

Looking into early headship  
The socialisation experiences of new primary  
headteachers in Cyprus

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## DECLARATION

I, Valentina Theodosiou, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis draws on socialisation theory and the stage theory of headship to explore the professional and organisational socialisation experiences of new Cypriot primary headteachers. The study examines the ways in which new heads have been prepared for headship and formed their professional identity as heads. It also offers insights into novice headteachers' socialisation in schools, the challenges they encountered upon assuming headship, as well as their progression through stages of headship during their early years in post.

The study employed a sequential mixed-methods approach comprised of unstructured face-to-face interviews, a survey of all 90 novice primary headteachers appointed during 2009-2010, in-depth semi-structured interviews with 12 novice headteachers and follow-up interviews with ten of them two years later to shed further light on the issues under examination.

The overall findings portray Cypriot headteachers' preparation for headship through formal and informal leadership development opportunities and provide empirical evidence of the complex process of their socialisation in schools and the challenges they encountered during early headship. Findings from this study contribute towards theory regarding headteachers' transition through stages of headship that could be used to develop practice and enhance understanding of how the professional and organisational socialisation experiences help shape the professional identity of headteachers. Empirical evidence from this thesis has important implications for policy makers, training providers and researchers with regards to headship preparation and induction in Cyprus and internationally.

The findings also suggest several important directions for future research, most importantly in professional identity formation and leadership styles; gender issues in pathways to headship; the importance of 'people' as socialisation agents for new heads; and the need for longitudinal studies on transition through stages of headship within the Cypriot educational context.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>In English</b>	<b>In Greek</b>
CES	Cypriot Educational System	Κυπριακό Εκπαιδευτικό Σύστημα
CPD	Continuing Professional Development	
CPI	Cyprus Pedagogical Institute	Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο Κύπρου
ESC	Educational Service Commission	Επιτροπή Εκπαιδευτικής Υπηρεσίας
LEA	Local Educational Authority	Σχολική Εφορεία
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture	Υπουργείο Παιδείας και Πολιτισμού
NCSL	National College for School Leadership	
NCTL	National College for Teaching and Leadership	
NITPSL	National In-service Training Programme for School Leaders	Πρόγραμμα Επιμόρφωσης Στελεχών Εκπαίδευσης
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship	
OS	Organisational socialisation	
PS	Professional socialisation	

## CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

The increasing body of evidence that the quality of leadership is imperative for achieving and sustaining high-quality education in schools and critical to student outcomes (Day et al., 2009, 2011; Leithwood and Louis, 2011), has placed instruction at the heart of leadership behaviours that involve establishing vision, mission, and goals; building a positive culture; and creating strong relationships with parents and the community (Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010). School leaders' role is rapidly changing and it is becoming more complex, as they are expected to adapt to wide-ranging expectations from diverse sources and multiple accountabilities for many different issues, as well as to the rapidly increasing agenda for change imposed by governments worldwide (Fullan, 2001; Bush, 2008b; Crawford, 2014). However, while school leaders' role as advocates for pupils' learning is increasingly being viewed as a critical part of school leadership, the 'concept of actually leading, rather than managing and administering a school, is quite new in many nations' (Brundrett and Crawford, 2008, p.2).

As a consequence of the increasing recognition of the demanding and critical role of school leaders, their preparation and training have become the main focus of educational systems worldwide during the last decade so as to best prepare school leaders with the appropriate skills, knowledge and dispositions to lead educational organisations in an increasingly changing global economy (Bush, 2011). However, although most governments do not require school leaders to attend any training prior to or after appointment to headship, the case for effective preparation and induction is gradually gaining ground (Bush, 2008b; Lumby, Crow and Pashiardis, 2008), as the consequences of appointing unprepared headteachers are often damaging to the individuals and their schools (Daresh and Male, 2000; Bush and Oduro, 2006).

Despite the international interest in headship preparation and induction, headship learning remains an under-examined and under-research area in many countries (Brundrett and Crawford, 2008), including Cyprus. As Walker and Qian (2006) have argued, the constantly changing school environment in which headteachers have the responsibility to work has implications on 'conceptions of what leadership entails, how principals are attracted, selected, prepared and socialized and, indeed, what it means to take up a principalship' (p.298). The reconceptualisation of a new and more complex leadership role for school leaders in the twenty-first century requires a closer look at the professional and organisational socialisation of headteachers (Crow, 2006), as it seems to be crucial to have more evidence about how leaders acquire the skills and attributes needed for the post and shape their professional identity with confidence to become effective leaders. McCall (1998) has argued that what matters most today is how well prepared people in leadership roles are to meet the challenges of the wider educational system in each country, as 'in a world of rapid change, the real measure of leadership is the ability to acquire needed new skills as the situation changes' (p.5) to lead an organisation in the future. Nevertheless, 'the best ways to enhance leadership skills remain open to debate and contestation' (Brundrett, 2010, p.2).

The international interest shown in leadership preparation is not shared by government stakeholders and policy makers in Cyprus where the assumption that good teachers could become effective school leaders<sup>1</sup> without specific preparation is still prevalent (Pashiardis, 2004a; Nicolaidou and Georgiou, 2009). Although the Cypriot educational reform committee acknowledges the importance of school leaders' professional development for good leadership practice (Kazamias et al., 2004; MOEC, 2014), no changes regarding heads' preparation and induction have been introduced yet. Hence, new duties have been attached to headship, such as school improvement planning, monitoring

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<sup>1</sup> The terms school leaders, headteachers, heads and principals are used interchangeably throughout the study and refer to the person on the highest level or post in the school hierarchy at all levels of education: pre-primary, primary and secondary.

teaching and learning, raising pupils' achievement and school-based staff continuing professional development (CPD), without proper investment in headteachers' preparation for the 'new' role. It is apparent that such changes gradually shape a new and more demanding professional orientation than the one found typically in previous generations of Cypriot heads, pointing, thus, to a reconceptualisation of school leadership. For this reason, it becomes important to understand new heads' perceptions of their role brought to the post, as well as how these perceptions have been shaped by professional socialisation (PS) and organisational socialisation (OS) experiences during an individual's career.

In spite of limited leadership provision and the dearth of studies on headship preparation and induction in the Cypriot context, a rich array of international research (Weindling and Earley, 1987; Crow and Glascock, 1995; Daresh and Male, 2000; Earley and Weindling, 2004; Crow, 2006; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Shoho and Barnett, 2006, 2010; Schleicher, 2012; Ylimaki and Jacobson, 2013) informed the present inquiry into the PS and OS of new heads. Also, the scarcity of studies into the early conceptions new heads have of what their role entails and professional identity formation (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004; Moorosi, 2014) alerted the researcher to explore critical dimensions of new heads' socialisation during the pre-entry and entry to headship stage of a headteacher's career.

My investigation continues this line of inquiry by examining the realities of first headship as experienced by new Cypriot primary headteachers. Emphasis is given to the preparation of newcomers for headship and the way they have formed their conceptions of headship - an area which has been relatively under-researched. As it has been argued, the anticipatory and PS experiences of headteachers may have possible implications for the way headship is enacted (Crow, 2006), as school leaders' personal and professional background form their leadership practices both consciously and unconsciously (Crawford, 2014). In view of the emerging role shaped for Cypriot school leaders as change agents and instructional leaders (MOEC, 2014), exploring the PS and OS

experiences of beginning heads may provide evidence for shaping headship preparation and induction in Cyprus; and enrich understanding of and support during heads' induction in schools.

## **Definition of concepts: educational leadership, headship and leadership development**

At this point, an attempt is made to provide a working definition of educational leadership as a key concept to be used extensively in this study. Then, the importance of leadership exercised by headteachers in schools and the leadership development of individuals to assume headship are discussed in brief.

In spite of the recognition of the importance of educational leadership, there is still no consensus in the literature as to what leadership actually is or how to define it. In a comprehensive review of leadership literature, Northouse (2003) identified four common themes in the way leadership tends to be conceived:

- leadership is a process;
- leadership involves influence;
- leadership occurs in a group context; and
- leadership involves goal attainment.

In line with this argument, Bush (2011) identified three dimensions of leadership that shape leadership enactment in schools: influence, values and vision; while Delakoura (2010) argued for a systemic view of leadership that acknowledges its complexity in encompassing social interactions in schools. According to Bush (2008a) influence constitutes a central characteristic of leadership that portrays leadership as a fluid process 'independent of formal management positions and capable of residing with any member of the organization' (p.277). This notion provides support for the concept of distributed leadership at all levels in schools that matters for school improvement (MacBeath, Oduro and Waterhouse, 2004).



On providing a working definition of *educational leadership*, the present study espouses the above characteristics and proposes that it is a dynamic, intentional and influential process situated in context and distributed among individuals who share common goals and vision for the improvement of their schools.

The literature clearly describes headship as a significantly altered and demanding role in the twenty-first century (Earley, 2013) that involves an assortment of functions and roles: school administration, management of staff and resources, leadership for learning, being a change agent, a strategic leader, a mediator between government and the local community. Research evidence points to the role of headteacher, as the formal leader in school, as central in improving the quality of teaching and learning (Day et al., 2011), while educational leadership has gained recognition by governments worldwide as the key to school improvement (Davies, 2009; West-Burnham, 2013). However, despite the 'abundance of studies on educational leadership, very few have attempted to measure the effect of school leadership on educational outcomes' (Menon-Eliophotou, 2011).

Within the Cypriot policy context, the model of learning-centred or instructional leadership is adopted as the normative desirable role for headteachers who are expected to bring about school effectiveness and improve student outcomes. While school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as a school influence on student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004), headteachers have the potential to improve teaching and learning indirectly, by exerting influence on teachers who are directly responsible for student outcomes. Such influence is often achieved by distributing leadership and employing teamwork and participative decision-making practices, sharing responsibility with staff at all levels (Hallinger, 2003; MacBeath et al., 2004) and entrusting credibility amongst staff of heads' expertise to perform headship and pure motivation to improve schools (Davies and Davies, 2013). Hallinger (2009) proposed three dimensions for the instructional leadership role of the headteacher: a) defining a

clear direction for the school, b) managing the instructional programme, and c) promoting a positive school learning climate.

However, recent conceptions of leadership as *leadership for learning* or *pedagogical leadership* point to the need for shifting the focus of schools away from student attainment towards learning itself, and regard this type of leadership as a collaborative process aiming to promote the learning of students, staff, the organisation and the local community (Hallinger 2009; Male and Palaiologou, 2012). According to Brundrett (2013, p.35), leadership for learning 'has become the most challenging aspect of school leadership activity' for contemporary headteachers, who are responsible for bringing together 'all the leadership capacity of a school whether it lies in the hand of the leadership team, staff, students and the wider community' to build a strategy for improving their schools.

With regards to *leadership development*, Bolam (2003, p.75) suggests that it is

an ongoing process of education, training, learning and support activities taking place in either external or work-based settings proactively engaged in by qualified, professional teachers, headteachers and other school leaders aimed primarily at promoting the learning and development of professionally appropriate knowledge, skills and values to help school leaders to decide on and implement valued changes in their leadership and management behaviour so that they can promote high quality education for their students more effectively thus achieving an agreed balance between individual, school and national needs.

From this perspective, leadership development is regarded as a participatory process that embraces all members of an organisation either in formal or informal leadership posts and fosters the collective, as well as the individual leadership capacity (McCauley and Brutus, 1998; Bolden, 2005) by preparing people for roles and situations beyond their current experiences. Delakoura (2010, p.433) views leadership development as a 'social process' in the pursuit of leadership effectiveness in organisations.

Nevertheless, acknowledging school leaders' contemporary role as pivotal in developing the leadership capacity within schools (Hallinger, 2003; Crawford, 2014) and fundamental in orchestrating school improvement (Bush, 2009)

suggests that proper investment in the preparation of individuals for assuming headship becomes increasingly essential (McLay and Brown, 2003). Otherwise, policymakers run the risk of placing new headteachers in challenging and adaptive situations that they are unprepared to handle. As Day (2001, p.605) indicates:

Attempting to build shared meaning systems and mutual commitments among communities of practice without a proper investment in individual preparation runs the risk of placing people in challenging developmental situations that are far over their heads.

According to Gunter (2001), an appointment to headship does not necessarily confirm a person as a leader or a person's ability to exercise leadership, especially within the new school leadership paradigm as described above. Therefore, without undermining the importance of leadership development for all members in schools, the emphasis in this thesis is placed upon the leadership preparation of individuals to assume headship and lead educational organisations towards improvement.

## **Aims of the study**

This thesis set out to present the situation in Cyprus regarding headship preparation and induction by exploring first-time primary headteachers' professional and organisational experiences. For the purpose of this study, new headteachers are defined as those being in post for up to four years following their appointment.

The thesis aimed to investigate headteachers' career paths in order to discover how these heads have been prepared for headship and have developed their professional identity as heads (professional socialisation). It also aimed to understand the ways in which newly appointed heads are socialised in schools and establish themselves in headship, as well as how they are affected by their working context in attempting to carry forward their vision for the school during the early years (organisational socialisation). Furthermore, the extent to which

school characteristics, such as school culture, size and location, as well as individual characteristics, such as headteacher's gender, years in service, qualifications and professional background, may have influenced novice heads' socialisation in schools during early headship was explored. The study also sought to identify the challenges encountered in post during first headship. Moreover, headteachers' transition through stages of headship within the first four years in post was explored to contribute to the development of a theory of new headteachers' professional growth in post. In light of the findings and previous research literature on leadership development, the study aimed to provide recommendations about heads' preparation and induction in the Cypriot context. Finally, the study also aimed to suggest a pathway towards developing a comprehensive scheme for the development and training of school leaders.

## **Research questions**

A rich array of international leadership research literature focusing on the induction stage of headship and the challenges met in post (Parkay and Hall, 1992; Hart, 1993; Daresh and Male, 2000; Earley and Weindling, 2004; Male, 2004; Crow, 2006; Weindling and Dimmock, 2006; Shoho and Barnett, 2010), preparation for headship (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Shoho and Barnett, 2006, 2010; Schleicher, 2012; Ylimaki and Jacobson, 2013), professional identity formation (Crow and Glascock, 1995; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003, 2007; Moorosi, 2014) and progression through stages of headship (Weindling, 1999, 2000; Earley and Weindling, 2004) informed the present inquiry. In particular, the longitudinal study (1982-1994) undertaken by Earley and Weindling for the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to explore the PS of new heads, their challenges in post and their attempts to 'take charge' in a new school (OS) has been heavily influential for my thesis.

On analysing the data sets about the PS and OS of new heads, further evidence emerged concerning headteachers' transition through stages of headship. Thus,

an interest in exploring the relevant literature (Hart, 1993; Parkay and Hall, 1992; Day and Bakioglu, 1996; Pascal and Ribbins, 1998; Earley and Weindling, 2004) and the applicability of stage models in the Cypriot context was generated. Also, Earley and Weindling's (2004) six-stage model that maps out the stages of transition through headship was adopted to explore headship progression in the Cypriot context.

As the field of inquiry is potentially vast, it was necessary to narrow my research focus on three aspects of primary headteachers' progression to headship in Cyprus. The first was about their *professional socialisation*, focusing on how they became heads, the formation of their professional identity as school leaders and the ways they have been prepared for headship. The second was about the *organisational socialisation* of new headteachers and the factors that shape their professional identity as heads and influence their establishment in schools. Of importance here was the notion of *school culture* and how new heads attempt to create a culture which reflects their vision for the school and yet at the same time are shaped by the existing culture or the one they inherit from their predecessors. Also, the challenges encountered in post were explored as part of the contextual characteristics that shape organisational socialisation. The last aspect was more theoretical than practical and was about an understanding of the leadership development through a conceptual model of the stages of headship.

Therefore the following research questions constituted the core of the study:

1. What is known about a) Cypriot primary headteachers' pathways to headship; and b) how well do they think have they been prepared for the post?
2. How do Cypriot novice primary heads shape their professional identity and become socialised into their role during their early years in post?
3. What are the most important challenges that newly appointed primary headteachers in Cyprus face during early headship?

4. Do stage theories of socialisation apply to Cypriot primary headteachers within their first four years in post?

### **Rationale for conducting the study**

The decision to conduct a research study in the field of leadership development of primary school headteachers was based on my special interest in the area which was generated through personal and professional relationships with headteachers, including some newly appointed heads serving in schools around the island. My interest was further supported by the educational reform changes currently being implemented in public primary schools in Cyprus. The rationale for proceeding with this theme is unfolded below.

First, in many ways this study is a step on my personal journey of understanding primary headship. As a primary school teacher, over the last 15 years, and as a school advisor for school development and school improvement at the Division of Primary Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC), I had ample opportunities to experience first-hand a number of headteachers who demonstrated a variety of skills, qualities, dispositions and leadership practices. Thus, I became aware of headteachers' manifold role in schools and accustomed to their day-to-day practice. I also noted the disparity of performance and readiness among headteachers to handle several emerging issues and their difficulty to reconceptualise headship and adapt their role to externally imposed expectations and duties attached to their role as part of the educational reform agenda. Such variations stimulated my motivation to study new headteachers pathways to headship so as to better understand the way they have been prepared for the post and have structured their professional identity as heads; and struck my attention especially with regards to support needed during induction in schools.

International imperatives, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) recommendations for the importance of school

leadership for reform and improved educational outcomes, the reports of Unesco (1997) and World Bank (2014) about the Cypriot educational system (CES), as well as the results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and TIMSS that place Cypriot students significantly below the OECD's average in reading, mathematics, and science, have been used to legitimate contemporary policy decisions and reform efforts in the CES. Within this prospect, the government adopted the learning-centred model of leadership found to raise educational standards and pupils achievement both in the USA and England (Male and Palaiologou, 2012), based on an explicit expectation for headteachers to act as instructional leaders (CPI, 2009). Therefore, additional duties have been attached to their role coupled with increased accountability and responsibility for school improvement.

While Cypriot headteachers for years have been mainly 'responsible for school administration and management' (Nicolaidou, Karagiorgi and Petridou, 2013), they are nowadays expected to see themselves as both administrators, managers and school leaders, who lead learning and influence staff towards school improvement through strategic planning and self-evaluation initiatives at school level. Such expectations have shaped a new more demanding role for Cypriot heads as instructional leaders and change agents (CPI, 2009), despite the fact that public schools are part of a highly centralised and bureaucratic system and headteachers are centrally rotated around schools quite often.

Considering the lack of formal headship preparatory and in-service training in Cyprus, it is not surprising that most headteachers experience difficulties in adapting their role to externally mandated changes and contemporary emphasis on school improvement. Understanding better what new heads bring to the post in terms of headship learning and how they have formed their professional identity as heads would enhance support provision upon assuming the post, so as to reshape their conception of headship according to school context and government expectations. Consequently, my engagement with this research study emerged naturally in response to the need for supporting headteachers to

reconceptualise their role in light of the educational reform changes promoted in Cyprus.

A second reason for proceeding with this study was my theoretical interest in contributing towards theory and understanding of new headteachers' professional identity formation while they experience professional and organisational socialisation, as well as testing the stage models proposed regarding heads' progression through headship in the Cypriot context. Responding on the call that socialisation research needs to begin to examine how prior roles or PS experiences impact new heads' socialisation into a new school (Louis, 1980; Crow, 1992), my thesis aims to advance understanding of OS of novice headteachers by focusing on how their socialisation into a new role is facilitated or constrained by previous PS experiences or previous roles in various school contexts, as well as contextual factors and limitations. Furthermore, as a response to Rhodes and Greenway's (2010) call for studies into leadership enactment in context and the identities and performances portrayed by heads, this investigation may have value in our better understanding of headship conception and headship enactment, as well as implications for the preparation and development of individuals seeking this demanding role. From this standpoint, exploring new headteachers' preparation and induction through an investigation of their PS and OS experiences, as well as identifying the factors influencing their socialisation in school during early headship, was imperative for understanding novice heads' attempts to establish themselves in post within a challenging school and policy context.

Below, the significance of the study is established in relation to the Cypriot educational context and gaps identified in the international research literature on headteachers' preparation and induction, transition to headship and professional identity formation.



## **Significance of the study**

This research study is significant for academics, researchers, policy makers, training providers, government stakeholders and practitioners in the field of headship preparation and induction, transition to headship and professional identity formation in a number of ways, as it develops theory that could be used to inform practice.

First, the induction and transition of new headteachers in post have been central in numerous studies aiming to reveal the difficulties encountered during their socialisation in schools (Crow, 2006; Male, 2006) and the career stages headteachers go through (Hart, 1993; Earley and Weindling, 2004). However, research evidence concerning headteachers' early conceptions of the role as shaped by preparatory programmes (Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004; Moorosi, 2014) and other PS experiences, and their reformation upon encountering school culture and context are limited. It was against this backdrop of insubstantial evidence that the current thesis was conceived to continue this line of inquiry by examining in-depth the PS and OS of beginning heads. A detailed study of novice headteachers' preparation for the post, the realities of taking up headship and the socialisation experiences they go through to become established in post may provide the basis for understanding headteachers' professional identity formation and progression through headship. Such investigation was important as the present study aims to illuminate headship preparation and induction and contribute towards theory regarding headteachers' transition to headship and professional identity formation.

