leadership (op. cit.).

Leadership or management?

A majority of all groups, other than those with Headlamp, saw the development of leadership skills as more important than management. This included a majority of all deputies with or without NPQH.

In attempting to ascertain if attendance at the national programmes impacted on views about the relative importance of leadership and management, the different ratings for leadership and management development when generic or context specific programmes are aggregated, for respondents with or without national programmes, were analysed using chi square. The value of χ^2 was not found to be significant. We can conclude that there is no difference between the views of respondents with or without national programmes experience on their perceptions of the importance of leadership or management development programmes.

To conclude, the almost equal balance in perceptions of respondents overall about generic or context specific leadership development can also be found in other surveys (Powers, Rayner et al., 2001) and challenges views held by some authors that *all* special schools are self-segregated and overwhelmingly inward looking (Alderson and

Goodey, 1998, Ainscow 1991). This conclusion is further strengthened by the relative unimportance of specialist training in determining professional development needs for special school leaders once in post. This is particularly true where their leaders are accessing national training alongside mainstream colleagues although the programmes do not appear to impact on perceptions of the respective value of leadership or management.

Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from the survey reported in this chapter can be framed as the answers to two questions: what is distinctive about leadership in the context of the special school and do special school leaders feel that generic leadership development programmes meet their professional development needs?

With regard to the special school context, special school leaders find that both the internal and external contexts of their schools are distinctive in that they deal with more complexity, are more isolated and are subject to more uncertainty than mainstream schools. The wide range of phenomena and circumstances in which complexity, isolation and uncertainty are manifested are detailed above.

In relation to their professional development we found that 90% of special school leaders had prepared for their leadership role through various forms of experiential learning, study or training including in Higher Education. This contrasts with the findings of Powers, Rayner et al (2001) who found that 20% had undertaken no professional development. Special school leaders had also accessed generic courses other than the national programmes as part of their on-going professional development.

54% overall had accessed one or more of the three generic national programmes, in contrast to 15% in Powers' survey (op. cit.). However the numbers accessing national programmes in NMSS and independent special schools are very small indeed due to funding issues and lack of information. Despite being eligible for LPSH, if not NPQH or Headlamp, older heads were much less likely to have accessed a programme as were those who were longer in post, men or leaders of independent or SEBD schools but the reasons given for non attendance did not overtly include resistance to undertaking generic programmes. Instead there may be an issue of the marketing of the programmes not reaching or appealing to those groups (Powers, Rayner et al, 2001).

All those who had attended generic national programmes identified many helpful aspects often related to networking, systemic overview and generic management and leadership skills and knowledge and reported a largely positive impact both on their schools and on their own practice. Equally there was a very strong identification with the perception that the focus on mainstream in content or participation can also be unhelpful and even off-putting. Special school leaders can find the content of NPQH and Headlamp modules irrelevant, the mentors or trainers unversed in special school issues and the possibility of finding common ground and sharing good practice when all other participants are from the mainstream, remote.

Notwithstanding these reservations, which echo those in Powers and Rayner's (2001) study, the three national programmes feature highly as the most valuable professional development experienced by those who have attended them, with LPSH receiving the highest vote of confidence, consonant with other reviews (Parsons,Welch et al., 2000) and Headlamp the lowest. Respondents also value highly experiential or on the job learning, networking, mentoring or role modelling. Specialist training rated low in this respect.

When asked to rate context or phase specific leadership or management training and specialist training, the latter was also rated the least important by a very wide margin. There was an almost equal balance overall between generic (46%) and context specific development (42%) but those respondents who had undertaken national programmes rated generic professional development most highly while those who had not undertaken them rated context specific development most highly. We can conclude from this that the national programmes have had some impact on perceptions.

By contrast attendance at national programmes made no difference to whether leadership development was seen as more important than management training, with the former being more highly valued by both groups.

Thus we can conclude that special school leaders find generic professional development programmes are both welcome and helpful in developing their leadership and management skills and in facilitating networking with other heads from all sectors but that, while specialist SEN training is not seen as at all helpful in developing leadership,

leadership development programmes do need to include more opportunity to share learning and practice with other special school leaders and, where appropriate, more phase specific content in addition to but not instead of generic content.

In the final chapter these findings are compared with the answers to the research questions drawn from the literature review.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This final chapter briefly sums up how the study may contribute to greater understanding of the issues it addresses: what is distinctive in the special school context and do leaders of special schools feel that generic leadership development programmes are sufficient for their needs. It then offers some thoughts on the research carried out for the study, both how it may be advanced by further study and how it could have been improved. Some implications for my own professional activities and the wider professional context are explored. Finally, consideration is given to dissemination of the study and recommendations arising from this thesis are listed.

How the study advances knowledge

This section covers how the present study advances knowledge on what is distinctive in the special school context comparing findings with the survey with findings from the literature summarised in table 2; perceptions of generic or context specific leadership development by special school leaders and how these appear to be influenced by career stage.

a) What is distinctive in the special school context

Firstly, special schools have been largely ignored in recent literature (Ainscow and Fox, 2003). In particular leadership in special schools has been the subject of very few recent research studies and none with an equivalent sample covering heads and deputies, maintained, independent and non-maintained special schools in England (Rayner and Ribbins, 1999; HayGroup, 2000; Powers, Rayner et al 2001; Male and Male, 2001; Attfield and Williams, 2003). A survey of the links formed by special schools with mainstream schools received responses from two thirds of special schools in England and Wales (Fletcher-Campbell, 2001) but no other large study has looked at special schools and certainly not at their leadership. Earley, Evans et al (2002) surveyed the current state of maintained school leadership in England including special schools, but produced a report with a generic orientation. In tables 2 and 7 I have located specific leadership and management behaviours, knowledge and concerns in special schools as reported in the literature *and* shown in the survey hoping to identify what is distinctive about their context and also to inform the preparation of leaders in new types of inclusive mainstream and specialist provision.