Second, at a time when educational reform is calling for 'non-traditional' views of school leadership, this type of research may help us understand how new heads fashion a role for themselves that takes into consideration their past experiences, the policy context and socialisation experiences in schools, to reshape their conceptions of headship and inform their leadership practice. Crow's (1992) call for examining how principals understand their roles and how these perceptions influence the kinds of leaders they are prior to implementing

educational reforms is still valid nowadays. Understanding the larger occupational context of headship is necessary in the ongoing dialogue concerning school improvement and the principal's role, as heads play a crucial part in maintaining and improving schools.

The thesis was conducted at the time when some of the changes derived from the educational reform (e.g. school improvement planning, action planning, monitoring teaching and learning) were implemented. Such changes brought about new responsibilities for headteachers with apparent consequences on school leaders' potential training needs and skills related to these changes. As the complexity of headship in Cyprus may continue to increase and the work that headship entails may become more intensified, research evidence arising from this study may provide recommendations under which leadership development programmes could develop effective instructional leaders, not only by anticipating a range of knowledge, competences and skills, but also by promoting the dispositions and values needed for effective school leadership. Also, exploring challenges in post, as well as identifying sources of socialisation during early years, may enhance support provision during first headship.

Third, this thesis investigates the experiences of novice primary heads as they transition into their new role in particular schools, focusing on the first four years in post - a critical period of 'entry and encounter', 'taking hold', 'reshaping' and 'refinement' for them (Weindling, 1999, 2000; Earley and Weindling, 2004). While reflections on professional and personal experiences cannot be generalised, they may provide valuable insights into how novice headteachers perceive school leadership and build an understanding of what constitutes headship during their career journey. Concurrently, by focusing on early headship, research evidence may expand understanding of how the socialisation process affects beginning headteachers' conceptions of headship which shape leadership enactment in school. It was found that the challenges met in schools during the induction period are to a certain degree determined by the organisational context and school culture in which new headteachers find

themselves, which in turn force newcomers to reshape their professional identity according to school culture and contextual peculiarities. With this organisational focus, my study complements research on beginning headteachers and their settlement in post.

Fourth, by locating the thesis within a series of international studies of leadership development, the study wishes to contribute towards theory and knowledge base on headship preparation and induction, particularly in Cyprus where little research has been conducted to date. The research findings may add to the international attempts for headship preparation and provision of quality in-service training that will meet the needs of aspiring and novice headteachers. The thesis may also contribute to a broader understanding of the challenges faced by newly appointed headteachers worldwide during early headship and the way they influence professional identity formation. Research focusing on transition and the career perspective of headship may also find data from this study useful in building theory towards headteachers' transition through stages of headship in particular school contexts.

Finally, the present research is significant in the field of leadership development of headteachers in Cyprus and the international research community. With regards to leadership development provision in Cyprus, there are only a handful of studies to draw upon about the National In-service Training Programme for School Leaders (NITPSL) and participants' needs (e.g. Michaelidou and Pashiardis, 2009; Nicolaidou and Petridou, 2009, 2011) - indicating the gap between emerging challenges and national priorities regarding school leadership-; while research into the PS and OS of headteachers and their need for support during early years in post is sparse. Acknowledging the scarcity of research about aspiring, new and experienced heads in Cyprus, this thesis provides evidence in bridging the gap between availability of leadership development opportunities and new Cypriot headteachers' needs. The exploration of new heads' learning brought to the post and the identification of

the challenges they encounter in situ may provide the basis for revising the NITPSL in ways to support newcomers during early years.

Furthermore, evidence regarding promotion to headship suggests that, unlike the leadership succession crisis faced in other countries (Lacey, 2002; Gronn, 2003), many Cypriot teachers aspire to headship regardless of the increasingly demanding leadership role and responsibilities. Within the last six years, a great proportion of young headteachers (n=354) with less accumulated experience in service compared to their predecessors were appointed to headship - a number over 100% of headteachers' population (Polis, 2013). This situation, coupled with the numerous proposed reform changes (MOEC, 2007), suggests an even greater need for leadership programmes to prepare new headteachers and support those in service to perform their role in an increasingly changing leadership context. Also, ongoing professional development opportunities to sustain heads in schools for more years may be needed.

Also, while discussing the proposed research with a number of senior education decision makers in Cyprus, as well as headteachers and colleagues, some expressed the view that it was important to build a leadership development scheme for aspiring, new and experienced headteachers based on valid and reliable studies regarding heads' personal and contextual training needs. This study, which echoes new heads' voices on headship preparation, sketches their socialisation experiences during induction and maps their progression through stages of headship, provides evidence to contribute towards this attempt.

## **The outline of the thesis**

The thesis, which presents early primary headship and the socialisation experiences of first-time heads in Cyprus, may be of interest to readers who work, study or research in educational systems internationally. The study of new Cypriot headteachers' PS and OS is unfolded next in nine chapters, including an introductory and a concluding chapter.

In Chapter 2, a brief introduction to the CES and background information regarding the context in which the study is situated are outlined. The chapter draws upon data from public reports, evaluation reports and research into the NITPSL to provide information about the CES, school governance, the selection and promotion of heads, and their preparation for their new leadership role through the NITPSL.

In Chapter 3, the research literature regarding the PS of headteachers is explored in depth. In particular, headteachers' preparatory and induction programmes are presented and the characteristics of exemplary leadership development programmes and their components discussed. Consideration is also given to adult learning theory that underpins effective headship preparation and induction. Finally, the impact of the professional and organisational socialisation experiences on professional identity formation is explored.

Chapter 4 examines the two aspects of novice headteachers' socialisation in schools. The influence of school culture on headteachers' OS is examined and the way individual and school characteristics help shape the socialisation of headteachers in schools discussed. The second part of the chapter considers the challenges faced by new headteachers on entering headship as identified in international research literature and the way they influence headship learning.

Chapter 5 presents the stage theories of headship and discusses headteachers' transition through headship. The induction stage of headship has been the major focus of numerous socialisation studies and entering headship has been characterised as a life-changing event in an individual's career. This study considers professional growth in post through career-stages of headship.

The following chapter, Chapter 6, outlines the methodological framework for employing a mixed-methods approach in addressing the research questions guiding this thesis. The methodological aspects of the study, such as the selection of the research tools and the participants, are deployed in three phases. Issues of validity, trustworthiness and reliability in thesis are also

discussed under the three phases of the study. Then, the steps taken towards data collection and analysis are presented. Finally, the ethical aspects of the study are acknowledged and the ways to handle them are outlined.

Chapter 7 presents the findings derived from a survey of all 90 newly appointed primary headteachers with one or two years in post, and interviews and follow-up interviews with 12 novice headteachers. From data analysis five themes emerged: a) pathways to headship; b) the professional socialisation of heads (preparation for headship, professional identity formation and the NITPSL); c) the organisational socialisation of new heads; d) the challenges of first headship; and e) the career-stages of headship. The findings are presented using these themes.

The penultimate chapter, Chapter 8, highlights the main research findings and discusses them in light of findings in the international research literature concerning headship preparation and induction, headteachers' professional identity formation, OS in school and the challenges encountered during the entry to headship stage. It also explores the original contribution of the thesis to knowledge and understanding of professional identity formation and transition through stages of headship within the context of primary headship in Cyprus.

In the final chapter, Chapter 9, the findings of the thesis are summarised, the limitations of the study acknowledged, and recommendations made for headship preparation and induction, as well as future research. The findings may prove helpful for policy makers, training providers, practitioners and academics, as they provide evidence that could enhance support provision during early headship and headship preparatory programmes, so as to better prepare heads for their new role in schools where school autonomy and improvement are dominant themes. Moreover, new roads open up to research professional identity formation within a career prospect, the role of school culture in shaping new heads' socialisation in schools and heads' transition through stages of headship within a longitudinal framework.

## CHAPTER II - THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This chapter includes an overview of the organisational aspects of the Cypriot Educational System (CES) with regards to primary headship and school-site management so as to throw light on heads' daily activity in schools. A brief description of the role of the Educational Service Commission (ESC) in the selection and appointment of heads and the role of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) in their preparation follows. The chapter also highlights recent changes attached to headship within the prospect of educational reform in the CES. Finally, the situation in Cyprus about headteachers' preparation and induction is described, drawing from research concerning the NITPSL offered by the CPI to newly appointed heads (e.g. Michaelidou and Pashiardis, 2009; Nicolaidou and Petridou, 2009, 2011).

Academic literature focusing on school leadership is limited in Cyprus and research studies concerning headship preparation are even sparser, while research into the PS and OS of new heads is non-existent. This chapter draws on research regarding the NITPSL, as well as government publications, such as the annual reviews produced by the MOEC and the ESC which include a considerable amount of statistical and other information regarding the CES and the selection and promotion of teaching staff. Also, the archive of the CPI was consulted with relation to the NITPSL and the internal evaluations for the NITPSL, course syllabi and decision documents were used. Thus, the primary references emerged from the aforementioned sources, as well as from actual people with extensive knowledge and experience of the educational field. An interview with the programme leader of the NITPSL was conducted and information was distilled from people within the field, such as experienced and novice heads. Furthermore, my knowledge of the field while working as a school advisor for school development and school improvement was drawn upon.

What follows is a brief summary of context and short conclusions drawn from the above primary references, so as to provide a comprehensive picture of primary headship in Cyprus and enable the reader to understand the parameters under which leadership development, headteachers' selection and daily practice take place. For this reason, unlike the following analytical, critical and evaluative sections, this chapter is largely descriptive.

### **The Cypriot Educational System (CES)**

Primary schooling in Cyprus is compulsory and free to children between the ages five and 12. The public educational system provides directly for the primary education of approximately 50,000 young people. In 2012, 342 public and 25 private primary schools, as well as nine special schools operated in Cyprus (MOEC, 2013). Special schools host pupils aged between six to 18 years.

The CES has unique characteristics compared to other countries. First, educational governance has long been highly centralised and bureaucratic in terms of its structure and ways of functioning (Eurydice, 2005; Thody et al., 2007). The higher authority rests with the MOEC, which is responsible for planning and providing education in Cyprus. Under its recommendations, educational policy is decided by the Cabinet of Ministers (national curriculum, textbooks, timetables, etc.) and its implementation in schools is supervised and assessed by the Inspectorate. The dominance of the national curriculum is reinforced throughout the system by state required textbooks (Thody et al., 2007).

One of the main challenges that headteachers in Cyprus have to deal with concerns the bureaucracies related to the administrative function of the school, as everything needs to pass through the Director of Primary Education within the MOEC for authorisation (Pashiardis, 2004a), subverting, thus, the organisational mission. Headteachers are in constant communication with the



school inspector for better application of the top-down directions and most of the times they work in isolation from headteachers in other schools. In contrast, many Western countries have developed decentralised and democratic educational systems and have delegated a great amount of responsibilities to headteachers and schools. Only recently, the MOEC begun to endorse the involvement of headteachers and teachers in school improvement planning (Ylimaki and Jacobson, 2013), while further changes to afford heads with greater autonomy and decision-making power to improve schools are needed (Menon-Eliophotou, 2002).

The CES has been traditionally conservative in nature and the implementation of changes and innovations has always been under long discussions. A major reform based on an evaluation report that a committee of seven academics completed in August 2004 (Kazamias et al., 2004) is being introduced gradually. Within this prospect, a number of changes regarding school timetables and subject curricula, the modernisation of teaching methods and the publication of new textbooks to align with subject curricula have been introduced. However, despite such changes, the CES remains heavily centralised in terms of policy implementation and functioning, as changes concerned with its structure and way of functioning have not been put forward. Additionally, changes concerning the selection and promotion of school leaders, the evaluation of teachers and schools, as well as teachers' professional development (see MOEC, 2014), are still under discussion. This is mainly due to changes in the political arena, the dire financial situation of the country and teachers' union disagreement with the proposed reform changes.

Hence, another challenge for school leaders is their limited autonomy with regards to school management and leadership. Unlike in Western countries (e.g. UK, USA), Cypriot headteachers still have no say regarding the appointment of teachers to their schools or their own transfer to another school. Also, evaluation is an exclusive responsibility of the inspector who visits the school on

a regular basis and evaluates teachers and headteachers for their teaching and management performance, respectively (Pashiardis, 2004a).

Second, for many years the systematic professional development of teachers and headteachers at all phases of their career has been neglected. As pointed out by Pashiardis (2004a) 'no organized, compulsory and systematic in-service training takes place after appointment to the education service' (p. 660) as a national in-service training scheme for teachers at all levels is non-existent (Georgiou et al., 2001; Nicolaidou and Georgiou, 2009). For years now, the optional seminars offered by the CPI during afternoons constitute the primary form of teachers' professional development (Karagiorgi et al., 2008). It was not until September 2012 that a two-day professional development training was reinforced by legislation at the beginning of each school year for pre-primary, primary and special teachers.

Within this context, the lack of specific preparatory programmes for appointment to any leadership post in Cypriot schools is noticed (Michaelidou and Pashiardis, 2009; Eurydice, 2013; Ylimaki and Jacobson, 2013). However, within the last decade, the three public and four private universities operating on the island have offered a variety of postgraduate academic opportunities in the field of educational leadership. The value of postgraduate qualifications is considered positively by inspectors while evaluating teachers, increasing, thus, teachers' possibility of being promoted to a leadership post (ESC, 2012; Polis, 2009, 2013).

Third, the policy and school contexts, along with the emphasis posed on school leaders as change agents and instructional leaders, shape a new and increasingly challenging leadership role for headteachers in Cyprus. The working context in Cypriot schools has changed significantly upon Cyprus accession in the EU in 2004 with apparent consequences on headteachers' role in leading multicultural schools. Within the last decade, a large wave of pupils from eastern European and Asian countries flooded schools, challenging, thus, the homogeneous context of Cypriot schools and leadership practice. Moreover,

the duties attached to headship concerning head's instructional leadership role in schools, such as strategic planning for school improvement, monitoring teaching and learning, improving student outcome, make headship a challenging role to fulfil.

Acknowledging that the Cypriot government historically treats all schools in the same way, irrespective of educational needs or contextual difficulties, new primary headteachers are often alone in coping with numerous challenges, huge responsibilities and accountabilities upon assuming the post. For instance, heads serving in schools of different sizes or types as described in the next section (Compulsory All-Day, Optional All-day, lower cycle etc) or in schools located in low socio-economic areas are not supported during induction. Hence, it would be important, then, to understand how new heads experience OS and develop commitment to school improvement in an environment that usually disappoints teachers and headteachers.

## **School management in Cyprus**

This section provides information about the types of primary schools operating on the island, as well as site-based management of schools.

Public pre-primary, primary and special schools are under the Division of Primary Education of the MOEC. They operate from 7:30 a.m. to 1:05 p.m. daily and have 35 teaching periods a week of 40 minutes duration. The institution of All-day School operates in particular schools on a voluntary basis, from October to May four days a week. Three or four periods are added to the regular timetable of Optional All-Day schools for carrying out assigned homework, consolidation and selected optional subjects. In 2006-2007, the Compulsory All-Day School was introduced, which is considered to be a type of public primary school. Compulsory All-Day Schools operate four days a week from 7:45 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and one day a week (Wednesday) from 7:45 a.m. to 1:05 p.m. The educational context and operational adjustments of these schools are very

different from those applied to existing Optional All-Day Schools. They operate with a unified curriculum, school management and staff (MOEC, 2011).

Schools are distinguished in single, double, triple and multi-teaching post schools depending on the number of teachers in school. However, only triple and multi-post schools are allocated a head, while in smaller schools, deputy heads or teachers often serve as acting heads. Some large urban primary schools are divided into two cycles and operate independently with two headteachers; the lower cycle, which constitutes of grades 1-3, and the upper cycle, which includes grades 4-6. All pre-primary heads serve in large urban and suburban schools across the country. All nine special schools, which encompass the three levels of education - pre-primary, primary and secondary education - are located in urban and sub-urban areas.

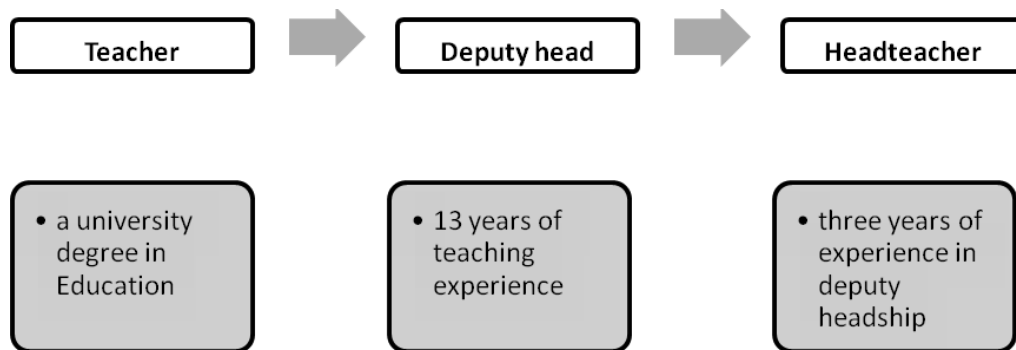
Primary heads have a dual role in schools - teaching and leading - and their duties and responsibilities are prescribed in detail by the MOEC (Thody et al., 2007). The hours of teaching allocated to primary heads are analogous to the number of teachers serving in school, and may vary between 11 to 21 teaching periods a week.

In each municipality or village across the country, there is a Local Educational Authority (LEA) which is responsible for the management of schools within its territory. The LEAs consist of five to 11 elected members serving for a period of five years and have the role of a transitional agent between the MOEC and schools within the area of their authority. They manage school budgets, provide suggestions about the allocation of pupils in schools and are responsible for school buildings and teaching resources. Nonetheless, the headteacher works closely with the LEA to plan and discuss alterations to school buildings, prepare an estimated budget for the following year and manage the money for school equipment and activities. It was not until 2007 that primary headteachers were allowed to handle and allocate a small amount of money for their schools (€800).

## Selecting and appointing new headteachers in Cyprus

Cypriot headteachers are centrally selected, promoted and appointed to schools around the country by the Educational Service Commission (ESC) - a five-member independent body appointed by the President of Cyprus for a period of six years.

**Figure 2.1 Teachers' career advancement in Cyprus**



Unlike other European countries, such as Belgium, Spain, United Kingdom and Finland, where headship preparation is compulsory, in Cyprus teachers may enter the competition for headship when they fulfil the requirements for the post. As shown in Figure 2.1, a minimum of 13 years of satisfactory teaching experience and at least three years of service in deputy headship (Eurydice, 2013) are the sole criteria for eligibility for promotion.

When available positions are announced by the ESC, prospective candidates apply for the posts. The applications are examined by a committee of inspectors which grants points to candidates based on three factors: (1) seniority of the staff, (2) the numeric teacher's performance evaluations by the Inspectorate and (3) postgraduate academic qualifications that deputy headteachers may have. When, a short-list of the individuals who qualify for the post is compiled, an interview of qualified candidates with the ESC follows (Pashiardis, 2004a; Thody et al., 2007). Candidate headteachers may accumulate up to five points during the interview based on their knowledge of pedagogical and methodological subjects (one point), comprehension of the role and responsibilities of headship

(one point), critical analysis of administrative and organisational aspects of headship (one point), effectiveness in communication and sufficiency of documentation (one point), personality (0.5 points) and language proficiency (0.5 points). Thus, the selection of headteachers is based on teaching performance evaluations conducted by school inspector, additional qualifications held by candidates, years in service and interview results.

The school inspector and the headteacher provide essay evaluations for teachers' performance every two years. Though, teachers receive their first numeric teaching performance evaluation from the inspector after completing 12 years of satisfactory teaching service, and every second year thereafter. The evaluation is based on the following criteria: (a) professional training, (b) effectiveness on the job, (c) organisation, administration and human relations, and (d) general behaviour and actions (Athanasoula-Reppa and Lazaridou, 2008). The numeric evaluation improves with seniority and, in this way, it determines teachers' promotion to higher posts in the CES hierarchy.

Although the processes of conducting teachers' evaluation and promotion are clearly prescribed, in practice they are highly problematic and have been the subject of a number of critiques. The main disadvantage of the promotion system is the importance placed on the seniority of qualified candidates rather than their competency for headship (Athanasoula-Reppa and Lazaridou, 2008). Until 2010, promotions were made based only on seniority, as the majority of candidates had much the same academic qualifications and evaluations (Theofilides, 2004). Hence, senior teachers were mostly the ones promoted shortly before retirement (Menon-Eliophotou, 2002; Pashiardis, 2004a,b). In 2010s, a careful examination of the personal characteristics of successful individuals reveals that postgraduate qualifications appear to count as an advantage for promotion to headship (Polis, 2013). During the promotion cycles in 2012 and 2013, candidates possessing doctoral and master's degrees - relatively younger than their counterparts who did not have additional qualifications - had spent fewer years in deputy headship prior to appointment to

headship (Polis, 2013). Nevertheless, unlike the long career in headship and routes to headship that aspirant heads in other countries have, appointments to headship in Cyprus remain largely based on seniority, as the three and five points allocated to master's or doctoral degree holders respectively are easily outweighed by years in services. A way to overcome this limitation is to change teachers' evaluation, selection and promotion scheme and criteria, so as young and qualified individuals to be promoted to a leadership post at an early age.

Successful candidates are informed of the school to which they are appointed only very shortly before taking up headship (Thody et al., 2007). The allocation and transfer of primary headteachers across the country is based on rotation policy held by the ESC on the basis of transfer credits accumulated during their teaching service. The credits earned during each school year vary according to school's size, location and distance from a teacher's residence. Typically, new headteachers possessing a small number of transfer credits are sent to rural schools or schools in different districts for a minimum period of two years before being transferred to a school nearer their residence. Headteachers usually serve in the same school for between two and five years, depending upon the availability of posts in each region as outlined by the educational authorities. Therefore, it is obvious that Cypriot headteachers experience short tenures in each school and they are forced under the regulations to move around schools, especially during their early years in post. Consequently, Cypriot heads experience different career phases from heads in Western countries, a fact that was investigated in this thesis through interviews and follow-up interviews with novice heads during their first four years in post.

### **Preparing new headteachers in Cyprus**

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) was founded in 1972 and is the main public institution that provides in-service training for teachers at all levels in Cyprus. Upon appointment to headship, all novice heads are required to attend

the National In-service Training Programme for School Leaders' (NITPSL), which is jointly taught by university professors and administrative practitioners (school leaders). The NITPSL is offered once a week and has an average duration of 90 hours. It usually begins in November and runs over a period of seven months. However, since 2010, two of its five-hour sessions, which are mainly concerned with the management responsibilities and the paperwork of the first week in school, are offered in the month of June of the previous school year.

Since its launch in 1991, the NITPSL has undergone several changes regarding its structural features, such as content, duration and ways of delivery. An internal programme evaluation conducted in 2007 showed that the programme lacked coherence and clarification with regards to its orientation (CPI, 2007). As from 2009-2010, the content of the NITPSL was considerably revised to comply with the new emphasis placed on heads to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. The aim of the NITPSL as described in the 2009 course brochure reflects this emphasis:

[...] to provide headteachers with the necessary requirements in order to apply effectively and productively their leadership, managerial, administrative and pedagogical duties, in such a way as to promote individual professional development and the improvement of the school unit in which they serve. (CPI, 2009, p.12)

Given the reform changes in the CES, heads are at the core of change implementation in schools. They are seen as the persons who will promote changes related to school improvement, enhancing, thus, the shift from the traditionally managerial school to a new more autonomous and high performing one. Additionally, school leaders will have the responsibility for the professional development of staff and be accountable for pupils' achievement. It is obvious that the CES is evolving and gradually changing, thus placing an amount of great responsibility and accountability upon headteachers. Thus, during 2012-2013, the aim of the NITPSL was altered as follows:

[...] to enhance headteacher's capability to provide effective leadership in school, by rendering him/her as a change agent. Through this training



program, headteachers should develop necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills to be able to respond worthily to the duties provided in the role. (CPI, 2012, p.13)

Moreover, changes have been made with regards to NITPSL's content and way of delivery. The thematic areas of the training have been raised to six: (a) smooth start to the academic year in the school, (b) development of the school unit, (c) organisation, administration and operation of the school unit, (d) development of school culture and school climate, (e) human resource development in the school, and (f) promoting teaching and learning. Particular emphasis has been given to promoting interaction and participants' involvement in activities encouraging 'practical' learning, such as case study scenarios and sharing good leadership practices with experienced practitioners. In addition, issues such as action planning and staff professional development are currently emphasised through the NITPSL (CPI, 2012). Furthermore, during 2012-2013, a mentoring component has been added with school leaders split into smaller groups, assigned to an experienced head - the mentor - who provides guidance and feedback regarding the 'practical' aspects of headship (CPI, 2012). However, incorporating mentoring to the NITPSL without consideration for the training of mentors and the matching between mentors' and mentees' needs is still a challenge to be addressed.

At the same time, short conferences are organised by the District Educational Offices (MOEC) on current educational issues and government's priorities throughout the school year for all serving headteachers. They are mainly theoretical and informative in nature; and they lack consistency in both theme and content, as they are provided as one-off incidents, without any follow-up (Nicolaidou, Karagiorgi and Petridou, 2013).

Although the NITPSL and occasional leadership development opportunities reside with the MOEC, perhaps surprisingly, the availability of postgraduate programmes in educational leadership and management by public and private institutions can be seen as the fulfilment of the calls for systematic preparation and development for schools leaders that have been made over an extended

period. Postgraduate qualifications complement the PS experiences and skills acquired during an aspiring headteacher's career and provide the academic background for performing the role of a headteacher. However, these programmes fail to establish links between academic institutions and school practice; and their impact on preparing aspiring headteachers for their new role has not been examined yet. Along with the NITPSL, postgraduate programmes do not adhere to any leadership standards or leadership development frameworks (Nicolaidou, Karagiorgi and Petridou, 2013).

Nevertheless, the NITPSL of the CPI remains the main leadership development opportunity headteachers are offered nowadays. However, in the educational reform proposal (MOEC, 2014), the establishment of the Leadership Academy, which will have the responsibility for the provision of leadership development and the certification of candidate heads, is recommended.

## **Research into headteachers' training in Cyprus**

An assumption embodied in the CES is that good teachers may become effective headteachers without specific preparation; that's why leadership provision in Cyprus 'is still at an embryonic stage and is far from addressing the actual needs of Cypriot headteachers' (Nicolaidou and Georgiou, 2009, p.168). As pointed out in previous section, despite the great deal of changes made to the NITPSL since its launch, it has been criticised by some as bureaucratic in nature and inadequate to prepare future school leaders (Georgiou et al., 2001; Pashiardis, 2004a; Nicolaidou and Georgiou, 2009). Their argument seems to be valid nowadays, and it is further supported by the findings of a number of contemporary studies presented below.

In the wake of demands for school reform and growing attention to the vital role of headteachers, an internal evaluation of the NITPSL was initiated by the CPI in 2007. The evaluation report pointed to the gap between the content of the NITPSL and headteachers' daily practice, and indicated the inconsistency

between the content and aims of the training programme, on the one hand, and the emphasis posed on the development and improvement of schools, on the other hand. According to this report, participants regarded the NITPSL as insufficient to prepare newly appointed headteachers to overcome the arising challenges encountered in post and they argued for the necessity of receiving preparatory training prior to appointment to headship (CPI, 2007).

Following the internal evaluation of the NITPSL in 2007, a number of studies indicated certain issues with the existing NITPSL. To begin with, explicit leadership standards or leader/leadership competencies are absent (Nicolaidou, Karagiorgi and Petridou, 2013). In addition, in evaluation studies, participants characterise the NITPSL as fragmented and argue about the modules being too theoretical and not focused on contemporary educational issues (CPI, 2007; Nicolaidou and Georgiou, 2009; Nicolaidou and Petridou, 2011). Further research on the NITPSL confirms that training is considered as theoretical and inadequate to prepare headteachers for upcoming school challenges (Michaelidou and Pashiardis 2009). Participants also point to the redesign of the NITPSL based on contextual educational factors particular to the CES, so as to become more professionally-oriented and provide heads with the necessary support to handle challenges in situ (Nicolaidou and Georgiou, 2009; Nicolaidou and Petridou, 2009). It is apparent from these studies that the NITPSL fails to address the learning needs of new heads and provide support in performing headship upon assuming the post.

Several studies (e.g. CPI, 2007; Nicolaidou and Petridou, 2011) also characterise the evaluation of the NITPSL as weak, with focus placed on participants' levels of satisfaction, rather than real impact of the training. Nicolaidou and Petridou (2011) argued that the evaluations of the NITPSL have failed to contribute to its improvement, due to the lack of an evaluation framework that would guide the design and implementation of programme evaluation and, afterwards, the redesign of the programme. For this reason, they set out to evaluate the impact of the NITPSL on primary and secondary

headteachers and secondary deputy heads by employing Guskey's (2000) and Stake's (1967) models for evaluating CPD programmes. Interviews with the participants showed that the NITPSL failed to meet the expectations of approximately 35% of participants, as well as to address school leaders' need for practical work relevant to particular school contexts. Although most participants claimed to have gained knowledge and skills to a great extent, they agreed that the competences and attitudes should be developed through practical activities relevant to school context. With regards to NITPSL's content, they indicated that the emphasis should be placed on instructional leadership.

Ylimaki and Jacobson (2013) drawing on a secondary analysis of findings from the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) regarding effective principals in seven countries, including Cyprus, reported that most headteachers had learnt their role through informal apprenticeships as teachers by shadowing their headteachers on the job. Thus, they gradually developed their leadership practices repertoire from which they retrieved or rejected practices when they became headteachers themselves. Also, they found that there were some ambitious aspiring headteachers who sought headship early in their career and accelerated their transition to headship by undertaking postgraduate studies in educational leadership. There is also evidence to suggest that prior experience in deputy headship is not adequate to equip new heads with the necessary skills for headship, and, thus, preparatory training prior to appointment may be necessary (Pashiardis and Orphanou, 1999; Menon-Eliophotou, 2002; Nicolaidou and Georgiou, 2009).

What is apparent from the above studies is the diversity in the degree of readiness and preparation for headship among the NITPSL's cohort of newly appointed primary headteachers with corresponding implications for headship preparation and induction. As participants move to the 'entry and encounter' stage (Weindling, 2000; Earley and Weindling, 2004) of their career, they realise that anticipatory PS experiences and leadership experience in deputy headship are not enough to prepare them for the demands of headship. Moreover, their

professional needs as sketched in the studies presented above are not addressed by the NITPSL, which mainly provides the theoretical background for school leadership and management and not the support needed on assuming a new leadership role in school. The gap identified between the NITPSL and headteachers' needs shown in many studies (Georgiou et al., 2001; CPI, 2007; Michaelidou and Pashiardis, 2009; Nicolaidou and Georgiou, 2009), necessitates further research focusing on headteachers' preparation for the post and the skills and qualities brought to headship by newly appointed heads, as well as novice heads' needs in post during early years.

This thesis sought to explore the views and experiences of headteachers coming from various professional backgrounds and school contexts concerning their preparation for headship, professional identity formation and their socialisation in schools. Hence, it was hoped to gain insights into headteachers' professional and organisational socialisation experiences that may help narrow the gap between leadership provision and novice heads' needs in Cyprus.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, background information and the context in which this study is situated were briefly outlined and the unique characteristics of the CES that frame leadership enactment in schools were acknowledged.

Despite the changes introduced regarding the national curriculum and heads' role in schools, the CES remains heavily centralised and bureaucratic in nature. School leadership is constrained by the bureaucratic procedures and the top-down policies imposed by the MOEC on important parts of school management, while school leaders experience little autonomy and high accountability. The changes introduced recently have framed a new and more demanding role for headteachers in Cyprus, while major changes concerning teachers' evaluation, school inspection and headteachers' selection and appointment are still under discussion.

In Cyprus, headship preparation is not a prerequisite for appointment to headship and all novice heads attend the NITPSL soon after promotion. Until recently, research on the NITPSL was sparse. Some useful work has emerged over the last decade which characterises the NITPSL as theoretical in nature, irrelevant to school practice and inadequate to meet new headteachers' training needs on entering headship. Although, in 2009-2010 the content and aim of the NITPSL were amended to reflect the emerging role of heads as change agents and instructional leaders, only minimal attention has been given to the knowledge, skills and dispositions essential for novice headteachers to comply with their demanding role in post.

By and large, the peculiarities of the CES and the restrained autonomy school leaders enjoy provide a qualitatively different educational context for Cypriot heads to work in. With this in mind, the thesis explores headteachers' preparation for headship and induction in schools, as well as how new heads under these circumstances and policy restraints conceptualise headship in ways to respond to the demanding task of improving their schools.

What follows in the next chapter is a review of the literature about the PS of new heads so as to expand understanding of headship preparation and professional identity formation.

# CHAPTER III: THE PROFESSIONAL SOCIALISATION OF HEADTEACHERS

## Introduction

The thesis aimed to explore the professional and organisational socialisation of headteachers during early headship. This chapter critically discusses international academic literature regarding the professional socialisation (PS) of new headteachers. Within this thesis, PS has a twofold meaning; it encompasses all leadership learning experiences accumulated during an individual's career towards preparation for the post, as well as the experiences that have shaped aspiring heads' understanding of what is headship and enhanced the formation of their professional identity.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion on the PS of headteachers which also includes anticipatory socialisation learning. The next sections draw on international literature to offer an overview of the preparatory and induction programmes for aspiring and newly appointed heads worldwide. The distinctive features of exemplary leadership development programmes are explored and the supporting strategies for headship preparation and induction are presented. Finally, formal and informal leadership experiences that shape aspiring heads' understanding of headship and enhance new heads' professional identity formation are also explored.

The exploration of the literature regarding headship preparation and induction, as well as headteachers' professional identity formation, informed my theoretical perspective and threw light on the following research questions:

1. What is known about a) Cypriot primary headteachers' pathways to headship; and b) how well do they think have they been prepared for the post?

2. How do Cypriot novice primary heads shape their professional identity and become socialised into their role during their early years in post?

### **The professional socialisation of headteachers**

Contemporary research studies into the professional socialisation of headteachers (Hart, 1993; Crow and Glascock, 1995; Daresh and Male, 2000; Crow, 2006) have been largely influenced by Merton's (1968) socialisation theory which is a commonly applied approach to understanding the socialisation of new entrants into organisations. Although his work concerned the professional socialisation of medical students, the concepts he coined, such as the 'reference group', 'anticipatory socialisation' and 'role model', are also notable in other fields, such as education. Merton (1968) defined *Anticipatory Socialisation* as the informal learning process through which individuals 'take on the values of the non-membership group to which they aspire' (p.319) as they move through a sequence of statuses and roles, each of which facilitates the rise to the reference group - the group to which they seek to become members - and the adoption of the values and behaviours of this group. The anticipatory socialisation, whether unconscious or conscious, precedes the transition into a new role and constitutes an integral part of professional learning.

According to Crow and Glascock (1995), informal preparation for headship, also known as *Anticipatory Socialisation*, begins early in a teacher's career and involves personal experience of schooling and previous heads, as well as first-hand involvement in leadership and management tasks. Headship learning that occurs prior to taking up headship may be guided by the individuals' choices and aspirations (Weindling, 2000) or may happen unintentionally as prospective headteachers move through a sequence of statuses and roles on route to headship (Daresh and Male, 2000) that may advance their likelihood of preparing themselves for the post 'through gathering social and technical experiences that will qualify them for the role' (Male, 2006, p.24).



Making the decision to apply for the post initiates the process of conscious preparation towards headship, also known as *Professional Socialisation*. The professional socialisation of aspiring headteachers, often includes formal preparation, where it occurs, and the early phases of professional practice. Crow (2006, p.311) offered:

Professional socialization [...] relates to the initial preparation to take on an occupational role such as school principal and includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to enact the role regardless of the setting.

Furthermore, Greenfield (1985) provided a useful perspective with regards to the PS of headteachers by distinguishing between the 'technical' and 'moral' aspects of preparation for headship. He defined moral socialisation as the development of attitudes, values and beliefs required for performing the role, whilst technical socialisation is concerned with the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours associated with role enactment. The combination of the two socialisation processes, he argued, provides individuals with the knowledge, ability and dispositions required in headship.

Regarding decision for headship, it is inevitably true that there are ambitious individuals that make the decision to become heads early in their career and, thus, systematically prepare themselves for headship in terms of knowledge, skills and experiences appropriate to the anticipated post. There are others, who after some years in teaching, decide to seek headship as they realise they have the leadership potential and qualities needed for the post. The anticipatory socialisation experiences may explain the readiness of successful candidates who appear to have assimilated personal skills and capabilities to perform the role effectively without necessarily being formally prepared for headship. Male (2006) also identified a third category of future headteachers; those individuals who had not thought of applying for the post 'until circumstances revealed them not only to be a viable candidate, but possibly the only one equipped to take on the job' (p. 40). Hence, their identity as school leaders had evolved more as a pragmatic response to the situation they were in.

Headteachers' preparation for the post and the formation of their professional identity as headteachers have been found to be equally shaped by a variety of anticipatory and PS experiences that enhance leadership learning, both prior and upon promotion to headship. However, given the increasing body of evidence that headteachers' role is imperative for school improvement and student outcomes (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2006; Day et al., 2009, 2011; Leithwood and Louis, 2011), the PS of headteachers should not be left to chance and their preparation through training appears necessary, so as to equip headteachers with the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding to lead educational organisations effectively (Bush, 2011). Hence, formal preparation and induction could form integral parts of headteachers' PS and play a central role in their professional identity formation.

Having defined professional socialisation, as it is going to be used in this thesis, next, an overview of headship preparatory and induction programmes in different parts of the world is offered. Then, the characteristics of exemplary leadership development programmes, as well as the supporting leadership learning strategies and methods are discussed.

## **International perspectives on leadership development and headship preparation**

On providing background for the first research question - '*What is known about a) Cypriot primary headteachers' pathways to headship; and b) how well do they think have they been prepared for the post?*' - it was considered necessary to consult the international literature and research studies about formal headship preparatory and induction programmes.

Prior to mid-1990s, little interest was shown in school leadership preparation from countries other than the USA and the provision of headship preparation and induction was non-systematic, optional and sparsely provided (Hallinger, 2003). As an answer to the call for the systematic preparation of school leaders

to deal with the responsibilities that headship entails and lead educational organisations effectively, a range of pre-appointment leadership development opportunities are on offer from universities, local governments, government agencies and commercial organisations across the world. Although, in some countries, the recognition of the need for appropriate and adequate preparation of school leaders emerged slowly (Bush and Jackson, 2002), the professional development of aspiring candidates to assume headship has been high on the agenda of the western world (e.g. UK, Canada and USA) with varying degrees of success (Bush, 2008b).

Contemporary accountability policies, decentralisation requirements and demographic shifts have affected the content and foci of leadership preparation in many countries (Ylimaki and Jacobson, 2013). Thus, there currently exists a continuum of approaches varying from informal and on-the-job apprenticeship models for the preparation of aspiring principals to more formal pre-service preparation that requires the certification of candidates' eligibility for headship. Examples of these initiatives are presented below.

### **Preparatory training for becoming a headteacher**

The literature regarding headship preparation is enormous and is growing rapidly, as leadership development approaches are continuously under review. However, for this study, I will initially draw from research literature and empirical findings on headship preparation in England and Scotland, as they are among the countries recognised as leading the way in attempts to improve leadership development. In both countries headship preparation is shaped by the need for aspiring heads to attain a standard before being given a license to become a head. Moreover, these countries have been very influential for reform changes in Cyprus, especially with regards to the pre-selection and training of candidate headteachers from a new proposed establishment - the Leadership Academy (MOEC, 2007). Along with headship preparatory programmes in England and Scotland, leadership development initiatives worldwide are explored to inform

what is known about induction in post and how headship learning shapes the professional identity of headteachers.

A range of training programmes for the development of aspiring, novice and experienced headteachers occurred in England, especially since the establishment of the National College<sup>2</sup> in November 2000 to provide a focus for leadership development in England (NCSL, 2001). Moving away from the 'one leader' model to distributed leadership in schools, different leadership roles are identified and various pathways to leadership roles are opened up. At the time of writing the National College encapsulates in its leadership framework the following leadership programmes for middle and senior leaders and those aspiring to headship that may lead to a qualification:

- Level 1: leading a team - The National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML)
- Level 2: leading across an organisation - The National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL)
- Level 3: aspiring to lead an organisation (for aspiring heads) - The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)

(National College, 2015)

All three qualifications are delivered through study modules by over 30 licensees around the country. As part of the move towards a self-improving, school-led system, the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) also offers for headteachers of outstanding schools the opportunity to become national leaders of education (NLE) and support schools in challenging circumstances, in addition to leading their own schools. In addition experienced chair of governors who are interested in supporting chairs of governors in other schools could attend the national leader of governance (NLG) programme.

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<sup>2</sup> It was established in 2000 as 'The National College for School Leadership' (NCSL). In 2010, it was renamed the 'National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services'. As of the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, the National College merged with the Teaching Agency to form the 'National College for Teaching and Leadership' (NCTL). <http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/> The NCTL is part of the Department for Education (DfE) and its qualifications are delivered by licensees around the country.

The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), which was introduced in England in 1997 prior to the establishment of the National College, is presented below as a good example of a preparatory programme for those aspiring to headship. The programme aims to develop talented leaders from all backgrounds with the key skills needed for efficient headship and leads to a qualification for headship, which although it is not mandatory, headship selection panels expect candidates to possess it.

Recently, NPQH was redesigned to deliver more personalised and flexible provision to meet the needs of individuals, schools and local systems towards educational excellence in a self-improving system (Diamond et al., 2013). NPQH now comprises of a placement in school for a minimum of nine days, three essential and two elective modules, as well as a final competency based assessment of the key competencies that are required for successful headship. Each module requires up to 50 hours of blended learning, typically consisting of workplace learning and practical activities (20 hours), face-to-face activities including peer groups (15 hours), as well as online learning, reading and structured reflection (15 hours) (NCTL, 2015).

Research evidence suggests that the particular programme has contributed to the PS of aspiring heads and enhanced their professional identity in terms of seeing themselves as capable and effective leaders. Drawing on an evaluation of the revised NPQH programme, carried out for the National College, with participants, providers and coaches over the 12-month period of the pilot, Crawford and Earley (2011) concluded that participants had viewed the revised NPQH as having significant strengths with regards to needs identification and personalisation. The revised NPQH included personalised learning, supportive learning environment, various components - particularly coaching, school-based work, online aspects - and a timeline that fitted aspiring headteachers' aspirations. Further evidence confirms the impact of NPQH on improving the effectiveness of newly appointed headteachers (Diamond et al, 2013). Trainees found all elements of NPQH useful for addressing their leadership development

needs, particularly coaching and placement in school, while those who had completed more components of NPQH available to them reported an improved level of confidence in assuming headship as a result of participating in NPQH.