Indeed, whether or not special schools have "special" aspects, the important issue of whether and what knowledge mainstream can learn from them to support inclusion also merits mention. Wang (1991) suggests that effective instructional practices from special and mainstream education be combined into a co-ordinated system (quoted in Ainscow, 1991 p. 7). Ainscow and Muncey found that successful inclusive mainstream schools had the following common features, which in terms of behaviours can relate to the HayGroup model of excellence for effective special school heads (2000 and 2002) (see also table 2):

- leadership committed to meeting all pupil needs
- staff confident in meeting individual needs
- a sense of optimism that all pupils can succeed
- support for individual staff members
- broad and balanced curriculum experiences for all children
- systematic monitoring and review procedures (quoted in Ainscow, 1991, p.4).

Further work needs to be done on the practical application of these findings within professional development programmes for both special school and mainstream leaders. This should be particularly useful at a time when the NCSL, under new leadership and with a new remit from the current Secretary of State for Education (Kelly, 2004) is again restructuring some of its programmes. Some recommendations are given towards the end of this chapter.

Secondly, there are theoretical issues. Length restrictions precluded detailed analysis of critical theory around special schools, but many current philosophical approaches tend to be critical of them or of the system which necessitates them as a remedial response to perceived "differences" (Slee, 1991; Tomlinson, 2001; Alderson and Goodey, 1998). By contrast it is possible to suggest that mainstream school leaders in inclusive schools could have something to learn from special school heads. Ainscow (1991) has worried that special educators do not interest themselves in disciplines not directly related to their work but the results of this study suggest that this is not the case for a very significant number of special school heads who rate generic leadership development much higher than specialist training. Their view appears to be that the latter is needed as a threshold qualification, but not as a determinant of effective leadership concurring

with Goleman (1999) and Gardner (1997). Thus two further outcomes of this thesis could be to gainsay some popular myths about special schools and to reduce their isolation by drawing them further into the discourses of inclusion and leadership.

In chapter 2, characteristics of the special school context taken from the literature were laid out in tabular form under headings derived from Hersey and Blanchard's model of situational leadership: the qualities of the leader, the nature of the task and the maturity of the followers. These headings can also define the range of professional knowledge needed by leaders and other stakeholders in the special school context. This survey sought to demonstrate what respondents thought was important in their context by asking how they measured their impact as leaders and what were their major professional concerns. Their answers add to existing knowledge of leadership in the current special school context (table 7).

The qualities of the leader

This section of table 2 defined attributes of special school leaders mentioned in the literature: their emotional intelligence, values, drive for improvement, commitment to inclusion and relationships.

Comparing the model in table 2 with the survey findings it is noticeable that the questionnaire did not elicit information about leaders of special schools other than factual attributes such as age, gender and professional experience. The only explicit correlation relates to the value of experience in mainstream as a pre-requisite of special school leadership (Rayner and Ribbins, 1999). 79% of respondents in this survey had some experience in mainstream, sometimes of many years and many others had experience outside schools. 29% had only worked in special schools. As a group they are highly qualified often holding several qualifications and are also enthusiastic about attending national professional development events. This aspect had not featured strongly in the literature to date. Although one could speculate that care for their staff, one of the attributes derived from the literature, is inferred by certain of their major professional concerns such as the desire to relieve teacher stress or to provide appropriate training (table 7), this is not explicit elsewhere in the findings and no other explicit conclusions can be drawn from my data that cast light on the qualities of the leaders, their leadership styles nor their values nor were these the prime focus of the

survey. Such information could more usefully be derived from other sources, in particular, and most easily, an aggregation of LPSH data or of Ofsted findings.

The HayGroup model used in LPSH (2000 and 2002) relies heavily on emotional intelligence, not measured by the questionnaire, although at least one respondent, the male head of an EBD school, demonstrated admirable but poignant self-awareness: “I'm not good as a leader in most areas. I'm possibly too much of a diplomat. Not assertive enough due to understanding of staff's own lack of confidence in themselves.” In this respect their stated preference for LPSH and other generic programmes rather than specialist training may denote a willingness to reflect on their own personal styles and behaviours as leaders.

Nor was the questionnaire designed to elicit information about the leaders' values although these may be implicit in their articulation of major concerns (table 7) and perceptions of professional development. It may be more appropriate to assert that these concerns and perceptions demonstrate the extent to which they feel their values are compromised by the current climate of uncertainty and hostility surrounding special schools and by expressed levels of stress engendered by that climate.

In the same way a drive for improvement could be shown in the multiple ways by which they measure their impact, which are mainly driven by pupil progress in academic or social development, their pride in outside accreditation such as School Achievement Award, beacon status, IIP, Chartermark, Quality Mark and Sportsmark or British Quality Foundation and also by their articulation of aspects which they value in the national programmes. This included strategic thinking and development of personal vision. As the needs of their pupil populations become more complex special school leaders want to ensure that they can recruit and train qualified staff in order to deploy their skills to meet different pupil needs. School improvement, teaching and learning, raising standards, post 16 care and progression after their pupils leave them as well as equal opportunities for pupils within wider society also figured as major professional concerns.

Special school leaders in this survey showed themselves to be committed to inclusion albeit deeply troubled by uncertainties in the political agenda and the lack of an agreed definition. They are suspicious of local and central government policy regarding

inclusion. This suspicion is not driven by self interest but by a desire to ensure that the most vulnerable children receive the best possible provision. Thus some expressed anxieties about the lack of early identification of pupil needs to inform appropriate placements. Most placed very high value on working with mainstream heads in professional development and networking activities, but were also frustrated by the practical difficulties of working with mainstream schools.

It is not possible to measure networking skills via the findings of a survey but respondents did show a high regard for networking in that they can measure their impact as leaders, through feedback from other agencies, critical friends etc. They also emphasised the great extent to which they value networking opportunities, with other special schools and with the mainstream sector. This includes being able to visit other schools, see models of good practice and discuss solutions to common problems. Although many respondents lamented the lack of other special school heads in their groups on all programmes, this does not prevent them from seeing networking in NPQH, Headlamp and LPSH as a strength. In third place after on the job learning and the national programmes, networking was given as the most valuable professional development activity by 20% of respondents, and this value increases for those who do not have national programmes. Many also mentioned the special school networks to which they belong, in NAHT, NASS, NAIMS and specialist groups such as the National Autistic Society. Networks can function as professional learning communities and networking and mentoring of course not only facilitate the transmission of professional knowledge and best practice but also counter the huge isolation felt by special school leaders from other parts of the education system (table 22). Networking by special school leaders is therefore not due to their wanting exclusively phase specific training, nor because they are "clannish" or "famous among themselves" as one respondent put it.