This is not surprising as the main elements of the revised NPQH programme incorporate the features of what we know about effective leadership development and headship (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Earley and Jones, 2009; Schleicher, 2012). However, one of the major critiques for the NPQH has been that it was centrally designed and offered that did not allow for context specific challenges to be addressed through training (Bush, 2013). As from September 2014, the NCTL is no longer developing the leadership curriculum of the NPQH, which will be updated by licensees who offer the qualification locally. Hence, it is up to them to maintain its high quality and focus to meet the needs of headteachers, schools and the educational system.

The contribution of the National College has proved significant not only for headteachers' preparation in England, but also for leadership preparation initiatives in other countries. In Scotland, the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) programme, which is underpinned by the Standard for Headship in Scotland (SfH), was introduced in 2000 to provide aspiring headteachers with the leadership development opportunities they need prior to appointment. It is delivered by regional accredited consortia and it is mainly a work-based professional development programme, delivered both, face-to-face and online. One of its distinctive features is that it is aligned with the academic award of a postgraduate diploma from the academic institution delivering the programme (Cowie, 2008; Cowie and Crawford, 2009).

An alternative way in achieving the SfH is currently through the Flexible Route to Headship (FRH) programme, which was introduced in 2007. FRH provides participants the chance to develop their leadership potential, interpersonal skills and leadership qualities needed for headship through an individualised 'Professional Learning Plan' that takes into consideration participants' different learning styles. It is highly focused on experiential learning through coaching

from local authority staff or headteacher coaches. A third route to headship is the recently established 'Aspiring Heads' programme which, unlike other programmes, lasts over a school year, contains substantial content relating to the technicalities of management and it is not currently accredited against the Standard of Headship (The Scottish Government, 2014). As with the SQH and FRH, a school-based improvement project is central to the 'Aspiring Heads' programme. However, like in England, the shortage of candidates to take on headship, especially in the primary sector, averted the attainment of the SfH from becoming mandatory for new heads in Scotland (Cowie, 2008; The Scottish Government, 2014).

In 2013, Blake Stevenson Ltd was commissioned by the Scottish Government to evaluate the three routes to headship available in Scotland; the SQH, the FRH and the Aspiring Heads programme. Research evidence from a survey and interviews with current and former Scottish participants enrolled on these programmes over the past five years (The Scottish Government, 2014) indicate that participants had a positive overall impression about the programme they had attended and they felt that it often contributed to their performance in key aspects of headteacher's activity, such as leading learning and teaching (90%) and managing resources effectively (85%). An apparent impact on participants' PS was recognised by the vast majority of participants who 'felt that their understanding of educational issues had been broadened and that the nature and possibilities of school leadership were clearer to them' (p.51). Moreover, evidence from earlier studies also suggest that new heads who had undertaken the SQH appeared to have developed confidence and self-belief and do not experience the shock of transition to headship reported elsewhere (Draper and McMichael 1998, 2000; Daresh and Male 2000; Cowie and Crawford, 2007).

While the need to prepare and train school leaders is nowadays widely accepted, specialised headship preparation programmes are still confined to a small number of countries, such as Canada, USA, France, Singapore and South Africa. Evidence from international literature indicate that different formal or

informal leadership development strategies are adopted to prepare headteachers for the requirements of the post. According to a recent OECD report (Schleicher, 2012), some countries, such as France and Korea, offer pre-service leadership preparation programmes for prospective headteachers that often lead to a university degree or a specialised qualification for headship, while Spain recently made participation in leadership development programs offered in partnership with universities mandatory. In other educational systems, such as Finland's, although leadership certification is not required, aspiring heads are actively encouraged to attend relevant training.

In Australia, while there are no formal preparatory requirements for assuming an administrative or leadership post, a variety of formal and informal approaches to leadership development for school principals exist once they are appointed. Regional-based programmes for aspiring, beginning and experienced principals and leadership teams exist that make use of a variety of strategies for leadership development, such as coaching, mentoring and shadowing, as well as internships, leave to attend international conferences and sponsored postgraduate academic qualification. The apprenticeship model has long been adopted in Australia, where teachers 'gain the necessary skills and experience on-the-job if they aspire to move up the ranks to principal' (Ylimaki and Jacobson, 2013, p.10).

Moorosi and Bush's (2011) investigation of school leadership preparation and development in ten Commonwealth countries - located in Africa, the Pacific, the Caribbean and Asia confirm the limited attention given by governments to preparatory training across the ten commonwealth countries. In spite of international calls in the literature on the importance of leadership development of school leaders, only two of the ten countries provided compulsory preparatory training for headship. Research evidence suggests that there is a variety of leadership learning provision across the countries; though leadership experiences remain the major component for headship learning across these countries. Upon assuming the post, Moorosi and Bush (2011) found that novice



headteachers are supported through mentoring and coaching that constitute integral parts of induction programmes offered in some countries. With regards to the content of leadership provision, there is a shift from what Bush and Jackson (2002) indicated as common elements among leadership training programmes 'leadership; including vision and mission, instructional leadership, human resource and financial management' (p.421) to work-based development programmes for practicing principals which focus mainly on leadership development across schools rather than the development of the individual leader (Moorosi and Bush, 2011).

In this section, research findings regarding headship preparatory programmes in different countries have been explored. Next, the characteristics of exemplary programmes and the supporting strategies that have been found to enhance headship learning and professional identity formation are presented.

### **Exploring the characteristics of effective leadership development**

This section begins with an exploration of the characteristic features of effective leadership development programmes as identified in the research literature. Reviewing exemplary preparatory and induction programmes may add greatly to our knowledge of the usefulness of such preparatory programmes and the components that provide most 'added value' for participants' preparation for headship. Moreover, the adult learning principles which underpin the professional development of headteachers as adult learners are discussed.

The PricewaterhouseCooper's study (NCSL, 2007) among others explored the existing, emerging and potential models of headship preparation, both nationally and internationally, which are effective for pupils' achievement. The report suggests that effective development programmes share the following key elements so as to best prepare school leaders for their roles in schools:

- curricular coherence and realistic settings that offer experience-based opportunities

- personalised programmes tailored to participants' needs and context
- use of cohort groupings and mentors
- involving schools in collaborative activities.

In the same line, a recent review from the USA regarding eight exemplary pre- and in-service principal development programmes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p.63) points to a number of key characteristics of these programmes, including:

- Research-based content that is aligned with professional standards and focused on instruction, organisational development, and change management.
- Curricular coherence that links goals, learning activities, and assessments around a set of shared values, beliefs, and knowledge about effective organizational practice.
- Field-based internships that enable candidates to apply leadership knowledge and skills under the guidance of an expert practitioner.
- Problem-based learning strategies, such as case methods, action research, and field-based projects that link theory and practice and stimulate reflection.
- Cohort structures that enable collaboration, teamwork, and mutual support.
- Mentoring or coaching that supports modelling, questioning, observations of practice, and feedback.
- Collaboration between universities and school districts to create coherence between training and practice as well as pipelines for recruitment, preparation, hiring, and induction.

Compared to a national random sample, principals attending exemplary leadership development programmes were found to feel significantly better prepared for instructional leadership and more committed to the principalship, as well as willing to engage successfully in school improvement practices, such as cultivating a shared vision and practice, leading instructional improvement,

developing organisational capacity, and managing change. They also spent more time on improving instruction and building collaboration with their teachers and their fellow principals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Furthermore, a recent OECD's study of innovative leadership development programmes found that the more effective ones:

- prepare and develop school leaders using innovative approaches that address the broader role and responsibilities of leaders, and that use core technologies to achieve intended outcomes;
- are designed to produce leaders who work to build student-centered schools with the capacity for high performance and continuous improvement towards that end; and
- take a system-wide perspective, so that the programmes are aligned with the larger goals and processes of the system concerning school improvement and student performance (Schleicher, 2012).

An overview of leadership development programmes in the public and private sector (Earley and Jones 2009) confirmed that effective leadership development programmes have many similarities as identified above. They make use of action and experiential learning to make the learning process 'real', encourage development at three levels: self, team and organisation, and have a core mission statement around which the system and programmes are built (Earley and Jones 2009, p.x). They also provided a culture that is supportive of leadership development at all levels, make use of mentoring to help experienced leaders develop aspiring leaders, assess the development of leaders from a number of different perspectives and make good use of technology and e-learning.

According to Kelley and Peterson (2000), effective preparatory and induction programmes have experiential learning as a core component, use a number of methods and practices described in next section and provide meaningful context-based opportunities and support in applying newly acquired knowledge into practice. There is evidence to suggest that process-based models anchored

in participants' schools and individual needs are more effective in promoting leadership learning than traditional content-based programmes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; The Scottish Government, 2014). As leadership development occurs more and more in context, this is achieved by strong collaboration between training providers and schools - a feature identified as common in most innovative US preparatory programmes (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Jackson and Kelly, 2005).

Drawing from their experience in working with principals in ways to improve school leadership through contextually grounded need-based approaches to professional development, Walker and Dimmock (2005) point to the fact that many leadership development programmes disregard the complexity and divergence of the different contexts within which school leaders work, and fail, thus, to connect theory to practice. In consequence, training programmes prevent headteachers' meaningful involvement in their own and peers' learning, resulting in participants' failure to shape their professional identity in terms of seeing themselves as capable leaders to handle challenges in authentic school contexts. From this standpoint, Walker and Dimmock (2005) argued for school-based approaches in leadership development and greater headteachers' involvement in their learning, so as to enhance their PS and shape their understanding of how headship is enacted in specific contexts. Similarly, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) found that strong collaboration between preparatory programme providers and districts that provide opportunities for leadership learning in authentic school contexts increase role clarity and the technical expertise of aspiring heads, changed role conceptions and develop skills and professional behaviours needed to succeed in post.

The value of the increased leaders' input to their leadership development and personal preparation for headship had also been acknowledged by the National College, which had launched the 'Early Headship Provision' (EHP) some time

ago. The New Visions<sup>3</sup> programme, which formed the core of the EHP, was designed to support participants' transition to headship and their first two years in post. In 2010, 'Head Start' replaced New Visions. Head Start, as well as its ancestor 'New Visions', constituted a practical, school-focused programme built on powerful professional learning networks and made use of a wide range of approaches to leadership learning, such as problem-solving, peer support, coaching, e-learning, action learning and mentoring by experienced consultant school leaders (Paterson and West-Burnham, 2005; Diamond et al., 2013). The sharing of experiences within an online network community of novice heads and online learning modules were all part of the revised programme.

Research into 'New Visions' programme (Bush and Glover, 2005; Bush, Briggs and Middlewood, 2006; Bush et al., 2006) made a useful contribution to the knowledge base about what 'works' in leadership development for newly appointed heads in England. The adopted problem-solving approaches and the opportunity for experience sharing among headteachers attending the training had been considered as the most positive aspects of the programme (Bush and Glover, 2005; NCSL, 2005b; Paterson and West-Burnham, 2005). Furthermore, examining the impact of 'New Visions' upon participants and their schools, Bush et al. (2006) found that the programme enabled new heads to establish their professional identity with confidence and develop enduring impact on the PS of participants, in terms of developing the knowledge and skills needed for headship, and generating new understandings about themselves and their schools. These findings are currently confirmed by international findings about effective components of exemplary headship preparatory and induction programmes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Schleicher, 2012).

Further research into effective leadership development programmes shows that high levels of adult learning about school leadership can occur as a result of attending an off-site training programme or because of the learning

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<sup>3</sup> New Visions was first offered in March 2002. In April 2010, it was replaced by Head Start programme for newly appointed headteachers and it was in operation until March 2014.

opportunities created within the workplace. That's why the best leadership development programmes try to benefit from the strengths of both workplace and workshop learning (Earley and Jones, 2010), providing, thus, critical learning opportunities for participants. According to OECD report leadership training for newly appointed school leaders which combines theoretical and practical knowledge and self-study 'can help to shape initial school leadership practices and build networks through which the leaders can share their concerns' (Schleicher, 2012, p.28).

Nonetheless, apart from knowledge and skills, dispositions are also needed to perform headship effectively. Hence, training programmes may also inculcate 'values and norms regarding what schools can and should be and how leadership can help in making these visions a reality' (Crow and Glascock, 1995, p.40). Moreover, as Sackney and Walker (2006) found, new heads' performance is improved when different technical and interpersonal skills are involved in the learning process, such as teacher supervision, conferencing and evaluation skills, financial management skills, communication skills and instructional leadership skills. They also pointed to the need to incorporate a variety of conflict management skills to handle interpersonal conflicts, as well as dealing with pupils' with severe behavioural problems as key areas for additional training of heads.

Bush and Jackson (2002) argued for headship provision to be available at the postgraduate level, by considering headship a complex role that requires headteachers to develop understanding, as well as knowledge and skills beyond description to analysis and synthesis entailed in these programmes. However, there is little evidence to support the effectiveness of graduate-level or district-level leadership development programmes on the PS of headteachers (Murphy and Vriesenga, 2004; Orr and Orphanos, 2011). Also, research on the value of exemplary leadership preparation on heads' capacity to engage effectively in leadership practices that promote school improvement and student learning has

been sparse (Murphy and Vriesenga, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Orr and Orphanos, 2011).

What is evident from the research literature reviewed in this section is that exemplary leadership development programmes in different countries adopt an andragogical approach (Knowles, 1989) to leadership learning that reflects the adult learning principles. According to Bush (2013), training initiatives grounded in adult learning characteristics are usually valued as being more appropriate to participants' needs and relevant to their school context. How adults learn best and how adult learning principles underpin the strategies incorporated into effective leadership development are discussed below.

### **Headship learning and adult learning theories**

As pointed out in previous section, many of the distinctive features of exemplary headship preparatory and induction programmes are anchored in adult learning. According to Connolly (2008) 'adult education includes all education that adults undertake, after they are finished with the compulsory education provision' (p.4). Knowles (1989) proposed that adult learning is characterised by the following assumptions with regards to adult learners:

- Adults need to know why they need to learn something before commencing learning.
- Adults have a psychological need to be treated by others as capable of self-direction.
- Adults have accumulated experiences and these can be rich resources for learning.
- In adults, readiness to learn is a function of the need to perform social roles.
- Adults have a problem-centred orientation to learning.
- For adults, the more potent motivators are internal (pp.83-84).

The prominent features of adult learning may be categorised in four interlinked phases, which are: adult learning as a lifelong process, adult learning as self-directed, adult education as learner centred and adult learning as a social process. The way adults learn impacts headship learning and the way new heads cope with their new job as they go through various experiences and encounter personal and professional change. In light of this categorisation, the impact of adult learning characteristics on headship learning is explored below and the ways in which school leaders have been found to learn better are illustrated.

Headship learning is a lifelong process for school leaders, which is heavily situated in context (Crawford, 2014). It begins early in an individual's career and it is continually shaped by leadership experiences that help school leaders develop their new professional self-concept. Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) examined self-direction in adult learning and found a connection between leadership learning and best practices for preparing school leaders. They discovered that self-directed learners who have clearly defined goals are more engaged in the learning process than those who do not. Adult learning providers should facilitate such growth and help learners to achieve their goals in becoming effective school leaders by providing a learning environment which encourages learner control (Connolly, 2008). In this way, the learner is at the heart of adult education seeking self-improvement to develop into a new role, thereby becoming part of a new professional identity, while shaping their views on headship (ibid).

According to Jackson and Parry (2008), individuals study leadership in five ways: attempt to lead, observe leadership in action, talk about leadership and read and write about it – not necessarily in a linear process. However, enacting leadership is much more complex than talking, reading, writing and seeing together. Hence, they claimed that individuals learn the most from 'doing leadership' and especially from situations in which they have failed to lead.



However, school leaders need knowledge, skills and insights required for their jobs, which involve more than interpreting new experiences in generating understanding of the context based on accidental or out-dated learning. Headship learning is a highly contextual process that takes account of the social influence on learning and the importance of experiential learning and mentoring in the intellectual independence and self-direction of adult learners (Connolly, 2008). Research literature shows that the greater involvement of school leaders in their own and peers' learning has the potential to contribute appreciably to the contextual relevance and the usefulness of many leadership development programmes (Walker and Dimmock, 2005; Bush et al., 2006). 'Observational' or 'vicarious' learning and modelling have been acknowledged to be 'the most powerful means of transmitting values, attitudes, and patterns of thought and behavior' (Bandura, 1996, p.5514), while mentoring is central to the headship learning process of obtaining the skills, knowledge and qualities needed for headship (Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004; Crow, 2006; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Similarly, Louis (1980) acknowledged the importance of communities of practice from whom adult learners learn. Being a member of a community of practice was something that many of the heads in the International Study of Principal Preparation (ISPP) seemed to value in training programmes (Ylimaki and Jacobson, 2013). By reflecting on other heads' experiences and their implications, new heads are encouraged to adjust their conceptual models of headship and reform their professional identity as heads. In this way, job knowledge and support provided through ongoing relationships with fellow heads in a community of practice is also part of headship learning being contextual (Crawford, 2014).

A significant challenge for leadership development programmes is to address the individual learning needs and the diversity of school-specific needs brought to the training, so as to develop effective leadership capacity among the participants. This consideration is particularly relevant to Cyprus where the

contextual and social character of adult learning is overlooked. The NITPSL's training cohort is comprised by pre-primary, primary and special school headteachers, with diverse anticipatory and professional socialisation experiences about headship and leadership enactment, who attend the same induction programme. Therefore, a training programme underpinned by adult learning principles that would have the potential to shape professional identity construction and the way individuals see themselves as capable school leaders to enact headship in particular contexts appears as necessary.

Having briefly considered the characteristics of adult learning that underpin exemplary leadership development programmes in western countries, the next section examines the most promising methods and strategies upon which leadership development programmes are anchored to maximise leadership learning and match leadership theory to the contextual and individual needs of headteachers.

### **Supporting strategies for leadership development**

The complex environment in which beginning principals take on their positions and the changing nature of headship require new features of headteacher socialisation nowadays. As summarised by Darling-Hammond et al. (2007, p.11), effective leadership development programmes incorporate strategies that maximize learning, learning transfer and leadership identity formation, such as the use of cohorts, student-centered instructional pedagogies and mentoring support, as well as opportunities to apply theory to practice through field-based experiences and high quality internships. A brief exploration of the most promising methods and practices utilised in the educational sector, as well as other sectors, for leadership development follows. Such exploration is hoped to provide insights into how formal preparation and induction of headteachers, as well as informal on-the-job learning, prepare headteachers for their new roles and shape professional identity formation.

Research into other sectors shows that organisations make use of a range of methods for developing leaders on-the-job which are perceived to be effective. Drawing on research involving managers in five case-study organisations across different sectors, excluding education, Sinclair and Agyeman (2004) found that among the effective methods used by organisations to develop leaders were the following:

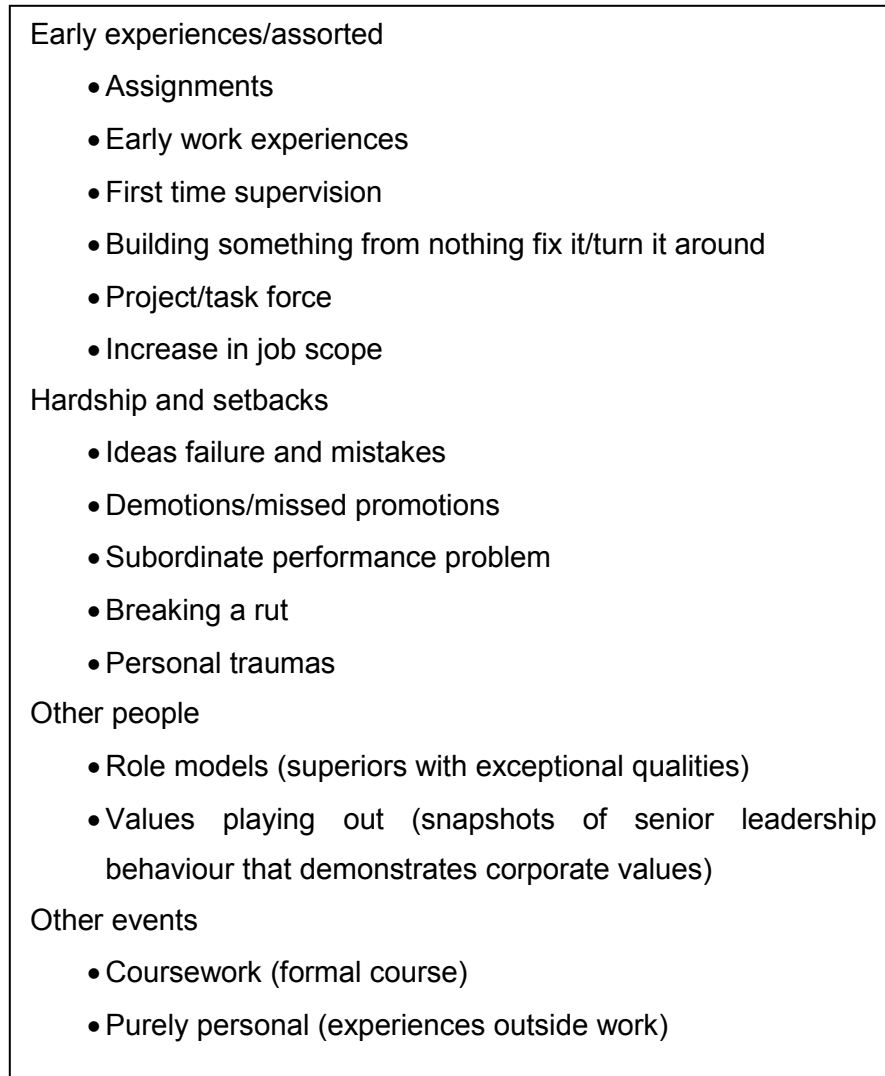
- training and development programmes
- formal qualifications
- experiential learning
- long-term global assignments
- international teams and forums
- mentoring and coaching
- increasing self-awareness
- tailoring development.

Hartle (2004), considering the best practice in leadership development in 25 organisations outside education, including public and private organisations and smaller companies, argued that the experiences that have the most leadership development potential could be grouped into four types: a) on-the-job assignments, b) working with other people, c) hardships and setbacks and d) other experiences such as formal developmental programmes and non-work experiences. By applying this categorisation to the education sector, he suggested school-based activities that were relevant to the development of leadership talent and proposed practical actions that schools could adopt in providing opportunities for school leaders' growth, such as coaching and mentoring, critical friendship, job shadowing, project leadership, action research, structured reflection, inter-visitation, networking, as well as courses, workshops and higher education programmes.

Similarly, McCall (1998) identified 16 different developmental experiences, other than formal training programmes, capable of impacting on the development of

leaders significantly. These are shown in Figure 3.1 grouped under four headings: a) early experiences/assorted, b) hardship and setbacks, c) other people, and d) other experiences.

**Figure 3.1: Supporting strategies for leader development**



Source: McCall (1998)

His work draws attention to the importance of presenting individuals with leadership development opportunities at an early stage in their career, as leadership development begins long before a person achieves a leading post. Although the activities listed below may be more relevant to other countries, one

of the objectives of the thesis is to identify the types of activities that enhance headship learning and support provision during induction in post.

Along with others, Sackney and Walker (2006, pp.346-347) identified numerous professional learning activities that support headship learning and enhance new heads in becoming effective in their new roles. These include:

- principal association leadership institutes
- short courses
- conferences
- leadership modules
- leadership development programmes and
- certificate workshop programmes.

Leadership development has been found to be enhanced by using an assortment of the above methods and support mechanisms complementary or in a reciprocal way that create leadership capability. According to Kelley and Peterson (2000), effective preparatory and induction programmes have experiential learning as their core component and use a number of the above methods to provide meaningful context-based opportunities and support for beginning heads to apply newly acquired knowledge into practice. Such personalisation through mentoring, coaching and other methods is justified because school leaders as adults are expected to be involved in determining their own leadership learning (Bush, 2013) which should be tailored to their specific learning needs.

A central component of the most powerful leadership development programme is to allow candidates to engage in critical field-based high-quality administrative internships, also termed 'leadership apprenticeships' (Earley, 2009), which involve the necessary skills for teamwork and collaboration (Crow, 2006). Internships can be viewed as a particular form of networking that may facilitate the PS of aspiring heads by enabling them to develop 'their own conception of headship' (Crow, 2001, p.6) and, hence, 'a clear understanding of their roles

and responsibilities' (Heck, 2003, p.247). Internships that provide future principals with the opportunity to work with 'a variety of students, a variety of effective, culturally relevant teaching, and a variety of school and work settings' (Crow, 2006, p.318) are likely to prepare better aspiring principals for the kind of demographically diverse school settings they will encounter. However, it has been argued that administrative internships can offer more learning than school placements (Crawford and Earley, 2011), only if they are reinforced by other programme elements, such as field-based inquiries, action research and other components that allow candidate heads to connect theory and practice, under the supervision of a qualified mentor (Crow, 2006; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Coaching and mentoring have a central place in exemplary induction programmes and their use as effective tools for socialising new heads in post is a common practice in many western countries. Coaching enables the novice head to make sense of the complex and oftentimes competing demands that surround his or her work during the initial socialisation period and help novice principals into the role of instructional leader (Hart, 1993; Matthews and Crow, 2003; Oplatka, 2012). Leadership coaching is a learning relationship that occurs through reflective goal-focused conversations between experienced and novice heads (Rhodes, 2012). Similarly, mentoring as part of a leadership development programme helps novice headteachers to expand their knowledge and skills for effective headship. While first-time heads are able to work with experienced practitioners in authentic school settings, they develop an understanding of school leadership in action and the professional expectations attached to headship. Hence, leadership mentoring has the potential to enhance role-identity transformation from teacher to headteacher (Crow and Matthews, 1998; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Moorosi, 2014). According to Bowne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004, p.471):

Role socialisation for aspiring principals is an intricate process of learning and reflection that requires working closely with leadership mentors in authentic field-based experiences, developing confidence through engaging in

leadership activities and administrative tasks, and assuming a new professional self-concept grounded in confidence about leading schools.

Research literature also suggests that when mentoring is considered in the context of the new role of headteachers and the complexity of headship, it is likely to be particularly influential for new heads' effectiveness in post (Jackson and Kelley, 2002). Through mentoring, newly appointed school leaders have access to guidance and advice of experienced school leaders (Schleicher, 2012) to handle challenges during early years in post. Hence, along with acknowledging the conservative bias of using experienced headteachers as mentors to pass on headship learning to the newcomers (Crow and Matthews, 1998), the need for trained mentors who may be in position to provide a variety of learning experiences in diverse settings and who encourage innovative, culturally sensitive leadership practices to evolve becomes apparent.

Acknowledging adult learning as a social process, Louis (1980) proposed that adult learners prefer group cohort learning, through group activities and networking. One of methods used widely as part of headship induction programmes is networking among participants, which is the main approach to group learning adopted by the NCSL (Bush, 2013) and can help to foster collaborative problem-solving and alleviate the feeling of isolation that some school leaders experience (Hobson et al. 2003; Earley and Jones, 2010). Mentoring and networking with practicing principals also appears to foster collegial relationships that can sustain newly appointed heads during the difficult early years in post (Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004) and enable them to 'get stronger traction in implementing the more complex and sophisticated aspects of an instructional leadership agenda' (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p.23). Hence, mentoring and networking are at the heart of any induction programme and imperative for the socialisation of new headteachers (Weindling, 2004; Bengtson et al., 2013), as they potentially assist beginning headteachers in addressing issues relating to various aspects of headship.

Arising research evidence suggests that leadership learning may also occur by observing experienced headteachers at work. Shadowing headteachers can be

a useful tool for learning about leadership practice, by providing insights into the nature of principalship and increasing our understanding of what headship entails and how it is enacted (Simkins, et al., 2009; Earley, 2012b). Moreover, shadowing headteachers may prove an insightful opportunity for reflection and feedback from fellow professionals, as well a leadership development opportunity for both; the experienced shadowed head and the new head (Earley et al., 2011).

Although structured preparatory and induction programmes are essential elements for the PS of new headteachers, learning the role is highly context dependent and the majority of new principals learn 'by doing' or by reflecting individually or collegially on their positive and negative experiences in post (Drapper and McMichael, 2000). For instance, an Australian beginning principal adopted an action learning approach to his professional learning with the support of two experienced primary school principals (Quong, 2006). He characterised 'learning headship' as a complicated process of learning and reflection that requires socialisation into a new role. What he found particularly helpful in confronting people and situations is building the 'principal's toolkit' which involves learning based on experiences, as well as knowledge and skills gained on-the-job that could be used to inform headship enactment. A continues reflection on his and other heads' OS experiences in schools enable him to experience daily success in handling issues related to school's work and processes after some time in post. Drawing upon the principal's toolkit, he dealt with arising problems effectively and gained greater knowledge of school context and the support expected within schools.

Reflection on practice may prove an important form of leadership development that may enhance the professional identity formation of new headteachers (Kelly and Saunders, 2010; Earley and Bubb, 2013). The importance of reflection for headship learning is pointed out in the following argument of Hartle (2004, p.65) who maintained that



reflection and review are often the Achilles' heel of leadership development yet they are demonstrably necessary to leadership learning and development as they are important means of converting information into knowledge and creating personal meaning and understanding.

Whilst research suggests that an assortment of methods and strategies attached to leadership development programmes increase their effectiveness in preparing candidate and novice school leaders for their new role, Hobson et al. (2003) pointed to the fact that further research is needed to establish the effectiveness of these strategies on the OS of beginning headteachers. Similarly, Crow (2006), drawing from reform initiatives in the USA regarding headship provision, indicated that the incorporation of strategies, such as mentoring, coaching and networking, in preparatory and induction programmes without a broader understanding of beginning headteachers' socialisation and a more relevant understanding of the context in which organisational socialisation occurs (Crow, 2006), may generate negative feelings of inadequate preparation amongst newcomers. Furthermore, although such strategies have been influential in western educational contexts, the assumption that they could automatically be applied cross-culturally is now challenged (Walker and Dimmock, 2005).

A number of strategies and methods that have been found to be supportive for headship learning were described above. What is explored in the subsequent section is how formal preparatory and induction training, as well as informal leadership learning through accumulated anticipatory and PS experiences, may help shape the professional identity of individuals as headteachers and readiness to assume the post. The impact of OS experiences in reshaping conceptions of headship is also discussed in brief.

### **The formation of a headteacher's professional identity**

The second research question of this study '*How do Cypriot novice primary heads shape their professional identity and become socialised into their role during their early years in post?*' aimed to uncover role conceptions of headship

and the process of professional identity formation for new Cypriot primary headteachers as they progress to headship. The construction of professional identity is influenced by numerous anticipatory and professional socialisation experiences, while it is ultimately reshaped by organisational socialisation (Merton, 1968; Crow, 1992). The consultation of international literature on this theme was hoped to illuminate our understanding of Cypriot headteachers' identity formation process.

Scholars of identity in leadership (DeRue and Ashford, 2010; Ely et al., 2011) agree that developing one's identity as a leader and leadership learning are similar processes, as they both entail a strong relationship between the self and leadership development. Ely et al. (2011) regard leadership development and the formation of leader identity as 'recursive and mutually-reinforcing' processes. Similarly, Lumby and English (2009) have argued that a preparatory programme for aspiring principals is an 'initiation into identity construction and subsequent performance' (p.97) and, perhaps, the first level of PS. However, although the PS of heads normally begins in the pre-appointment phase of a head's career and continues into early years in post, headship learning is a dynamic and mounting career-long process that begins much earlier and involves more than what happens during formal preparation.

The professional identity of school leaders evolves over time and it is shaped by various leadership experiences during one's career in relation to individuals' understanding of the role and responsibilities of headship. Such experiences may include informal leadership learning, as shaped by personal experiences of schooling, interaction with previous heads, involvement in school leadership practice, professional development initiatives, modelling, mentoring, as well as networking and shared learning (Greenfield, 1985; Crow and Glascock, 1995). As indicated by the respective literature, such learning may enhance aspiring principals' identity formation (Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004; Moorosi, 2014) and leadership enactment in schools.

Research evidence shows that anticipatory socialisation experiences are part of the leadership development process, as various teachers' formal and informal leadership experiences in schools and professional associations contribute to the development of principals' role conceptions (Hart, 1993; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). In the NFER study, when heads were asked what they perceived to be the single most powerful development opportunity of their career in helping to shape their understanding of school leadership, both 'on-the-job' development opportunities such as working with others, especially a good role model, and 'off-the-job' development opportunities, such as postgraduate studies, were noted as highly significant (Earley and Weindling, 2004).

Crow and Glascock's study (1995) about aspiring US principals identified three major sources of role conception: a) observer of principal work while they were teachers, b) their own expertise as teachers, and c) non-education work experience. The participants in this study, who had spent an average of 17.3 years as teachers, underlined the significance of anticipatory socialisation experiences for headship learning and they were in position to identify three types of skills acquired from working in schools or other contexts during their career which they felt were helpful in headship: interpersonal, special tasks and leadership. Interpersonal skills, which were highly emphasised, included communicating, motivating and working with diverse groups of people. Special task skills included experiences in school evaluation and organisation. The category of leadership included decisiveness, assertiveness, flexibility and facilitative skills.

In an influential first study regarding the professional growth of 18 practitioners in a principal preparation programme in the USA, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) revealed four major themes that influence practitioner's growth towards headship: a) role conceptualisation of principalship, b) initial socialisation into a new community of practice, c) role-identity transformation, and d) purposeful engagement based on career aspirations for principalship. Participants in a headship preparatory programme indicated that 'the key socialization

experience [for headship] was working directly with school administrators in real settings' (p.486), while employing additional activities, such as attending conferences and participating in district principal meetings, enhanced their PS and prepared them for headship. In this way, research findings support the notion that the process of becoming a headteacher extends beyond leadership development programmes and working with experienced principals in authentic settings is central to the process of candidate headteachers' socialisation into a new community of practice.

Moorosi (2014), drawing evidence from a mixed-methods study that evaluated the impact of a leadership development programme, explored South African school leaders' identity construction as it was shaped and influenced by experiences from the programme. Her analysis identified three themes reflecting the factors that shaped the leadership identities of the participants: a) the identification and development of personal attributes, b) the intersection of gender, race, background and context, and c) interactive learning through mentoring and networking. Interviews with school leaders conducted prior, during and at the end of the programme suggest that 'leaders developed an improved sense of self at different stages throughout the various aspects of the programme' (p.803) with women being benefited more despite their less advantaged entry status. Such findings confirm Bennis' (2009) view that leaders achieve different milestones of leadership identity development at different stages in their career.

In an attempt to explore the complexities the identity construction process involves, Jones (2008) interviewed ten British male headteachers serving in diverse school settings at different levels by asking them to reflect retrospectively upon their roles and life experiences within their early years that shaped their professional identity construction. She found that these heads had a strong sense of their own abilities and self-confidence of succeeding in post as motivating factors for seeking headship. Moreover, their professional identity was shaped by societal 'stereotypes' of hegemonic masculinity and

preconceptions that were continually reinforced to heads from a range of different group; parents, governors and the society. Male headteachers' professional identity was bound up with a sense of power and discipline, and not nurture that characterise their female counterparts. Male heads appeared aware of the weight of society's view of primary teaching as 'women's work' that pushes male teachers into the upper years of schooling where they are fast-tracked into leadership roles. As Ribbins (1999, p. 84) writes:

[...] future head teachers are socialised into deep rooted norms and values by the action and interaction of key agencies including the family, school and other reference groups. These agencies [...] shape personality by generating a conception of self, along with the rudiments of a work style attitude and outlook.

Cowie and Crawford's (2009) study into headship preparation in England and Scotland explored the experiences that headteachers encounter when taking up the post, by considering the relationship between headship preparation and the leadership and management practices of novice primary heads in the two countries. Using narrative methodology, they sought the views of seven headteachers - the majority of whom were women, regarding their paths to headship and experiences faced on appointment to headship. Headteachers' narratives suggest that NPQH and SQH have been particularly helpful in equipping new headteachers with the 'skills and abilities required to deal productively and confidently with the issues they are likely to face on appointment to headship' (Cowie and Crawford, 2009, p.12), as well as the qualities and dispositions needed for headship. Collaborative activities and networking - which developed beyond preparation programmes - have urged aspiring headteachers to exchange experiences, develop and extend their learning, and establish their professional identity with self-belief and high levels of confidence in engaging with the demands of the new role. Therefore, the responsibilities of headship did not appear to threaten new headteachers who saw themselves as competent school leaders to handle challenges in context.

These findings confirm the findings of an earlier study concerning a detailed analysis of novice headteachers logs and their reflection on headship

professional development, which showed that headship preparatory programmes enhanced headteachers' ability to handle challenges, by developing their confidence and self-belief (Cowie and Crawford, 2008). As Crawford and Earley (2011) have noted, individual headteachers need to be helped to develop confidence in their leadership and management capabilities and to acquire the appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills for headship.

Similarly, Browne-Ferrigno (2007), in an exploratory case study of participants' reflections on their professional growth, conducted during the implementation of 'The Principals Excellence Program' (PEP) in the USA, indicated that socialisation experiences stimulate role transformation and influence practitioners' learning. Participants in the programme that was based on situated learning, leadership mentoring, community building and succession planning theories reported increased confidence and readiness for their new role, as well as a change in their perceptions of principalship. The cyclical pattern of classroom learning followed by active-learning experiences in schools and guided reflection about those experiences, helped participants to grow professionally and gain broader insights about principal responsibilities. Moreover, leadership mentoring engaging experienced, novice, and aspiring principals enhanced headship learning through listening to peers sharing their experiences and 'forced everyone to examine their perceptions about the principalship' by adopting new behaviours (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007, p.22).

Drawing from evidence provided by the studies presented earlier in this chapter, it becomes evident that prospective heads do not assume the post as *tabula rasa*, but they bring to headship knowledge, skills and dispositions developed through various socialisation experiences. Along with leadership competencies and knowledge, new headteachers assume headship with an initial conception of their role as headteachers they have formed through preparatory training, shadowing former heads, experience of schooling and leadership experiences, experience from non-education contexts (Hart, 1993; Crow and Glascock, 1995;

Browne-Ferrigno, 2003), as well as through reflection on their professional practice (Cowie and Crawford, 2008).

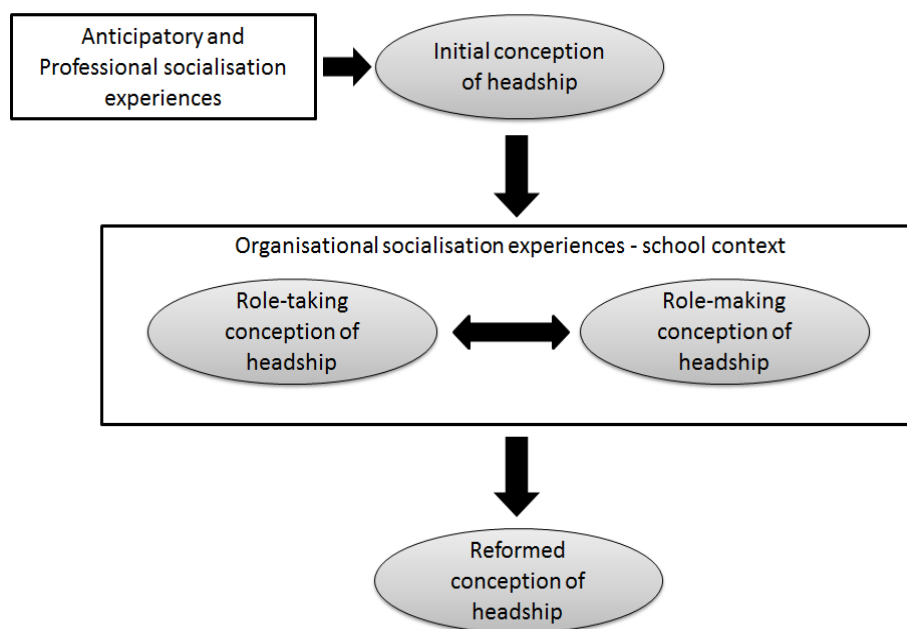
On entering headship, a useful approach to understand headship learning and the reconceptualisation of headship by novice heads is Merton's (1968) socialisation theory which emphasise the two-way interaction between the new headteacher and school context. 'Organizations protect against the intrusion of new members, values, and beliefs by routinization and through formal and informal mechanisms, one of which is socialisation' (Hart, 1991, p. 469), while novice heads have an active role in learning the ropes in the new school, as they are 'socialized into a new community of practice and a new role identity' (Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004, p.488).

Newly appointed heads bring with them to headship their own set of values, beliefs and role expectations which are tested as they are socialised in schools. In cases where the particular organisation holds conflicting values and norms to those learnt during the PS phase (Crow and Glascock, 1995; Hart, 1991), the continuing interactions between the individual and the context initiates the process of role-identity transition by developing a new identity - headteacher's identity (Daresh and Male 2000; Crawford and Earley, 2011). From this perspective, the professional identity formation of heads often constitute a balancing act between the external and the internal expectations placed upon headteachers. According to Murray (2013, p.529),

the internal view of professional self is a vital component because it is based on what a person values in their roles and informs their professional practice. These internal beliefs and perceptions need to be reconciled with a critical interpretation to enable the individual to practise their profession with integrity.

As shown in Figure 3.2 below, a traditional notion of effective socialisation of new heads in schools often implies a certain degree of conformity; a 'role-taking' process (Hart, 1993), where new heads take a role conception given by the school, the district and the community.

**Figure 3.2: Conception of headship**



However, given that their organisational socialisation is a two-way process, the greater complexity for newcomers is to adopt a ‘role-making’ direction, where their initial role conception is altered to encompass the attributes provided by the school context (Crow, 2006). From this standpoint, the socialisation process of headteachers entails both role-taking and role-making (Mathews and Crow, 2003).

On understanding the formation of a headteacher’s professional identity, some researchers (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Matthews and Crow, 2003) talked about a fourth type of socialisation - *Personal Socialisation*. Personal socialisation involves a change of self-identity that happens as new headteachers learn new roles and develop new values and dispositions for the way headship should be enacted. It occurs at the workplace and entails new headteachers’ attempt to align their own and others’ perceptions of themselves within a larger societal perspective about effective headship, headteacher’s role and agency (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). In the twenty-first century, a different professional orientation is needed than the one found in previous generations of headteachers, as the



headteacher's role is increasingly being viewed as the one of an advocate for pupils' learning. Although personal socialisation may be part of both professional and organisational socialisation, it does not reside in either (Crow, 2006, 2007; Weindling and Dimmock, 2006), but it is rather shaped by both.