Like networking, mentoring aids adult learning through conversation and is a means of focusing learning in the specific context (Shaw, 1995; McIntyre, Hagger et al 1993; Furlong and Maynard, 1995; Wilkin, 1992). Both afford the opportunity to reflect on and articulate practice (Barth, 1991) and build and share knowledge (Fullan, 2001). Having a senior practitioner as mentor or a role model were seen as valuable professional development activities (table 22). Working with an ineffective or effective colleague, work shadowing or having a mentor were equally seen as formative

experiences by respondents (table 8) as Rayner and Ribbins (1999) also found and 19% of my survey group reported having or being a mentor as part of their on going professional development.

The Institute of Management and Demos looking at organisational leadership in a study for the DfES and Department for Trade and Industry also found that mentoring was one of the most effective development methods for leaders (Horne and Jones, 2001). Kirkham, like Horne and Jones, has pointed out that a mentoring relationship implicitly recognises the uniqueness of the individual's position (Kirkham, 1999) while lamenting the lack of expert knowledge among Headlamp providers.

Authors quoted in table 2 ascribed the importance of relationships to special school leaders, particularly in relation to understanding the individual child as well as the need for good people management skills and to foster positive relationships with other stakeholders (Rayner and Ribbins, 1999; HayGroup, 2000; Male and Male 2001, Powers, Rayner et al., 2001; Burnett, 2003, 2005). In this survey many respondents also said that they measured their impact via the quality of their relationships and spoke of supporting parents and teachers in times of stress. Chapter 4 showed in some detail how special schools have more compound relationships than mainstream schools and how the frequency and depth of these liaison relationships both inside and outside school, the numbers of stakeholders with varying or contradictory perspectives on specialist provision and the demands these place on schools exceed those experienced by mainstream heads.

The nature of the task

The literature presented the following particular aspects of the nature of the task for special school leaders: school size, the management of change in a climate of uncertainty and complexity, feelings of isolation, multi agency working, specialist SEN knowledge, curriculum knowledge and resourcing issues.

While Rayner and Ribbins (1999) and Porter, Lacey et al. (2002) see special schools as small schools in terms of pupil numbers, HayGroup (2000) do not agree. In LPSH special schools are not classed as small schools due to large staff numbers. Respondents to my survey repeatedly objected to being classed as leaders of small schools, referring

to their large and multi-disciplinary staff groups. One head was quoted: "It was sometimes difficult to find common ground with primary heads with 4-10 staff when I have 62."

Issues related to the management of change, complexity and uncertainty are shown in the findings as part of the distinctive nature of special schools and are discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and so are not repeated here. These issues far surpass those experienced by mainstream schools. Uncertainty was also expressed in the survey in terms of leaders struggling to find meaning in current discourse on special education, not knowing the extent of change or of having change imposed upon them by central or local government (table 7). Leaders also spoke of their worries about the number, range and implementation of government initiatives which did not easily fit the special school context and which they were obliged to modify to meet their needs. Some spoke of always being an "afterthought" At the time of the survey target setting, performance management, benchmarking, modifications to the curriculum and the literacy and numeracy strategies were all major issues especially for schools providing for children with severe learning difficulties.

Chapter 4 also discussed the significant extent to which special school leaders experience feelings of isolation in multiple ways including from the LEA, other schools especially mainstream schools and during professional development activities. One striking quotation, already mentioned in chapter 4, about NPQH was: "Throughout my training the group was split into "primary", "secondary" and "What shall we do with George?"" Feelings of isolation are particularly striking in the case of NMSS and independent schools, who are educating children at the far end of the specialist spectrum often very successfully, as shown by DfES value added figures, and funded by the public purse, but virtually excluded from all activities open to maintained special schools. Having to cope with this isolation does corroborate the resilience which special school leaders were found to possess in the HayGroup research.

The literature referred to multi-agency working as a distinctive feature of the special school context and again the findings of this survey demonstrated the extent to which multi agency working is given as a major professional concern (table 7). Special schools depend heavily on a wide range of other agencies, as shown in chapter 4, in order to meet complex pupil needs but successful multi-agency working is hard to

achieve and government has attempted to address what one respondent called "a lack of joined up thinking" in its "Every Child Matters" agenda (DfES, 2003b).

Self evidently specialist SEN knowledge is part of the professional knowledge required to work in special schools and increasingly will become important in the mainstream as the inclusion agenda progresses, but special school leaders valued it only as a threshold qualification and not as a determinant of success. Porter, Lacey et al. (2002) referred to "a tradition in some (schools) of idiosyncratic pedagogic and therapeutic methods". There was no evidence to support this value judgement in the survey.

Rayner and Ribbins (1999, p. 315) found a "mismatch between need and resource to provide for individual pupils." This was echoed by respondents to the survey as a major concern. 20% mentioned fears about the lack of resource to make inclusion work: to support, train and prepare staff for change and for the growing complexity of the pupil population. Special education is logically very expensive as it deals with complex and labour intensive care, education and therapy for children with multiple needs, often requiring 24 hour care. Special school leaders are not alone in feeling that in some quarters the inclusion agenda is being used as an exercise to cut costs (Croll and Moses, 1999).

Table 2 referred to the distinctive nature of curriculum knowledge in special schools including the 24 hour curriculum, the need for extensive modifications to government initiatives, to train staff and the nature of multi-tasking in special schools. All these issues found significant echoes in my survey. The subject of teaching competence also arose but in the form of worries about an ageing teaching force, the lack of suitably qualified staff and the disappearance of specialist initial and in-service training.