Research evidence from Belgium indicates that both professional and organisational socialisation experiences during early headship have an impact on 'the professional growth and on the way beginning principals construct for themselves a meaningful job' (Vandenberghe, 2003, p.5). In his study of primary Belgian headteachers, Vandenberghe (2003) proposes that the evaluation and interpretation of many different positive and negative experiences occurring while in post has the potential to shape the way headship is framed and enacted. He considered 'positive' experiences those indicating appreciation for the new head both inside and outside the school and enhancing understanding of the role in part of the new headteacher. He defined as 'negative' the interventions or actions that complicated a headteacher's life. Most Belgian headteachers in Vandenberghe's study reported positive experiences that led beginning headteachers to experience personal efficacy and job satisfaction as follows: influence of the family (25%), a colleague-principal (24%), external educational advisors (25%) and the impact of training activities in which they participated (21%), while the importance of the informal contacts they had with fellow principals during training was concurrently emphasised. Furthermore, one-in-five headteachers (19%) referred to external influences coming from parents, indicating appreciation and support to headteachers' work, as well as negative critic, lack of understanding and pressure on headteachers. Novice principals also mentioned human interactions with staff as the major negative experience, as their disapproval of new heads' vision for the school generated feelings of low efficacy among heads and lack of trust. However, as found in this study, the professional growth of beginning headteachers resulted from both negative and positive experiences in post that helped reshaping the professional identity of new heads and enhanced personal efficacy in solving problems arising in schools.

These findings are in line with DeRue and Ashford's (2010) argument that one's professional identity as a school leader is strengthened if it is relationally recognised through his or her actions being affirmed by others within a particular school context. Such recognition, along with the internalisation of a leader's identity, are central to the process of becoming a headteacher and form the second level of leadership identity construction (Ely et al., 2011). The third level of identity formation is the collective endorsement of individuals as part of a broader social group (DeRue and Ashford 2010), where leadership identity is enriched through 'shared representations and collective meanings' (Day, 2001, p. 585) amongst leaders and those who are led. This approach is underpinned by a philosophy that links leadership development to personal and professional learning:

The primary criterion for leadership is the ability to learn from experiences in order to enhance [...] capability. If leadership is to be developed in everyone then they have to be helped to process their personal and professional experiences through a value system and in response to others in order to evolve a growing understanding of what it means to be a leader. (West-Burnham and O' Sullivan, 1998, p.24)

In this section, the formation of headteachers' professional identity through anticipatory, professional and organisational socialisation experiences was explored and its relation to headship learning was established. The ways in which school culture, the contextual peculiarities of schools and the difficulties new heads encounter in post shape the organisational socialisation of beginning heads are discussed in the following chapter.

## **Summary**

Earlier in this chapter, an overview of leadership development initiatives in different parts of the world was offered, the characteristics of exemplary leadership development programmes were identified and the supporting strategies and mechanisms incorporated into training to enhance headship preparation and induction were discussed. Finally, professional identity formation and the way leadership learning impact this process were considered.

Such exploration aimed to shed light on the professional socialisation of new heads and professional identity formation in Cyprus.

Research findings suggest that when certain characteristics of adult learning underpin headship preparatory and induction programmes, participants value the training as being more appropriate to their individual needs and relevant to school context. Moreover, research evidence proves that effective leadership development programmes take advantage of both training and school context to promote headship learning by providing field-based opportunities for new and aspiring heads to test theory into practice. Aspiring headteachers' engagement in complex and adaptive challenging activities in situ, as well as strategies that enhance networking and individualised learning, such as internships, mentoring, reflection and job shadowing, have been found to shape leadership learning, and, thus, the way prospective headteachers form their professional identity and conceptions of headship.

New headteachers reach the post with conceptions of their role as heads as developed through various formal and informal anticipatory and professional socialisation experiences. Initial conceptions of headship are ultimately reshaped in light of the contextual peculiarities and school culture, while new heads' professional identity as heads frame leadership enactment in particular contexts.

Given the educational reform demands on Cypriot headteachers, 'leadership must grow by design rather than by default' (National College, 2007, p.17). This will help ensure effective leadership development for the requirements of headship and successful leadership enactment. Therefore, there is much to learn from exploring headship preparation and induction programmes in other contexts and the strategies attached to exemplary leadership development programmes so as to support the acquisition of skills, knowledge and dispositions needed to enact headship successfully in Cypriot schools.

# CHAPTER IV: THE ORGANISATIONAL SOCIALISATION OF NEW HEADTEACHERS

## Introduction

This chapter provides a synthesis of research studies that have attempted to characterise the induction stage of headship. Transition to headship is viewed through the lens of organisational socialisation theory (Merton, 1968; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979) which holds that organisational socialisation (OS) is a bi-directional process of interaction between the headteacher and school context, as well as research studies into the challenges encountered by first-time heads on assuming headship. It considers the OS experiences of new headteachers in schools and particularly focuses on the ways in which headteachers reform their professional identity, establish their credibility in post and initiate changes to implement their vision for the school. Central to the process of school socialisation is school culture which has the potential to shape the way new headteachers develop professionally and construct for themselves a meaningful conception of their role in post. School characteristics, such as school location and size, headteacher's characteristics and the challenges beginning heads face in post are also considered in shaping the OS of new heads.

The organisational socialisation perspective (Merton, 1968; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979), which explores socialisation into a new post within an organisation and the two-way interaction between the appointee and the organisational culture, as well as the cognitive approach to socialisation (Louis, 1980), formed the theoretical framework for answering the following research questions:

- How do Cypriot novice primary heads shape their professional identity and become socialised into their role during their early years in post?

- What are the most important challenges that newly appointed primary headteachers in Cyprus face during early headship?

## **Organisational socialisation theory**

As defined in the previous chapter, *professional socialisation* entails the required skills, knowledge and dispositions to enact a leadership role (Hart, 1993; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Crow, 2006) which are acquired through personal experience of schooling and working with previous heads, first-hand involvement in leadership and management tasks (Crow and Glascock, 1995) and formal headship preparatory training (Greenfield, 1985; Weindling, 2003). *Organisational Socialisation* comes to the forefront when an individual assumes a position to a specific organisation and it includes learning the knowledge, values and behaviours necessary to perform the role within a particular organisational culture and context (Merton, 1968; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Weindling, 2003). Merton (1968) described *Organisational Socialisation* as a series of stages that newcomers move through to become organisational members, while Van Maanen and Schein (1979) defined it as ‘the process by which one “is taught and learns the ropes” of a new organisation role’ (p.211).

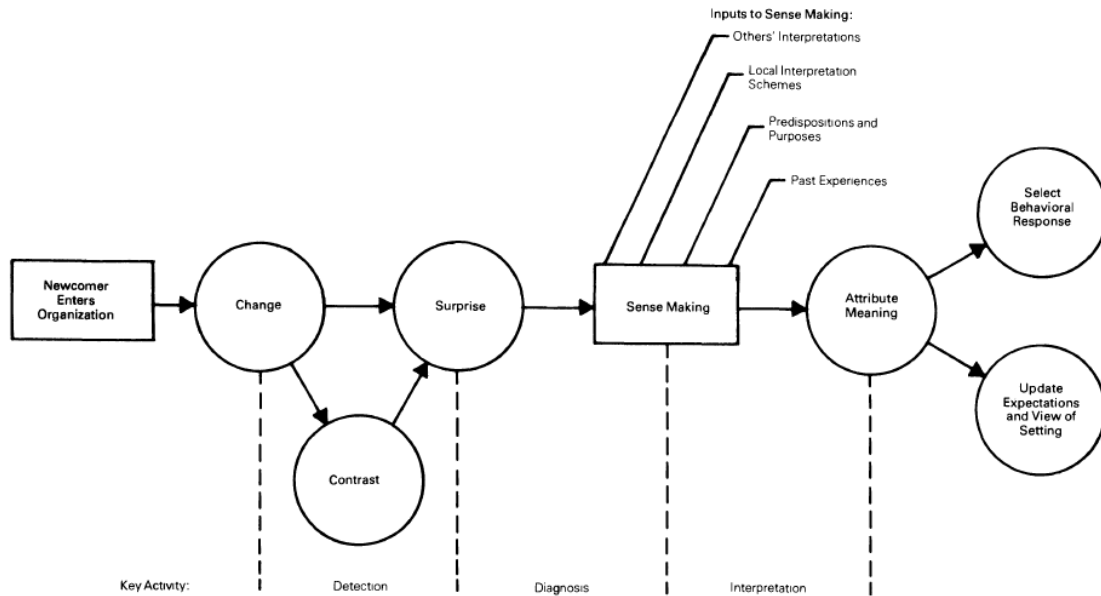
Within organisational socialisation theory, OS is viewed as a two-way interaction between the individual (the new headteacher) and the context (the school), where each tries to influence and change the other. Once a headteacher is appointed to a new post, the organisation through formal and informal social mechanisms tries to protect against the intrusion of new members, values, and beliefs (Hart, 1991), influencing, thus, the socialisation of the individual in a new school. According to Van Maanen and Schein (1979), the extent to which an organisation controls the socialisation of the newcomer could have potential effect on the successful adjustment of the new head to the organisation and the leadership enactment. From this perspective, OS and succession in post are viewed as two sides of the same process, as the first is ‘focusing on the group’s

influence on the newcomer, the other [is] interested in the newcomer's influence on the group' (Hart, 1991, p.496). The OS of the succeeding individuals can be viewed as resting on the continuum from sustaining and nurturing the current direction of school to changing direction towards school improvement.

At the same time, new headteachers have an active role in learning the ropes and interact with the norms and demands of schools, as they are 'socialized into a new community of practice and a new role identity' (Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004, p. 488). The typical OS of beginning principals is described as consisting of individual, informal, random, and variable learning (Greenfield, 1985). Newly appointed heads make sense of headship role in school by themselves or through informal feedback from teachers, parents, pupils and other leaders in school. Although most headteachers often become deputy heads prior to their appointment to headship, this socialisation experience provides a narrow conception of headship and rarely enables individuals to experience the full range of responsibilities that headship entails (Greenfield, 1985).

Along with the organisational socialisation theory (Merton, 1968; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979), Louis' (1980) cognitive approach to socialisation may explain headship learning and how newcomers make sense of the challenges they encounter on entering schools (see Figure 4.1 below). Louis (1980) proposed a new perspective identifying key features on newcomers' entry experiences and described the sense-making process individuals follow to cope with entry experiences of surprise, contrast and change. On entering an organisation, newcomers experiences 'disorientation, foreignness and a kind of sensory overload' (Louis, 1980, p. 230) due to their limited experience of how things are done in the new school context.

**Figure 4.1: Sense-making in organisational entry**



Source: Louis (1980, p.242)

Change was used to represent the external objective differences in moving from one organisation to another (e.g., a change in physical location, role and salary). Contrast was said to refer to the differences that emerge in the newcomer's perceptions while experiencing a new situation. Surprise was used to refer to differences between newcomers' anticipations of and actual experiences in the organisation. She suggested that surprise, which is an inevitable part of the organisational entry experience, may provoke cognition. In coping with surprises, individuals rely on a number of inputs, such as past experiences in handling similar situations and information searching from the 'insiders', to develop an 'interpretive schema' of the realities within the specific school contexts (Louis, 1980). On looking for explanation, new interpretations of surprises are developed and the necessary behavioural responses to the immediate situation are selected. Along with the behavioural responses to local context, newcomers' expectations and view of the setting is altered. In this context, new headteachers challenge their pre-conceptions of headship and adopt a new work-related social identity.

Louis (1980) social cognitive theory could provide a rich starting point in efforts to understand how newcomers learn 'the ropes' in and of new organisational cultures by attaching meaning to the experiences and social interactions in the new working context. In this thesis, where the professional and organisational socialisation experiences of newly appointed heads are in the core of the study, understanding the socialisation of new heads in schools and the way they shape their professional identity as head, while they experience surprises and attribute meaning to school culture, is immense for effective OS in schools.

Having discussed aspects of the social cognitive theory and the organisational socialisation theory that have informed this thesis, a review of the literature into transition to headship and the induction of novice heads in schools follows.

## **Transition to headship**

Making the transition from teaching to leading a school constitutes a major step in an individual's career (Daresh and Male, 2000) and involves socialisation into a new role and setting. Drawing on Merton's (1968) socialisation theory, Hart (1991) distinguished between two broad types of beginning headteachers' socialisation: the professional and the organisational that occur simultaneously and overlap during the induction stage of headship. During induction, the PS focuses on 'inculcating a conception of the role for newcomers', while OS on 'making these newcomers effective organizational members' (Crow, 2006, p.311). However, OS often overwhelms PS during early headship as the norms and values learnt during the PS process may differ significantly from those learnt during OS. That's why much research into headteachers' transition to headship explores both the socialisation process of novice headteachers in settling into a new role (Crow, 2006; Male, 2006) and their professional growth as heads (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003, 2007; Shoho and Barnett, 2010).

Armstrong (2011, p.27) frames the transition of teachers to leadership roles as 'existing in the relationship and processes between the individuals and groups'



and describes it as a socio-emotional experience that allows heads to reflect on their experiences to grasp understanding of the transition experience. Central to this process is *school culture*, which along with other features of the school and the leader, has the potential to facilitate or impede the socialisation process of new heads in new school contexts. What follows below is an exploration of the reasons initiating the process of seeking headship and the professional, organisational and personal aspects that transition to headship entails (Male, 2004, 2006).

Aspiring headteachers are motivated by a variety of reasons to make the transition from teaching to leading a school. On one hand, they are individuals ready to seek challenges beyond the classroom as they 'want to learn more about educational matters and to be involved in the local school policy' (Vandenberghe, 2003, p. 11) and make a difference for more students in school than is possible for a classroom teacher. On the other hand, many aspirants are unaware of their leadership potential and they do not seek headship until they are encouraged by peers who identified their leadership capabilities, sense of vision and ability to lead others (Vandenberghe, 2003). Similarly, McLay and Brown's (2001) small-scale study into female headteachers' career paths to headship in English independent (private) secondary schools found that none of the female heads planned to become a head and they had received encouragement from colleagues and their former headteacher to apply for headship. Encouragement to seek headship has been more evident in studies into female career paths to headship (Coleman, 2002), which are explored in a following section.

The socialisation process of making the transition from teaching to a leadership role entails personal, professional and organisational socialisation, as it

brings with it a unique set of circumstances relating not only to the occupational expectations or standards, but also to the personal and organisational dimensions of the transition (Male, 2006, p.17).

As Armstrong (2011, p.4) put it, crossing the boundary between teaching and leading 'precipitates a challenging cognitive, emotional and social journey across uncharted personal, professional and organizational territory'.

First, the organisational socialisation of novice heads may necessitate personal change on the part of the new headteacher (personal dimension), as moving into headship requires an individual to leave the confidence of a known role - as a teacher - and experience the uncertainty of the new role - as a headteacher (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). The proposal of the imagery of the greasy pole by Walker and Qian (2006) - used years ago by Benjamin Disraeli as he began his first term as Prime Minister of Great Britain - to explain the complex nature of the dramatically demanding school leadership role seems to reflect the situation which new headteachers experience upon entering headship, as they need to acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding to balance at the top of the school hierarchy.

Second, along with professional socialisation experiences that shape headteachers' professional identity and headship learning, contemporary schools may impact the socialisation process of newcomers in school (organisational dimension) and lead to the establishment of their professional identity through a re-conception of their role in particular contexts (Crow, 2006). Male (2006) adopted the analogy of driving a car as to describe the moving into headship and settlement into a new role. As he said, prior to obtaining a license to drive, one has to learn how to drive, which requires learning the relevant parts of the law, practicing driving and passing a test displaying a range of approved driving skills. However, driving in a real setting requires for different approaches and skills to be used. Once we learn how to drive we tend to follow pretty much the same routes and routines each day, so driving becomes a more relaxing and sometimes reflexive or automatic activity. He suggests that this analogy is also valid for first, second or subsequent headships.

On entering headship, new heads have to learn different skills and adopt different dispositions from those learned during the PS stage, reshaping, thus,

their conception of headship. The socialisation process in different schools and transitions in between different facets of their career inform headship learning (Crawford, 2014) and enable headteachers to build their leadership repertoire from which they evoke practices to enact school leadership, making, thus, headship a reflective practice for experienced heads. The above position is further supported by Southworth (2004) who talked about 'maturity' in the leadership role - a notion which is related to the experience relative to the post an individual possess, regarding, therefore, 'all heads in their first year of their first headship...immature' (p. 8) to perform headship effectively.

Third, a key element of the transformative process of becoming a headteacher is the accommodation of new appointees to their organisational context and the balance between personal and organisational change in determining their success (professional dimension). Research evidence (Hart, 1993) suggest that new heads' integration in their working context may be easier for those appointed internally from within the school, as they bring some knowledge and experience of school culture that may ease the socialisation process and allow heads to opt for changes at an earlier stage.

Nevertheless, the socialisation of first-time heads in schools constitutes a complex two-way dynamic process of interaction between the headteacher and the school, which depends on various organisational socialisation forces, among which are school characteristics (location, size, type), headteacher's characteristics (gender, previous experience, professional background) and the culture of the organisation.

### **Organisational socialisation forces**

The entry to headship stage of a principal's career is dominated by organisational socialisation. Assuming headship in a new school put headteachers on full alert so as to lead a new organisation. However, particular features of the school context have been the subject of several studies (e.g.

Draper and McMichael, 1998; Daresh and Male, 2000; O'Mahony and Matthews, 2003) as having powerful socialising influence on new headteachers and a great impact on the organisational socialisation process.

In an early study, Greenfield (1985) pointed to four dimensions that may influence the socialisation process of new school leaders:

- a) relations with teachers
- b) relations with the community
- c) relations with peers and superiors and
- d) establishing and developing routines that promote organisational stability.

Along with teachers, former headteacher and school culture (Greenfield, 1985; Hart, 1993), other sources of socialisation include parents and the school community. School's location may impact beginning heads' organisational socialisation, as it is related to the socio-economic background of pupils and the expectations from the new head held by local community. Moreover, the challenges encountered in post constitute powerful potential influences for the professional and organisational socialisation of new heads occurring during induction in schools.

Below, the influence of school culture on new heads' organisational socialisation is explored. The impact of school location and size, headteachers' gender and the challenges encountered in post on the organisational socialisation of new headteachers are considered next.

### **School culture**

Lumby and Foskett (2008, p. 44) defined school culture as a

set of beliefs, values and behaviours, both explicit and implicit, which underpin an organization and provide the basis of action and decision making.

It is socially constructed in the interactions and by the perceptions of the involved individuals regarding 'how things are done' within a particular school context. Although research into school culture is limited, a number of emerging research studies in the western context call for attention on the way schools shape the organisational socialisation of new heads and impact professional identity formation (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004; Crow, 2006; Moorosi, 2014).

The literature on organisational culture contains many perspectives and theoretical orientations due to the different methodological approaches employed in various studies. In this thesis, school culture is explored through the lens of socialisation theory (Merton, 1968; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979) with a focus both on beginning heads' socialisation in schools and the way their professional identity is reshaped by school culture during the early years in post. The latter, has been the focus in the previous chapter where headteachers' identity formation has been explored in depth. School culture's role in promoting vision implementation and change initiations for school improvement is explored below.

Understanding the culture in any school forms the core of action implementation in the organisation. For novice headteachers to influence the organisational culture and promote their vision for the school, entails 'decoding the signals to arrive at the central beliefs of the organisation' (Lumby, 2001, p.143). As leadership is always 'situated in a context and a relationship' (Bolman and Deal, 2003, p.336), new heads should initially opt to socialise within school context and access support from school staff prior to altering school culture and promoting their vision for the school. As Draper and McMichael (2000, pp.459-460) maintained, they should 'gauge the attitudes and skills of those same colleagues to plan the most appropriate order and speed of strategic change'. Such interactions, which dominate the post-appointment phase of headship, legitimate and validate a new headteacher within a school, preparing, thus, the way for heads to exert influence and make improvements (Pashiardis and

Orphanou, 1999; Earley and Weindling, 2004). As Menon-Eliophotou (2012) put it, heads are 'the main point of reference in the school culture and a strong influence on the level of collaboration and progress' (p.226) in schools.

While school leaders interact with the organisational culture both 'in terms of efforts to include the multiple cultures which may be present and also to sustain, adopt or change the dominant culture' (Lumby and Foskett, 2008, p.56), they are concurrently shaped by school culture within which headship is enacted. As it has been argued, school culture has a pivotal role in the socialisation process of the newcomer into a new role and a new school (Hart, 1993). School culture in every educational institution is unique and shaped by 'the context in which the school operates and the values of those who have led or been part of the organization over time' (Lumby and Foskett, 2008, p.44). New headteachers' predecessors have been identified as important sources of socialisation (Weindling and Earley, 1987; Mathews and Crow, 2003; Earley and Weindling, 2004; Weindling and Dimmock, 2006) for newcomers, as they shape school culture according to their leadership style. Similarly, teachers hold strong expectations about how headship should be enacted in the particular school and respond accordingly to a new headteacher's attempts to challenge the status quo and implement change in school. As pointed out by Earley (2012), most novice headteachers have to work with the school culture they inherit and only a handful of them are 'in the privileged position of taking over a brand new school and therefore able to shape culture' (p.4).