The followers

It is difficult to ascertain information about the maturity of staff groups, in other words how well they perform or how far they are "on board" from this study. That would be more relevant when considering leadership in individual schools. However it was possible to define the nature of staff groups for which special school leaders must adapt their leadership style in order to achieve success for their schools and their pupils. Both the literature and the survey describe multidisciplinary staff groups including teachers,

para-professionals, care staff, therapists and health care professionals. Often teachers are the smallest staff group and sometimes other professionals working in the school are employed or line managed by agencies other than the headteacher. This is a clear difference from leadership in mainstream schools and also has an impact on the professional knowledge needed in special schools which relates to issues of education, care and therapy not found in the mainstream.

b) Perceptions of generic or context specific leadership development by special school leaders

The literature review described tensions between positivist and interpretative stances by some academics in relation to the study of school leadership and the provision of school leadership development programmes.

Other authors see little value in adopting an "either/ or" position (Leithwood, Jantzi et al, 1999; Bush and Glover, 2003) seeing a leadership continuum or a spectrum, including managerial leadership, rather than a polarity between leadership and managerialism. This would also appear to be the perspective of the school leaders in my survey.

Although some authors strongly criticise the national school leadership programmes as being rational, centrally prescribed, derived from business models and ignoring context, practitioners can clearly be seen to value the programmes highly. For instance HayGroup's work (2000 and 2002), sometimes criticised on the basis of their commercial status, perhaps unfairly (Male, 2000; Crawford, 2000), has not previously been subjected to detailed analysis against other theories. This thesis has aimed to show how it does not fit neatly into Grace's "policy science" definition and others have shown how problematic it can be to construct rigid boundaries between different epistemological traditions (Whitty, Power et al., op. cit1998).

While the survey findings did not prove that a majority of leaders in special schools find generic programmes sufficient for their needs with overall results in tables 23 and 24 almost equally balanced between generic and context specific professional development activities, it did show that they value the programmes and that at least half the respondents are happy to be included in generic programmes placing high value on

meeting with mainstream colleagues on these programmes. This concurs with the findings of Attfield and Williams (2003) in their much smaller study and with the views expressed by Fullan (2004, 2005) and Fink (2005) on the need to develop holistic, systemic leadership for a sustainable education system rather than a reductionist, site based leadership. However the balance is weighted differently between respondents with experience of generic programmes who were largely in favour and those who had not attended national programmes, who were more sceptical. Consonant with studies by Powers, Rayner et al (2001) and Male and Male (2001) respondents also wanted to see the generic programmes supplemented by additional modules or context specific content. What this study also identified was how strongly special school leaders object to being the only leader from their sector in a particular programme, a view also expressed by HMI (2002, p. 9). This has real implications for planners of new or revised development programmes intending to provide professional learning communities, action learning sets, coaching, mentoring, networking and other experiential activities.

When comparing leadership development with management training, special school leaders in this study were substantially in favour of the former as well as dismissive of the value of specialist training in developing leadership.

Stages of leadership

Theories about phases of leadership (Day and Bakioglu, 1996; Weindling, 1999; Rayner and Ribbins, 1999) state that the views, behaviours and needs of school leaders change over time. The national leadership development framework also identified five career stages for school leaders (NCSL, 2001).

There was evidence in the survey of views about professional development changing over time. While deputies and aspiring and new heads and those who have not undertaken national training place great value on management training particularly in relation to current government initiatives (tables 22, 23, and 24), the positive response to LPSH shows the extent to which longer serving heads find leadership development more useful. The relation of preferred training type to career stage and to current initiatives was also a finding of Powers, Rayner et al (op. cit., 110).

Phase specific issues seem to become less important with experience (tables 23 and 24) as heads become more practiced in management and administration or have learnt to delegate and can concentrate on the generic nature of their leadership role, especially where they are accessing LPSH. Of course, this finding will not be unique to special school heads.

Critical evaluation of the research

With hindsight, several potential problems can be identified in relation to this study which illustrate either my own learning or issues for further study.

Chapter 3 addressed the issue of possible bias in particular that due to my own professional interests. In addition, my professional involvement with HayGroup, with LPSH and with Headlamp and HIP means that my analysis of HayGroup's work and of the national programmes is not disinterested. HayGroup are criticised for their commercial interest (Male, 2000). On the one hand HayGroup themselves have had a financial interest in the research and the production of the models and continue to maintain the database for LPSH. On the other hand, it can be argued that the most distinguished academic institutions also carry out research commissioned and funded by government or the private sector and cannot claim to be disinterested in relation to those studies (May, 1997, p.45). Nor can we claim that the HayGroup research is not founded on sound empirical and theoretical bases. My interest lies with practice and HayGroup's well constructed models appeal to me as much as to the vast majority of headteachers who are introduced to them.

It is also possible to question the methods employed. For many scholars, such as Greenfield (1993), the use of a questionnaire, part of a "scientific" paradigm to study social institutions is anathema. I chose the breadth of a larger sample using this method rather than the depth of richer data using interviews. Follow up interviews were originally planned to enable greater depth as well as breadth but in the event this proved over-ambitious. Further study could follow up some of the unresolved questions raised e.g. around gender, independent schools and take up figures. It should also be both simple and interesting to compare the figures in this study with databases held by the DfES or the NCSL which were not made available to me, if they exist at all.

This survey did not seek the pupil or parent view, which would have been interesting in relation to special school leadership and could be a topic for further research.

Mixed method analysis was appropriate to the mainly positivistic data supplemented with qualitative answers to open ended questions. Basic quantitative counts were allowed by NVivo. Trends can be detected by a visual examination of most of the numerical data in Chapter 4, but a researcher more confident in the use of statistics may have carried out more rigorous tests of statistical significance than here although other major quantitative studies exist which also employ only the most basic statistical tools (Earley, Evans et al. 2002).

Problems with the questionnaire

These related to administrative issues as well as content and validity. I did not ascribe a number to the postal questionnaires and thirty were returned with no identifiers. This was only a problem when selecting schools for the follow up mailing. A few recipients complained that they had had two mailings, which then enabled me to identify their questionnaire.

Thirty two people returned incomplete questionnaires which lack of time prevented me from following up. Omissions could be inadvertent or deliberate due to time constraints or unclear instructions. Time cannot be the only reason, as many gave very full answers elsewhere and one NPQH graduate deeply critical of the programme sent back two separate incomplete questionnaires.