Various reform initiatives worldwide are currently calling for school principals to act as transformational leaders to promote effectiveness into their organisations (Elmore, 2000; Leithwood et al., 1999; Crow, 2006). Edgar Schein (1996) talked about creating culture as the most significant task of leaders but also the most difficult one, while Fullan (2001) proposed that 're-culturing' an organisation and understanding the processes involved in cultural change, are, perhaps, the greatest challenges for headteachers in promoting school improvement. Such a cultural change

involve[s] an orientation and openness to change – change in personal identity, change in the priorities of the principal's tasks, and change in what constitutes an effective organization (Crow, 2006, p.319).

Trust among school staff is considered an important aspect for school improvement, 'commonly thought of as the lubricant that keeps organisations running smoothly' (Day et al., 2011, p.10). For headteachers to achieve this, it has been found that care for the well-being of teachers, as well as teachers' participation in decision making, contribute to the creation of high-trust environment among staff (MacBeath et al., 2004; Day et al., 2011). In schools with low level of trust, leaders usually face resistance in their improvement efforts, as staff members are unwilling to collaborate towards common goals. According to Schein (1996), when mutual understanding of organisational change between headteachers and teachers fails, school culture may act as a control mechanism for the OS of the new head, thus affecting the re-culturing of the school according to headteacher's vision.

A number of people, such as teachers, colleague and the former headteacher (Greenfield, 1985; Hart, 1993), parents, pupils and the local school community, who are at the core of leadership activity, may also serve as socialisation sources for the beginning head. Although they have been traditionally ignored in research into new heads' socialisation, pupils and parents are a major socialising source in the school by 'presenting problems, challenges and opportunities that influence the beginning principal's learning of knowledge, skills, and dispositions' (Crow, 2006, p.319). Furthermore, parents and the local community may shape the role conceptions new heads have by exercising influence on the values, knowledge, and skills celebrated in the particular school.

The personal and societal characteristics of pupils and their family background, such as the socio-economic variables (Bush and Middlewood, 2013), have been found to affect school culture, as pupils from diverse, minority or economically deprived family backgrounds are more likely to have low expectations for school performance (Waterhouse, 2008; Day et al., 2001). Furthermore, Southworth and Weindling (2002, p.2) also indicated the differences of contextual factors,

such as urbanisation and poverty in the communities the schools serve, on pupils' performance and school culture. Such incidents, along with the changing student demographics, may shape the OS of new heads and influence their initiatives in re-shaping school culture.

Although, until recently, headship preparatory programmes focused on the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the values and dispositions that a novice head brings to headship and develops on the job are also critical for the way headship is performed (Crow, 2006) in particular school contexts. As headteachers' new role in reform contexts is to be agents of change in schools, preparatory programmes should also include 'values and norms regarding what schools can and should be and how leadership can help in making these visions a reality' (Crow and Glascock, 1995, p.40). Such preparation would enable new heads to structure their professional identity with confidence in implementing their vision for school improvement, as self-perceptions affect efficacy and the ability of new heads to innovate and deal with challenges.

In this section, the importance of school culture on framing the OS of first-time heads and the implementation of their vision for the school has been discussed. The impact of school location and size, as well as novice headteachers' gender on organisational socialisation are considered next.

### **School size and location**

Along with school culture, school size and location have the potential to shape new headteachers' socialisation experiences and their establishment in school. Research studies indicate that school size has an impact on the organisational socialisation of new heads and the way headship is enacted in specific school contexts (Southworth, 2004; Wilson and Brundrett, 2005), by pointing to the double load of teaching headship in small school units and the heavier demands in terms of school management in large-sized schools. As the amalgamation of schools (MOEC, 2007) and the concentration of population around cities and



the suburbs is expected to continue evolving in the same way, examining the influence of school size and location on headteachers' socialisation in post could provide evidence to inform headship preparatory and induction programmes in Cyprus.

Southworth (2004) was the first who examined the context of leadership in small, medium and large-sized primary schools in England. His findings proved that size makes a difference in the way leadership is enacted and transacted in schools of different sizes. In small primary schools (fewer than 150 pupils), the double load of leading and teaching is tiring and sometimes exhausting for heads. However, leadership is exercised more directly and it is expected to influence both teaching and learning. Headteachers in small schools also reported feelings of isolation and loneliness due to the lack of other leaders in school to talk to and share with their leadership problems. In medium-sized and large-sized schools, leadership is shared with deputies and senior teachers and, therefore, a headteacher's influence on teaching and learning decreases. Moreover, male headteachers in Southworth's study were found to have longer experience of headship than female counterparts in large primary schools.

Along with Southworth (2004), Wilson and Brundrett (2005) describing the experiences of a serving headteacher in a small rural school confirmed that the teaching headship a difficult role to fulfil. Headteachers in small schools have both headship duties and significant teaching commitment, along with the responsibility for a class of children. On the other hand, headship in a small rural school is described as unique and rewarding, especially when good relationships are established between staff, the children, parents and other stakeholders. However, as Wilson and Brundrett (2005) said, the small body of research into the management of small schools has concentrated mostly on the quality of the curriculum provision in small rural schools and not on the role of the headteacher or how headship is enacted.

Further evidence suggests that small schools may be exceptionally challenging for their heads, especially when they are situated in rural areas. As Clarke and

Wildy (2004) indicate leaders of small schools in Australia who may find themselves located in small, conservative, rural communities, often struggle with feelings of professional isolation and loneliness as they transition into a rural school with hostile school culture. This finding supports the notion that the local school community constitutes a significant socialisation force for the new head, as locals not only compare the new principal to the previous one but also often resist changes to the routines and culture to which they have become accustomed (Hart, 1993; Spillane and Lee, 2014).

With regards to the Cypriot context, Tsiakkios and Pashiardis (2002) investigated the perceptions of teachers on the management of small primary schools - single, double and triple-teaching post schools. The study showed that serving in a small school has been a challenging experience for Cypriot headteachers. Tsiakkios and Pashiardis (2002) identified flexibility in organisational issues and close cooperation with the staff as the major benefits derived from serving in a small school. Though, the impact of the leadership experiences accumulated by teachers while serving in small schools on headship learning and the subsequent socialisation in schools was not examined in this study.

School size also appears to have an impact on how well-prepared headteachers feel when they take up headship in the respective type of school. Evidence from a survey of 1405 headteachers in England conducted by Trevor Male in 1999 found that headteachers in large primary schools felt inadequately prepared to confront the challenges of first headship compared to heads of smaller schools. In contrast, headteachers who were appointed in small schools said that 'they could practice what they preached' and that 'they often had a direct impact on a significant cohort of the student population' - students in the headteacher's class (Bright and Ware, 2003, p.11).

The fact that there is no analogous research study concerning the leadership of schools of different sizes in Cyprus highlights the importance of the present study. Although, this thesis did not investigate primarily the nature of leadership

in small, medium and large-sized schools in Cyprus, exploring the socialisation experiences and the challenges new heads encounter in schools during early headship may illuminate professional identity formation and heads' preparation for assuming headship with confidence in schools of different sizes.

### **Headteacher's gender**

Among research studies, gender has been identified as a factor affecting novice headteachers' socialisation experiences during early headship (Coleman, 2002; Bright and Ware, 2003), as well as headteachers' paths to headship (Coleman, 2002; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003, Earley, 2013). Although gender has also been indicated as a factor influencing promotions to primary and secondary headship in Cyprus (Nicolaidou and Georgiou, 2009; Polis, 2009, 2013), research on gender's impact on heads' professional socialisation is unavailable. Reviewing such literature could potentially enlighten heads' career paths to headship and preparation for the post in the Cypriot context.

Despite the fact that women dominate the teaching profession in many countries, especially in the primary sector, only few of them hold management and leadership posts (Coleman, 2011; Earley et al., 2012). While exploring the data accumulated as part of a survey of newly appointed primary and secondary headteachers in England conducted by Trevor Male in 1999, Bright and Ware (2003) found that gender had a pivotal role in new headteachers' experiences of early headship and their confidence in assuming headship. Especially at the primary level, the researchers pointed to the small number of female headteachers leading large primary schools. However, research suggests this fact could be attributed to the decisions made by the appointing bodies which prefer appointing a male headteacher in a large school. Nevertheless, female headteachers in that study demonstrated greater confidence in their new role than their male counterparts. This surprising lack of confidence of male headteachers to fulfil their new role was attributed to the massive number of female teachers in the primary sector which may act as a constraining factor for

male headteachers' confidence. However, lack of confidence in gender comparison was not found among the secondary heads, where the proportion of male to female teachers was more balanced.

In contrast, Coleman (2002), drawing on new English and Welsh headteachers' views about their career paths, the ways in which headteachers perceived their leadership style and the amalgamation of career and family demands, found that both male and female headteachers may experience difficulties or lose their confidence on entering headship. However, her findings presume that being a female headteacher is much different from being a male headteacher, as women were found to be more prone to experience feelings of isolation at work due to 'cultural and social expectations surrounding the leadership of schools and other organisations [which] continue to endorse the idea of the male as leader' (ibid, p.157). Furthermore, it was found that a large proportion of female headteachers do not plan their pathway to headship and most women who are appointed to the post are largely confronted with the dilemma of combining family life and career (Coleman, 2002). As Coleman (2011) confirms these findings are still valid nowadays.

With regards to career paths to headship, research evidence proposes that women are taking a slower professional path to headship during childbearing years and apply for significantly less leadership posts than men during the accession stage of a headteacher's career (Gronn, 1999; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Earley, 2013). This is mainly because female aspirants' decisions about their leadership career 'have to be balanced against competing demands such as child-bearing and family formation' (Gronn, 1999, p. 38) or their decisions may be geographically constrained by family commitments (McNamara et al., 2012; Earley, 2013).

In the same line, evidence from the American context confirm Coleman' (2002) findings. Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) exploratory study of the professional growth of 18 practitioners suggests that career advancement for fathers tended not to be delayed due to parenting, whereas several mothers curtailed their career

plans or delayed transition into a leadership role until their children were older. Furthermore, she identified career aspiration as a factor influencing the process of becoming a principal and found that men tend to take advantage of preparatory training opportunities more often than women for career advancement.

Female under-representation in headship has also been examined in Greece - a country with a centralised educational system with many commonalities and similarities to Cyprus. Kaparou and Bush (2007) aimed to identify the factors that affect female representation in secondary headship positions according to six secondary female headteachers' views. They found that the reasons for women's under-representation in leadership positions are either personal, such as weak self-confidence for the demands of the role, lack of motivation and family responsibilities and obligations; or social, such as gender discrimination in promotions and in the workplace, and cultural stereotypes that identify management as 'masculine'. The findings of this study suggest that a strong link between family factors and the career progress of female headteachers in Greece, exists, as women were found to strike for the balance between family and career.

Although teaching clearly continues to be a female-dominated profession, promotion statistics in Cyprus point to the unequal allocation of headship posts between male and female candidates and designate the under-representation of women in leadership posts (Nicolaidou and Georgiou, 2009; Polis, 2013). The discrimination against women in appointments to headship becomes apparent when a comparison between the number of female and male candidates and that of appointees is made. While during the last cycle of promotions in 2013, female headteachers comprised the 77% of candidate headteachers, they occupied 68% (28 out of 41) of the available posts.

New headteachers' settlement in post is equally influenced by numerous socialisation sources as presented above and the challenges encountered in

post. Such challenges have been found to shape the way newcomers construct a role for themselves and perform headship, that's why they are considered next.

### **The challenges of first headship - problems and difficulties**

This section draws on research literature into the organisational socialisation experiences and the challenges beginning headteachers experience as they enter headship with regards to establishing themselves in post and promoting changes within schools. Such exploration aims to expand our understanding of the early career stage of headship and provide the background for answering the research question: '*What are the most important challenges that newly appointed primary headteachers in Cyprus face during early headship?*'.

Although socialisation to headship is basically unique in each school, research literature spanning several decades illustrates that newly appointed headteachers in a number of western educational systems are confronted with several common and re-occurring challenges upon entering schools (Daresh and Male, 2000; Bright and Ware, 2003; Hobson et al., 2003; Southworth, 2004). These are defined as problems, situations, incidents or issues which appear to have no simple solution and an apparent impact on the OS of the new head. Although, problems facing new headteachers in other parts of the world may differ considerably from the challenges presented below (Bush and Oduro, 2006), it is beyond the scope of the thesis to consider them.

Among the aims of the first major study of newly appointed secondary heads in England and Wales - the NFER longitudinal project (1982-1994) - was to document the demands made on new secondary heads and their challenges in post (Weindling and Earley, 1987). It was found that the areas of particular difficulty encountered by new heads included staff-related issues, such as low staff morale and dealing with incompetent staff, communication and consultation with staff, managing the introduction and pace of change, the need to create a better public image for the school and the school buildings. Moreover, one key

challenge that new headteachers had to tackle was dealing with the existing routines and the shadow of their predecessors which had shaped the school in their image. The research also showed that most heads experienced professional isolation and loneliness in post and reported a lack of feedback and support on their professional progress. Also, on assuming the post, the majority of the respondents (85%) regarded themselves as ill-prepared for the demands of headship.

Further research from the UK aimed to shed some light on the issue. In 2003, Hobson et al. reviewed the research evidence regarding the problems new headteachers in England and Wales encountered during their first two years in post and the support strategies employed to assist the development of new heads in the UK and internationally. Their literature review suggests that whilst headteachers differ in terms of their background, the school context in which they serve and their experiences as new headteachers, they were largely confronted with similar problems and challenges. These challenges are summarised below:

- feelings of professional isolation and loneliness
- dealing with the legacy, practice and style of previous head teacher
- dealing with multiple tasks, managing time and priorities
- managing the school budget
- dealing with (e.g. supporting, warning, dismissing) ineffective staff
- implementing new government initiatives, notably new curricula or school improvement projects
- problems with school buildings and site management

(Hobson et al., 2003, p. ii)

Bright and Ware (2003) explored further the data accumulated through a survey of 1405 headteachers serving at all phases in England by Trevor Male in 1999 to document the challenges of early headship in relation to preparation for the post. It was not surprising that many respondents regarded headship as a difficult and isolating role to fulfil and Bright and Ware (2003) summarised the difficulties in settling into the new role by pointing to

the sense of isolation, the overwhelming realisation that the 'buck stops here' and how many felt ill prepared by their previous educational experiences for this new and exacting role (p. 7).

Moreover, the study verified the position that the early stages of headship tend to be dominated by organisational issues; requiring considerable learning on the part of the new headteacher, as they encounter the people and the organisation, to understand the nature of the role. The findings suggest clearly that headteachers' need for support and mentoring from experienced colleagues is crucial for novice headteachers to settle efficiently into the new job. Otherwise, participants admitted learning the job largely from their mistakes (Bright and Ware, 2003).

Male, Bright and Ware (2002) conducted a further investigation of the same data and sought to establish the respondents' perceived state of readiness for the demands of headship in the three areas of activity: development of skills, increase of knowledge and the formation of attitudes and values – namely their professional identity - and to identify reasons attributed by respondents for their perceived state of readiness. They particularly explored the impact of gender, experience/inexperience as a deputy head and the possession of a higher degree on headteachers' perceived state of readiness in the aforementioned areas of activity. In all cases, respondents considered themselves to be 'inadequately' to just 'adequately prepared' for the three areas of activity. Further exploration of the data showed that more than half of headteachers in all phases who considered themselves 'well-prepared' in terms of skills needed for the post attributed their readiness to experience, while around half of heads attributed their readiness equally to training and experience. Also, more than three-fifths of the respondents attributed their professional identity formation to experience. As suggested from the results, although accumulating a number of experiences on-the-job help shape to a great extent the professional identity of headteachers, though training intervention may be needed to help shape professional identity with confidence with regards to headship role and responsibilities.

Moreover, Daresh and Male's (2000, p.95) study of first-year principals in England and the USA identified the 'culture shock' of moving into headship for



the first time, as nothing could prepare the respondents, both American and British, for the 'change in perceptions of others or the intensity of the job' (p.95). In both contexts, new headteachers experienced a loss of identity and found it difficult to identify themselves with a new role. In particular, they described moving into headship as a life-changing event and assumed that they felt lack of preparation for major decisions which required reflection and assistance, high levels of stress and significant alterations in their personal lives. Importantly, although the two countries had distinct models of preparing prospective leaders, the findings pointed to the limited impact that headship preparatory training had on school leaders' readiness for the post and the gap found between training aims and newly appointed headteachers' needs. This situation has been described elsewhere as the 'bumpy ride of reality' (Draper and McMichael, 1998, p.207), as novice heads realise that they lack preparation and skills for the role.

Particularly, new headteachers faced challenges regarding time management, undertaking multiple tasks and establishing priorities for the school (Draper and McMichael, 2000; Briggs et al., 2006; Crow, 2007). Draper and McMichael (2000) study of ten secondary school heads identified headship in its first years as a time of anxiety for most heads who faced issues inherited from previous heads, difficulties in handling and prioritising issues, poor conditions and facilities and staff issues. Heads pointed out that having a deputy who can be trusted is very important and helps alleviate the loneliness of the job experienced in post.

Weindling and Dimmock's (2006) study into early headship confirmed the findings from earlier studies, that newly appointed headteachers in England face difficulties arising from the legacy of the leadership style and practices of the previous head, the need to communicate and consult with the staff, the public image of the school, and possible weakness in some members of the senior leadership team. Recent evidence proposes that dealing with ineffective and resistant staff members also poses significant challenges for beginning heads,

as supporting and reprimanding these individuals may become difficult and stressful (Spillane and Lee, 2014).

Further evidence from a comprehensive study in the Australian context that examined the socialisation experiences of beginning principals suggest that transition to headship is a life-changing experience for new heads who expressed concerns about leaving a familiar role as teachers for a new one as heads. Furthermore, they were particularly concerned with their ability to balance their personal and professional lives and they experienced feeling of unpreparedness and lack of leadership knowledge and skills once in post (O'Mahony and Matthews, 2003).

Research findings regarding novice heads' feeling of unpreparedness to perform the role is further supported by evidence arising from Sackney and Walker's (2006) review of a number of Canadian studies pertaining to building learning community capacity to explore how beginning principals are prepared, socialised and respond to the capacity-building work of leading learning communities. Sackney and Walker (2006) found that new headteachers were not prepared for the pace of the job, the amount of time spent on certain tasks, the number of tasks required and the loneliness of the position. They were also preoccupied by the fear of failure and some found the work less rewarding than they had originally anticipated. As they highlighted, without effective preparation, novice headteachers 'flounder' (ibid, p.344) in their attempt to cope with the competing demands of the post, the heavy workload, the increasing responsibility and expectations from various stakeholders.

Similar findings were reported by Nicolaidou and Georgiou (2009) in Cyprus who found that the lack of preparatory training for aspiring headteachers generates negative feelings among newly appointed headteachers who worked based on personal experience or by copying other headteachers they had met as teachers. In their study, one headteacher underlined the necessity of being adequately prepared for the post prior to promotion by asserting that taking up headship without preparation 'feels like being abandoned at sea'. In line with

this finding, Thody et al. (2007) looking into the selection and training of principals in four European countries - Cyprus, Greece, UK and Sweden - affirmed that 'once appointed, Cypriot principals essentially sink or swim alone' (p.44). This is due to the unavailability of formal headship preparation in Cyprus, where aspirants learn the role through their lengthy experience in deputy headship and by shadowing their principals in performing the role and deciding 'what they would emulate or avoid on becoming principals themselves' (ibid, p.49). However, on moving on to headship, further support is needed to perform the role.

As indicated by studies into the entry to headship stage conducted largely in western contexts, new heads experience similar problems and challenges on first headship. Although this fact was attributed a decade ago to similarities related to school type and size (Hobson et al., 2003), a recent study of new English headteachers in big cities (Earley et al., 2011) found that newly appointed headteachers faced similar challenges and experiences irrespective of the size, the phase of the school and its geographical location. Instead, their challenges were mainly concerned with relationships, implementing the change management agenda and prioritizing the issues to be addressed and spending their time properly. Likewise, Rhodes and Greenway (2010) asserted that one of the most significant challenges facing heads nowadays is the accountability and responsibility for the success of their school and each child in school, by pointing to the fact that 'the enactment of their leadership is a very public performance which can attract either success or failure on a day-to day basis or in its totality' (p.152). Hence, working in a high stakes accountability and performativity culture has made the job more complex and less desirable (Earley, 2013).

Along with accountability pressures and implementing government's initiatives, Spillane and Lee (2014) signify that new principals frequently face difficulty in managing and prioritising the multiple tasks expected of them, as well as more technical challenges attached to school autonomy, such as managing the

budget and maintaining the school buildings. Also, relatively recent studies into early headship, point to the fact that school leaders' work continues to be fragmented and fast-paced; involving long hours of workload and multiple demands from diverse stakeholders which may contribute to high levels of stress and burnout among headteachers (MacBeath et al., 2009; Spillane and Lee, 2014).

Such findings indicate that an increasingly challenging role is shaped by accountability, the multiplicity of tasks and external expectations imposed on new heads worldwide. That is why once appointed most heads feel de-skilled (Male, 2006) and lack in competence and confidence for the complexity and multiplicity of tasks that school leadership entails (Daresh and Male, 2000; Cowie and Crawford, 2008). They also experience 'culture shock' as nothing in their training could prepare them for the intensity of the job (Daresh and Male, 2000), as well as self-doubts and uncertainty about headship (O'Mahony and Matthews, 2003). Transition into a role that carries ultimate responsibility and decision-making, requires for different skills, dispositions and qualities to be adopted by new heads to respond to their duties effectively.