Efforts were made to achieve clarity and objectivity in the questionnaire but problems were not entirely eliminated. For instance faced with a table for pupil numbers some people ticked boxes instead of providing numbers rendering it impossible to compare school sizes therefore this was excluded from the analysis. Other questions proved to be redundant because insufficient numbers gave clear answers. This applies to questions about secondary specialisms and the dates and providers of national programmes and NPQH conferences. Much of this could be of interest but none of these data were used. Another question on what the NCSL should offer to all school leaders did not yield data which supported the research questions and so the results were not used in the report. In fact more data were collected than could be used here and are

available for other projects. Also question 20 about what could the NCSL offer to all school leaders did not, with hindsight, relate to the research questions and so the data were omitted. As predicted by May (1997) and Gilbert (1993, p.135) hypothetical questions such as question 20 elicited hypothetical answers. May says that people shrug and say: "Who knows?" and this proved to be true in many cases. Some respondents actually answered thus: "??", as they also did with question 21.

Although the pilot presented no problem with this question, one sixth of survey respondents found it difficult and instead of giving the ranking 1-5, ticked one or two boxes only. The use of an attitude scale for this question where an opinion was sought, was intended to reduce the degree of subjectivity and the possibility of errors of interpretation by the respondents and the coder but this turned to be unhelpful for some respondents. It may have been easier to ask "Which of these do you consider a) most important and b) least important for the professional development of special school leaders?" but that would not overcome the problem introduced by employing potentially elusive terms such as "leadership", "management", "phase specific" and "generic" as if they were neutrally descriptive. In an interview where probing is possible, I might have been able to clarify and allow for other factors which influence opinions. Alternatively in the questionnaire I could have asked respondents to comment on a series of statements relevant to the concepts in order to provide multiple indicators and check validity (Gilbert, 1993, p.120).

There was some duplication in the responses to questions about how the programmes had helped the respondent in their role (i.e. what aspects of the programmes were helpful) and how it had impacted on their practice (i.e. what did they now do differently) and on their school. Also over one third of NPQH applicants, including 40% of the deputies, did not answer. One or two respondents queried the meaning of "Could NPQH (Headlamp/LPSH) have been improved to suit your context?" Again, these were hypothetical questions and using such questions again would require careful consideration. Some questions also proved ambiguous for a small number of respondents. Question 19 has been quoted in this context.

When answering open ended questions some respondents used words included in checklists earlier in the questionnaire, such as "work shadowing" which left a lingering

doubt as to how far I had innocently introduced concepts which otherwise may not have been used spontaneously.

In the presentation of the data in Chapter 4 it proved difficult to strike a balance between the possibly excessive use of tables and the less clear use of narrative. Any decisions which were made in this respect were influenced by considerations of the need to complete in less than 40000 words.

Professional implications

In 2002 Baroness Ashton, a Minister in the DfES, set up a working group of which I was a member, to examine and consult on the future role of special schools within an inclusive framework and also to consider, *inter alia*, professional development issues. The findings of this study were provided to the DFES and influenced the report of the working group (DfES, 2003a). Subsequently, the findings continued to be of much use to me, and to other panel members, in this thesis as with other aspects of my work, as an LPSH trainer, an adviser to maintained special schools and as Chief Executive of NASS. In this latter role I organised professional development for school leaders in the non-maintained and independent sectors, lobbied for resources for the schools and represented them to central and local government in order to influence policy. A strategic objective of NASS is to extend our networks to maintained special schools and this project has informed that endeavour. It also helped us to identify topics for research across the sector such as on standardised measures of pupil outcomes for children with complex and multiple needs. On a purely practical level the database of special schools compiled when planning the survey also found a further use in building networks between maintained, non maintained and independent special schools.

In terms of the wider professional context, the findings were also made available to the former Director of Programmes at the NSCL and have informed decisions to ensure that members of the smaller phase groups are clustered in LPSH programmes. Any further use of the findings as a sound evidence base by NCSL to inform professional development for all school leaders and most especially for special school leaders and by DfES when looking at the future role of the special school could be of benefit to the wider profession.

Dissemination

One way of checking the validity and reliability of data is by trying to ascertain if the people studied find the account produced to be true, the inferences logical and of high utility. Before this report was completed, the findings were shared with several special school heads and deputies, many of them respondents to the survey. Some read the survey findings and conclusions and others attended a presentation at the London Leadership Centre in May 2002. All those involved said that they found the data and the conclusions accurate, convincing and useful.

Leaving aside the issue of possible publication of much of this thesis either in book form or articles for relevant journals, an option which will be pursued, wider dissemination is assured in several ways using a research brief which summarises this report:

1. the study was part financed by the London Leadership Centre for use by that institution and by the NCSL;
2. the findings were used by the DfES working group on the Future Role of the Special School;
3. A summary of the findings were published in the Autumn 2002 edition of "Leading Edge", the journal of the London Leadership Centre;
4. the findings were disseminated to the Non-Maintained and Independent sectors at NASS Conferences and workshops.

Summary of Recommendations

The 2004 remit letter to the NCSL (Kelly, 2004) requested a thorough evidence based review of national programmes and these recommendations might be useful in informing that review.

Further research

- Research should be carried out to identify groups which are under-represented in national programmes and reasons for non take up to inform future marketing
- Whether or not special schools have "special" aspects, the issue of what mainstream needs to learn from them to support inclusion merits further study

- The question of whether SEBD and independent schools appear to be less outward looking and if so why merits further research as does the gender issue, particularly in relation to HIP (i.e. why do more females than males access the programme?)

Professional development

- Leaders in all categories of special school should be able to access national development programmes
- Funding mechanisms should not exclude any group of special school leader from professional development activities. Pupils in all types of special school are publicly funded and this differentiates independent special schools from other independent schools.
- A major aim of professional development for special school (and mainstream) leaders should be to support and prepare them for transformational leadership and the management of change
- Professional development should enable special school leaders to meet mainstream peers *and* other special colleagues, including visiting their schools in order to reduce isolation.
- The NCSL should provide opportunities for networking locally where possible, regionally and nationally with special *and* mainstream colleagues as part of the three programmes and also for special school colleagues not on the programmes
- The broadly generic nature of the programmes particularly LPSH should be maintained
- Additional and specific special school management issues should be addressed in NPQH and HIP using residentials or targeted modules offered nationally to achieve economies of scale. This could include: meeting the needs of increasingly complex pupil populations, leading different types of provision including residential; the demands of all age schools; leading multi-disciplinary teams ; benchmarking, data collection and target setting for schools which are statistically isolated; input on multi- tasking management roles; multi -agency working; training in behaviour management and physical intervention; training on specific legal issues. There should be input on specific initiatives which have a distinct emphasis in special schools or for children with SEN e.g. the literacy and numeracy strategies; Key Stage 3 strategy; monitoring and evaluation;

training on issues related to SEN specialisms. These topics would also be useful in preparing leaders of inclusive mainstream schools.

- Restrictions on how HIP funding can be spent should be eased
- Providers should recruit more mentors, trainers and assessors with recent SEN expertise
- The NCSL should recruit consultant heads with recent SEN expertise
- The NCSL should take positive action to ensure that targeted groups for the programmes have more than one special school participant (by starring certain programmes/ courses when the calendar is published) in order to form a referent group.

Policy

- The work carried out on the future role of special schools within an inclusive system should be completed and should inform professional development as defined above
- The implications for special schools should not be an afterthought when planning and introducing curricular and other initiatives.
- There should be support for transformational leadership, development of vision or management of change related to new roles for special schools within inclusion or how the revised SEN Code of Practice relates to them;

Conclusion

This study has contributed a great deal to my own learning. Not least my own reading on professional, theoretical and research issues over the ten year period of degree studies and the two years in which I carried out the research described herein has been illuminating and useful, not just in terms of knowledge required for my doctoral studies but also for my professional work. On the practical, professional side I have also learnt new skills by becoming more familiar with computer assisted research tools for data analysis and the construction of bibliographies.

On the theoretical side I have learnt a great deal about research methodology and epistemology which has made me very aware of views other than my own, especially in the key areas of leadership and special schooling which I have chosen to study. I have also learnt the value of objective presentation and assimilation of both fact and theory.

Most significantly I have learnt a very great deal about special schools and their leaders with whom I have worked on a daily basis and have a better understanding of the context in which they work.

Above all I would like to acknowledge the contributions of all those special school heads and deputies who dedicated precious time to answer my questions and to thank my supervisors, Professor Geoff Whitty and Dr. Marianne Coleman for guiding me through this journey and for contributing so much to my learning.

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APPENDICES

1 Questionnaire for special school leaders
2A NVivo document set listing
2B NVivo node listing
2C Document attributes
2D Model, node relation to document attributes in data analysis
3 Chi square tests on data in table 26. Most important ratings for respondents with or without national programmes,
   a) generic or phase specific programmes;
   b) leadership or management programmes.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire for leaders in special schools

Section A. Personal details

1. Name,

2. Gender, *Please tick* M ☐ F ☐

3. Age, *Please tick where appropriate*

25-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51+

4. Name and address of present school and contact number,

5. Position, *Please tick where appropriate*

Head	Deputy

6a. Type of school, *Please tick where appropriate*

Community	
Foundation	
Voluntary	
Non-Maintained	
Independent Approved	
Independent (other)	

6b. Main area of SEN catered for ______________________________

6c. Other needs catered for ______________________________

6d. Religious denomination of school *(if any)* ____________________

7. Provision for pupils, *Please enter pupil numbers. You may use more than one box.*

	Early Years Pupil numbers	**Primary** Pupil numbers	**Secondary** Pupil numbers	**Tertiary** Pupil numbers	**All through** Pupil numbers
Day					
Residential Weekly					
Residential termly					
Residential/52 weeks					

Section B, Experience, training and qualifications

8. Years in current post, *please tick*

0-2	3-5	6-10	11 or more

9. Is this post your, *Please tick where appropriate*

	Yes	No
First headship?		
First deputy headship ?		

10. Number of years in previous post, *Please tick where appropriate*

0-2	3-5	6-10	11 or more

11a. How did you prepare yourself for headship/ deputy headship?
You may tick more than one box

Period as deputy	Workshadowing	Experience in mainstream
Reading	Had a mentor	Experience outside schools
Academic study	Training	
No relevant preparation	Other experience (please specify),	

Comments____

11b. Please specify number of years' experience in mainstream, special schools or outside schools (including as an LEA officer or in a support service),

Mainstream ______________________________
Special schools ______________________________
Outside schools ______________________________

12. If you ever worked outside schools *please tick/ specify your role*,

Sector	**Role**
LEA officer	
LEA central or support service	
HE	
Private sector	
Other	

13. Qualifications, *You may tick more than one box*

First degree	
Further degree/s	
PGCE or Cert (ed.)	
Further advanced course	
Specialist qualification	
Mandatory qualification	
Other	

Please specify ....

14. Have you accessed any of the following national programmes?
You may tick more than one box

NPQH	
Headlamp	
LPSH	

15. If you are eligible for NPQH, Headlamp or LPSH but have not yet accessed them, why not?

	Eligible *Please tick*	Accessed? *Please tick*	Why not?
NPQH			
Headlamp			
LPSH			

16 Have you had any other training for leadership and management?
(Please specify)

LEA Course	
Mentoring	
HE course	
HMI course	
Other	

17. What activities might have been added to your training to make this more effective in preparing you for your present role?

18. Please state briefly what, in your opinion, has been the most useful or valuable training or professional experience to date in shaping your effectiveness as a school leader.

19. How do you measure your success/impact as a special school leader?

20. What should the National College for School Leadership offer to *all* school leaders?

21. What is most important in professional development for special school leaders?

Please rank the following statements in order of importance, with 1 being the most important,

Generic headship management training	
Generic headship leadership development	
Specific special school management training	
Specific special school leadership development	

Training for your specialism	

22. What current issues are of major professional concern for you as a special school leader?

23. Do you have any further observations to make about training and / or the role of special school leaders?

(If you have not undertaken NPQH, Headlamp or LPSH please go to question 43)

<u>Section C NPQH</u>
(Please complete this section only if you have undertaken the NPQH)

24. Date started the Programme

25. Date graduated

26. Name of provider

27. Did you attend one of the residentials for special school candidates in 1999/2000? *(please tick as appropriate)*

	1999 conference	2000 conference
Yes		
No		

28. In what specific ways has NPQH assisted you in your role?

29. Did NPQH improve your practice? *Please tick one box*

A great deal	To some extent	Don't know	Hardly at all	Not at all

(*Please specify how*)____

____

30. Did it impact on your school? *Please tick one box*

A great deal	To some extent	Don't know	Hardly at all	Not at all

(*Please specify how*)____

____

31. Could it have been improved to suit your context?
Please tick

Yes	
No	

(*Please specify how*)____

____

Please go to Question 43.

Section D Headlamp
(Please complete this section only if you have accessed Headlamp funding)

32. How did you spend the funding? (*Please specify providers*)

33. In what ways did Headlamp assist you in your role?

34. Did it improve your practice? *Please tick one box*

A great deal	To some extent	Don't know	Hardly at all	Not at all

(*Please specify how*)____

____

35. Did it impact on your school? *Please tick one box*

A great deal	To some extent	Don't know	Hardly at all	Not at all

(*Please specify how*)____

____

36. Could it have been improved to suit your context?
Please tick

Yes	
No	

(*Please specify how*)____

____

Please go to Question 43

Section E LPSH
(Please complete this section only if you have undertaken the LPSH)

37. Date on which you attended the 4 day workshop.

38. Name of provider.

39. In what ways did LPSH assist you in your role?

40. Did it improve your practice? *Please tick one box*

A great deal	To some extent	Don't know	Hardly at all	Not at all

(*Please specify how*)____

____

41. Did it impact on your school? *Please tick one box*

A great deal	To some extent	Don't know	Hardly at all	Not at all

(*Please specify how*)____

____

42. Could it have been improved to suit your context?
Please tick

Yes	
No	

(*Please specify how*)____

____

43. Please add any further comment you wish to make.

Thank you for your time. Please return using the enclosed SAE to Rowie Shaw, 41 Durant Street, London E2 7BP by July 16th 2001

Appendix 2A

NVivo revision 1.1.127 **Licensee, Rowie Shaw**

Project, Survey **User,** Rowie Shaw **Date,** 10/08/02 - 15,12,11

DOCUMENT SET LISTING

Document Sets, 39

1 Deputies with NPQH
2 Deputies without NPQH
3 Deputies Headlamp
4 Heads with LPSH only
5 Heads-None
6 Heads with LPSH & Headlamp
7 All Headlamp
8 All LPSH
9 Memos
10 NPQH-Heads
11 Heads NPQH & Headlamp
12 Headlamp only
13 Heads NPQH only
14 All NPQH
15 Not stated
16 DeputiesLPSH
17 Heads
18 NPQH only
19 Incomplete papers
20 Deputies
21 Heads female
22 Deputies-female
23 No relevant preparation
24 Non memo
25 Not access Headlamp
26 All male
27 All female
28 25-35
29 36-40
30 41-45
31 46-50
32 51+
33 Not first post
34 First post
35 No national prog
36 Phase specific
37 With national prog
38 EBD
39 No further study
40 Working Set

NVivo revision 1.1.127 **Licensee,** **Rowie Shaw**

Project, Survey **User,** Rowie Shaw **Date,** 10/08/02 - 15,10,36

NODE LISTING

Nodes in Set, All Nodes
Created, 15/06/01 - 19,38,56
Modified, 15/06/01 - 19,38,56
Number of Nodes, 80

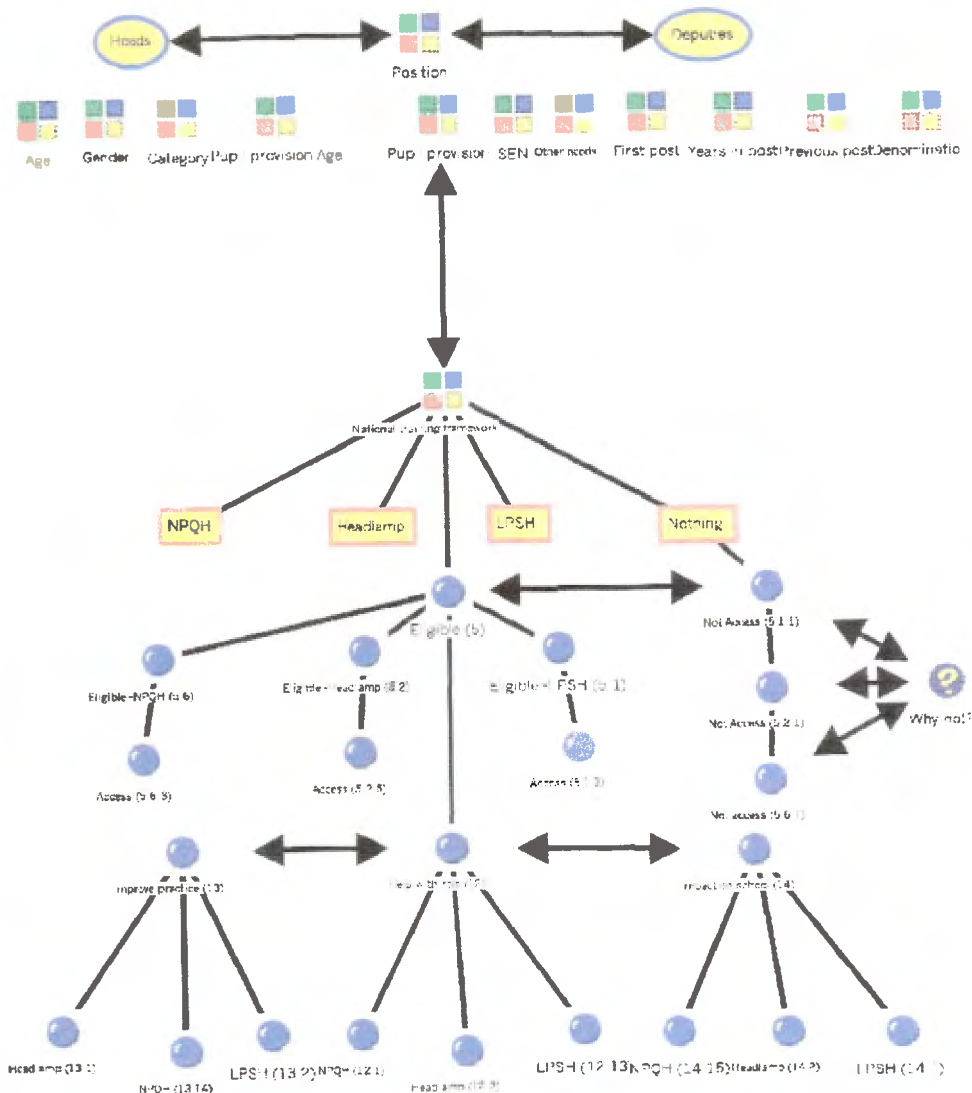
1 Special schools not special
2 What makes special schools special?
3 (1) /Preparation
4 (1 1) /Preparation/Workshadowing
5 (1 2) /Preparation/Mainstream
6 (1 3) /Preparation/Deputy Headship
7 (1 4) /Preparation/Reading
8 (1 5) /Preparation/having a mentor
9 (1 6) /Preparation/outside schools
10 (1 7) /Preparation/academic course
11 (1 8) /Preparation/training
12 (1 9) /Preparation/No preparation
13 (1 10) /Preparation/other
14 (2) /Years' experience
15 (2 2) /Years' experience/in special schools
16 (2 3) /Years' experience/in mainstream schools
17 (2 4) /Years' experience/outside schools
18 (3) /Experience outside school
19 (3 1) /Experience outside school/LEA service
20 (3 2) /Experience outside school/HE
21 (3 3) /Experience outside school/Private sector
22 (3 4) /Experience outside school/LEA officer
23 (3 5) /Experience outside school/Other
24 (4) /Qualifications
25 (4 1) /Qualifications/Further degree
26 (4 2) /Qualifications/PGCE or Cert Ed
27 (4 3) /Qualifications/Advanced course
28 (4 4) /Qualifications/Specialist Training
29 (4 5) /Qualifications/First degree
30 (4 6) /Qualifications/Mandatory Qualification
31 (4 7) /Qualifications/Other
32 (5) /Eligible
33 (5 1) /Eligible/Eligible~LPSH
34 (5 1 1) /Eligible/Eligible~LPSH/Not Access
35 (5 1 3) /Eligible/Eligible~LPSH/Access
36 (5 2) /Eligible/Eligible~Headlamp
37 (5 2 1) /Eligible/Eligible~Headlamp/Not Access
38 (5 2 6) /Eligible/Eligible~Headlamp/Access
39 (5 6) /Eligible/Eligible~NPQH

40	(5 6 1) /Eligible/Eligible~NPQH/Not access
41	(5 6 3) /Eligible/Eligible~NPQH/Access
42	(6) /Other training
43	(6 1) /Other training/Other training~Mentoring
44	(6 2) /Other training/Other training~HE
45	(6 4) /Other training/Other training~other
46	(6 5) /Other training/Other training~HMI course
47	(6 7) /Other training/Other training~LEA course
48	(7) /Most useful experience
49	(8) /Measure impact
50	(9) /NCSL offer
51	(10) /Concerns
52	(11) /Further observations
53	(12) /Help with role
54	(12 1) /Help with role/NPQH
55	(12 2) /Help with role/Headlamp
56	(12 13) /Help with role/LPSH
57	(13) /Improve practice
58	(13 1) /Improve practice/Headlamp
59	(13 2) /Improve practice/LPSH
60	(13 14) /Improve practice/NPQH
61	(14) /Impact on school
62	(14 1) /Impact on school/LPSH
63	(14 2) /Impact on school/Headlamp
64	(14 15) /Impact on school/NPQH
65	(15) /Could be improved
66	(15 1) /Could be improved/Headlamp
67	(15 2) /Could be improved/LPSH
68	(15 2 1) /Could be improved/LPSH/LPSH~No
69	(15 16) /Could be improved/NPQH
70	(15 16 1) /Could be improved/NPQH/No
71	(16) /Added activities
80	(18) /Headlamp funding

[Locations 72-79 were used for search results].

Appendix 2C

Document Attributes (NVivo)



Appendix 2D
Model, Node relation to document attributes in data analysis (NVivo)

Appendix 3, Chi square tests on table 26

Respondents with or without national training

What is most important, generic or phase specific development (aggregating leadership and management)?

Actual	Generic	Phase specific	Total
With	131	83	214
Without	101	133	234
	232	216	448

Expected	Generic	Phase specific	Total
With	110.82142	103.17857	214
Without	121.17857	112.82142	234
	232	216	448

$\frac{(0-E)^2}{E}$	Generic	Phase specific	Total
With	3.6741551	3.99463105	
Without	3.3601211	3.6090229	
			$\chi^2 =$ 14.589608

df = 1

The different ratings for generic or phase specific development, when leadership and management and management courses are aggregated, for respondents with or without national programmes were analysed using chi square. The value of χ^2 was found to be significant at the 0.001 level for a two tailed hypothesis and so we can conclude that there is a difference between the views of respondents with or without national programmes on whether development should be generic or phase specific.

What is most important, leadership and management development (aggregating generic or phase specific courses)?

Actual	Management	Leadership	Total
With	82	132	214
Without	102	132	234
	184	264	448

Expected	Management	Leadership	Total
With	87.892857	126.10714	214
Without	96.107142	137.89285	234
			448

$\frac{(0-E)^2}{E}$	Management	Leadership	Total
With	0.3613234	0.2753672	
Without	0.3613235	0.2518309	
			$\chi^2 =$ 1.249845

df=1

The different ratings for leadership and management development when generic or phase specific programmes are aggregated, for respondents with or without national programmes, were analysed using chi square. The value of χ^2 was not found to be significant therefore the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. We can conclude that there is no difference between the views of respondents with or without national programmes on the importance of leadership or management development programmes.