## **Summary**

Within the last decades, many researchers have sought to understand the entry to headship stage of a headteacher's career by employing the organisational socialisation theory as a two-way process of interaction between the individual (new headteacher) and the context (school). Transition to headship has been portrayed as a life changing event in a headteacher's career, which entails personal transformation on behalf of the new head and reconceptualisation of headship. This thesis set out to explore headteachers' organisational socialisation experiences and the challenges new heads encounter in post, so as to inform understanding of the interplay between the new head and school culture in implementing changes for school improvement.

Along with externally mandated demands and accountabilities, the contextual characteristics of schools, such as school culture, location and size, and people, such as staff, pupils and parents who are at the core of school leadership practice, affect the smooth socialisation of the new head in school. New headteachers also face numerous challenges especially regarding time management, undertaking multiple tasks and establishing priorities, which may generate high levels of stress, a sense of trauma or even professional isolation and loneliness. Amongst the most important challenges school leaders face worldwide is to 'socialise in schools' and establish their authority in headship, as dealing with the legacy of the previous headteacher and resistance from staff may be daunting. Such challenges have been proved crucial for the settlement of a new headteacher in post and have implications for both headship preparation and induction.

Having discussed the organisational socialisation and challenges typifying the entry to headship stage of a heads' career, the numerous stage-models that have been developed to portray the stages headteachers go through as they progress professionally are reviewed in the subsequent chapter.

# CHAPTER V: THE CAREER-STAGES OF HEADSHIP

## Introduction

Researchers worldwide have sought to understand the developmental phases novice headteachers endure (e.g. Hart, 1993; Parkay and Hall, 1992; Day and Bakioglu, 1996; Pascal and Ribbins, 1998; Earley and Weindling, 2004) as they move from teaching to a leadership role in school (e.g. Weindling, 2000; Weindling and Dimmock, 2006; Shoho and Barnett, 2010), with a number of researchers in different locations identifying what is involved in the making of and being a principal during early headship. These studies framed the present thesis which continues this line of inquiry into early headship by exploiting the professional and organisational socialisation of new heads to identify and describe first-time heads' induction and progression to headship within the first four years in post.

On answering the research question: '*Do stage theories of socialisation apply to Cypriot primary headteachers within their first four years in post?*', it is hoped to contribute towards the development of career stage theory and its relevance and applicability within the Cypriot educational context.

## The stage models of transition through headship

Within the headship career perspective, career is viewed as an accumulation of life experiences over time and every new role is regarded as contributing to headship learning (Hart, 1991). In the light of this perspective, headteachers are supposed to develop professionally and progress through a series of discrete stages during their career cycle, such as early, mid-career and late career stage of headship, each having its distinct characteristics (Oplatka, 2004, 2012).

Several scholars have used career stage frameworks to illuminate the steps through which all novice headteachers pass during headship. Headship stage

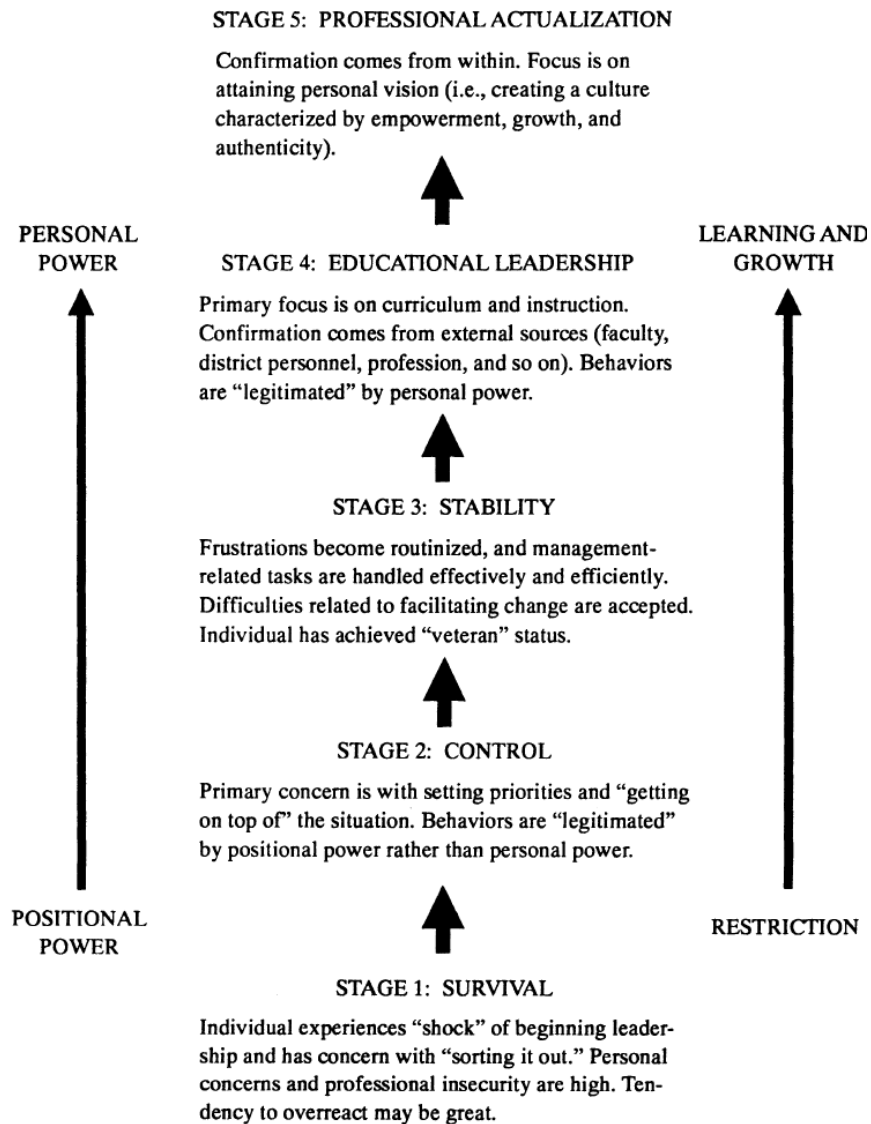
frameworks are viewed as linear or cyclical, with linear frameworks portraying headteachers as moving along a continuum to reach equilibrium, whereas cyclical frameworks, view heads as moving forward and backward through stages as they move to subsequent headships or other roles.

Hart (1993), in a synthesis of early studies in the USA, views headteachers moving through three broad stages during a principal's transition to headship. Her three-stage model identifies the following stages:

- (a) *Encounter, anticipation, or confrontation.* On taking up headship, newcomers struggle to make sense of school culture, national policies, and local needs. A considerable learning on the part of the new head is needed as part of the 'sense-making' process (Louis, 1980).
- (b) *Adjustment, accommodation and clarity.* As newcomers understand the politics in school, they seek accommodation with people and the school culture, and role clarity within the new school. Interpersonal relationships and interactions are vital for reaching stability and promoting school effectiveness.
- (c) *Stabilization.* With time, headteachers endeavour to reach stability in post, although for some heads this stage may not occur, as they move to a subsequent headship. Feelings of mutual acceptance between the new head and the school community are apparent.

Parkay and Hall (1992), in a study based on Weindling and Earley's (1987) NFER longitudinal study, surveyed 113 new American high school principals and carried out 12 case studies of new principals throughout their first year in post. A return visit was made after three years. The researchers suggested a five-stage model to describe the career patterns of new principals through headship, as presented in Figure 5.1 below.

**Figure 5.1: Parkay and Hall's (1992) principals' socialisation hierarchy**



Source: Parkay and Hall, 1992, p.56

As new principals encounter the people and the school, they experience shock and frustration in 'sorting things out' is high. Upon setting priorities and handling efficiently the situations, newcomers take control over the organisation. Leadership learning experiences in post allow new heads to grow professionally, gaining, simultaneously, legitimacy in post. There are four basic assumptions that underlie this model and hold that career stages are not necessarily linear.



- (1) Principals may begin at any stage of career development, especially those not in first headship.
- (2) Principals may pass through stages at different pace.
- (3) Principal's stage of development is determined by a variety of factors, apart from school and heads' characteristics.
- (4) Principals may simultaneously operate in more than one stage in different aspects of their role.

Other conceptualisations of headteachers' developmental phases acknowledge the personal, social and professional learning experiences that occur prior to becoming a headteacher (Gronn, 1999; Ribbins, 2003; Weindling, 1999; Earley and Weindling, 2004). These experiences shape newcomers' expectations of what the job entails and their perceived readiness to perform the role.

Gronn's (1999, p.32) model of leadership development, which was largely based on the biographical study of Sir James Darling, a distinguished principal in Melbourne, views leadership as heavily context-bound and approaches leadership from the perspective of a career, providing, thus, 'a more informed understanding of the various contexts in which leaders lead' and an explanation of how 'contextual factors structure a leader's actions' (p.31). His leadership framework is based on three macro contexts which structure the career paths of school leaders: historical, cultural and societal, and consists of four leadership development phases.

- (a) *Formation*. Refers to the formation of a leadership character through preparatory socialisation processes and experiences offered by family, school and a variety of peers and reference groups, such as friends and mentors, as well as readiness to assume responsibility and authority.
- (b) *Accession*. It is the stage of preparation for a leadership role. The candidates' internalised self-belief, which entails a personal efficacy and self-esteem, along with external recognition of candidates' potential

capacity to lead, allow candidates to go through succession, selection and induction towards role mastering and establishment in post.

(c) *Incumbency*. It marks the period of actual headship, and it begins upon appointment to first headship. Serving in various leadership posts, provide headteachers with experience for mastery and self-realisation. On first appointment, headteachers go through informal and formal induction into the responsibilities of the role. For every new headship, only induction into organisational norms and values may be necessary. As they manage to reconcile external and school demands, they achieve satisfaction and self-actualisation.

(d) *Divestiture*. It is the point in the school leader's career of leaving the post, voluntary or involuntary, due to various reasons, such as illness, ageing or incapacity to fulfil the duties of the post. School leaders may choose to leave headship at any time in their career, or they may choose to lead from another post.

Another conceptualisation for the period known as *Incumbency* by Gronn (1999) is the one provided by Day and Bakioglu (1996) which encompasses four developmental phases. While analysing data derived from 196 questionnaires, documents and 34 interviews with English school leaders, Day and Bakioglu (1996) proposed the following framework regarding the lives of school leaders:

(a) *Initiation: idealism, uncertainty and adjustment*. Includes learning on the job and accommodating aspirations and vision with existing school culture. This phase lasted about three years.

(b) *Development: consolidation and extension*. It is recognised as the most rewarding phase for headteachers with four to eight years of experience.

(c) *Autonomy*. It is the time when school leaders feel themselves to be effective and productive leaders. They feel confident that they have

attained the role. However, externally mandated changes may threaten their work.

- (d) *Disenchantment*. Participants have plateaued, and they lack motivation for learning and improvement, mainly due to social-psychological factors and reasons related to life-cycle. They resist change and their actions aim to maintain what has already been achieved.

Within the British context, Ribbins and colleagues (Pascal and Ribbins, 1998; Rayner and Ribbins, 1999) combined the two aforementioned models of school leaders' lives and careers, with minor modifications, into a single framework and used it with headteachers in primary and special schools in the UK. They identified two possible trajectories through headship (Ribbins, 2003) which explain the pathways taken by school heads:

- (a) *Formation, Accession, Incumbency* (initiation, development, autonomy, disenchantment), *Moving on* (divestiture)
- (b) *Formation, Accession, Incumbency* (initiation, development, autonomy, enchantment), *Moving on* (reinvention)

A significant difference between the models provided by Day and Bakioglu (1996) and Ribbins (2003) is that in the second model, headteachers are seen as either to have reached a 'plateau' in their career where they feel very competent for the role (enchantment) and they may choose to lead from a different post (reinvention); or they have become burned out and lost their confidence to perform the job (disenchantment) and it is time for them to leave the post (divestiture). Ribbins (2003) added two more assumptions to career stage models:

- (1) It is possible for principals to go back or progress by more than one stage each time.
- (2) Some principals may never progress to the final stage or pass through all stages.

Despite differences in progression through headship, Oplatka (2004, 2012) identified four key stages which headteachers are perceived to go through their career. (1) During the *induction stage*, new headteachers are socialised into a new role in a particular context and are confronted with many issues and difficulties through which they develop a sense of confidence to perform the role. (2) In the *establishment stage*, headteachers experience professional growth and feel self-confident to run the school. They are aware of the realities of the school and attempt to reconcile external and school demands. (3) The *maintenance/renewal* stage involves the mid-career stage of headteachers, and it is characterised by fewer opportunities for professional growth. It may be related to feelings of disenchantment and loss of enthusiasm in post or to feelings of enthusiasm and self-fulfilment while seeking new experiences in new school settings. Finally, (4) the *disenchantment stage* refers to career-long headteachers who are burned out in their post and, thus, they gradually assume an autocratic leadership style and a negative disposition to change.

Drawing on research reported by Gabarro (1987) and on their extensive research with headteachers, Weindling (1999, 2000) and Earley and Weindling (2004) re-examined the findings of the NFER study (1982-1994) so as to describe heads' career patterns through headship and identify the difficulties new heads encountered as they attempted to 'take charge' in a new school. The proposed six-stage model maps out the stages of transition through headship, and acknowledges the professional socialisation of heads - named as 'Stage 0', as follows:

### **Stage 0 – Preparation prior to headship**

As part of their PS, aspiring heads, throughout their career, had developed a conception of headship which was influenced by formal and informal processes and experiences. Heads in the NFER study emphasised the following PS experiences:

- the value of a period as acting head

- working with heads who delegated and saw deputy headship as a preparation for headship
- a variety of experiences as a deputy head
- management courses that complemented experiences gained on the job, and
- having a good and bad headteacher role models.

### **Stage 1 – Entry and encounter (first months)**

During this stage of headship, the organisational socialisation of new school leaders begins. The first days and weeks in post constitute a critical period for novice heads. The headteacher's notion of headship is confronted with the realities of a particular school and new heads attempt to make sense of the situation, the people, the problems and the school culture. Experience is used to prioritise actions and changes to be implemented.

### **Stage 2 – Taking hold (three to 12 months)**

The new head strives to 'take hold' (Gabarro, 1987), develops a deeper understanding of school context and begins to challenge the routines and norms in school, by introducing a number of organisational changes. In the NFER study, staff were lenient and open to changes for some time, before a negative reaction to a change implementation challenged new head's confidence in changing school culture.

### **Stage 3 – Reshaping (second year)**

After a year in post, new heads felt more confident to introduce significant changes to reshape the school, mostly in terms of structural changes. Both, the new head and the staff have learned about each other's strengths and weaknesses, and their mutual expectations have become more realistic. Thus, school leaders' expectations of major change would be embraced by staff as well.

#### **Stage 4 – Refinement (years 3 to 4)**

During this stage, further curriculum changes and innovations are introduced, and previous innovations and structural changes are refined.

#### **Stage 5 – Consolidation (years 5 to 7)**

After about five years in post, headteachers have introduced most of their planned changes and the following period could be characterised by consolidation between staff and the head. Though, externally imposed changes, such as reform changes, or changes in school context, such as a change in staff composition, may disturb school during this stage and at any stage of headship.

#### **Stage 6 – Plateau (years 8 and onwards)**

In the NFER study, heads proposed that a period of seven years was satisfactory as to implement the changes they wanted in school and validate the impact of these changes on student outcomes. This period corresponds with Day and Bakioglu's phase of 'disenchantment' or Ribbins' 'enchantment'. After serving for a period of ten years in school, a significant minority of NFER heads admitted reaching a plateau, and motivating them to remain enchanted and effective until the end of their career was a great challenge (Earley and Weindling, 2007). However, this was less likely for those who had moved to a second headship, as they moved back to 'Stage 1'. Moreover, at the time of major educational reform, the NFER heads remarked that 'it was not necessary to move posts in order to rejuvenate themselves or acquire new challenges' (Earley, 2012, p.11).

With regards to Weindling's (1999, 2000) and Earley and Weindling's (2004) stages of headship, the detailed specificity of the time scale between each stage is surprising given the disparity in the experience and characteristics of novice headteachers and the circumstances of the schools in which they are appointed. Within the Cypriot context, these discrepancies might be more apparent as headteachers are centrally allocated to schools and transferred between

schools across the island. Furthermore, while three decades ago the NFER heads were able to introduce many changes internally, more recently school leaders are accountable for many leadership initiatives mandated externally - especially in the light of the educational reform promoted in the CES. Attempting to test the aforementioned six-stage model of headship transition in Cyprus would require a longitudinal study to take place - a fact making this attempt unfeasible due to the constraints imposed by the time limit and financial restrictions of a doctoral study. However, this could be a possible suggestion for research beyond this thesis, by tracing participants and having them comment retrospectively on their experiences in post.

With these considerations in mind, the thesis attempted to test part of Weindling (1999, 2000) and Earley and Weindling's (2004) headship stage model into the Cypriot context. As this thesis focused solely on the induction stage of headship, it specifically explores Cypriot headteachers' career paths from 'Stage 0 - preparation prior to headship' to 'Stage 4 - refinement', by exploring the socialisation experiences of headteachers prior and upon entering headship, the difficulties newcomers face during early years, as well as the experiences that helped them to gain confidence in leading a school and implementing changes for school improvement. Upon testing these stages in the Cypriot context, variations in time scales and career-stages included in each headship cycle were expected given the peculiarities of the CES with regards to its centralised character and the appointment and transfer of headteachers. However, this thesis does not wish to imply that every new headteacher undergoes the same succession of stages or experiences, but rather to highlight the need to explore school leaders' socialisation process and their attempts to alter school culture and implement changes as influenced by their vision for the school.

Nevertheless, there has been a considerable debate around career-stage perspective and its validity in the literature. Researchers have pointed to the difficulty of measuring a career stage and, thus, to the lack of apparent boundaries between career stages. Also, they have criticised career-stage

perspectives for being consistent with the western world and thus, have failed to address issues of gender, discrimination, context and culture (Oplatka, 2004, 2012). Hence, criticism was taken into consideration during the design of the thesis and while analysing and interpreting the data.

## **Summary**

New headteachers experience various socialisation stages as they move from teaching to leadership of schools. Research evidence indicates that headteachers go through three main phases in a headteacher's career which are summarised to the pre-appointment, induction and in-service stages of headship. A number of stage theories also acknowledge the anticipatory and professional socialisation of heads prior to entering headship.

Like other studies, this thesis focuses on the entry to headship stage of a heads' career to explore the socialisation experiences of novice heads and the extent to which they impact professional identity formation and heads' establishment in post. The anticipatory and professional socialisation experiences prior to appointment are also taken into consideration. Such exploration is hoped to add to the stage theory of headship transition, by providing insights to inform progression through stages of headship in a country where selection, appointment and transfer of heads around schools is centrally managed.

Having reviewed the numerous stage-models that have been developed to portray the stages headteachers go through as they progress professionally during their career, the next chapter presents the methodological perspectives of the thesis concerning its methodology, the adopted data collection tools and the steps taken towards data analysis and presentation of the findings.



# **CHAPTER VI: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

## **Introduction**

The present study explored headship preparation and induction in Cyprus from the perspective of novice headteachers through the lens of organisational socialisation theory (Merton, 1968; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). Specifically, it sought to explore new heads' preparation for the post, the formation of their professional identity as heads, their socialization in schools and the challenges they encountered in post during early years. Moreover, their progression through stages of headship was explored (Weindling, 1999, 2000; Earley and Weindling, 2004).

This chapter begins with a presentation of the methodological perspectives of the study and a justification of mixed-methods strategy employed to address the research questions. This is followed by an outline of the research design which is depicted under three phases. In each phase, a justification for the selection of instruments employed in the study and the steps taken towards the selection of the participants are described. Furthermore, issues of validity, reliability and trustworthiness in research are also discussed. Then, the ethical considerations of the study are acknowledged and the ways in which they were dealt with are presented. Finally, the relationship of the researcher to the study is considered.

## **The methodological perspectives of the study**

In this section the epistemological and ontological perspectives underpinning this thesis are introduced and the interpretive paradigm and the pragmatic worldview which underline aspects of the research process followed are outlined.

On reviewing the literature regarding the entry to headship stage of a headteacher's career with particular interest on headship preparation and socialisation in post, four research questions emerged that constitute the core of the thesis. These are:

1. What is known about a) Cypriot primary headteachers' pathways to headship; and b) how well do they think have they been prepared for the post?
2. How do Cypriot novice primary heads shape their professional identity and become socialised into their role during their early years in post?
3. What are the most important challenges that newly appointed primary headteachers in Cyprus face during early headship?
4. Do stage theories of socialisation apply to Cypriot primary headteachers within their first four years in post?

On writing the research questions, I began considering possible research designs that would help to provide answers to the research questions. It soon became clear that positioning myself within the research process would allow for the selection of the best methodology that would guide my thesis. Making explicit what I was bringing to the research regarding my own philosophical approach or epistemology, as well as the underlying assumptions I use to make sense of the world, I would be in position to understand how other people, such as new heads, view the world and construct different perceptions of school leadership. Briggs and Coleman (2007) evoke 'reflexivity' as 'the process by which researchers come to understand how they are positioned in relation to the knowledge they are producing' (p.32). It is critical for researchers to recognise that they are part of the social and educational worlds they are studying, as their understanding of the world is 'reflected in, and affected by, the norms and values that have been absorbed as part of life experiences' (ibid, p.32).

Headship preparation, professional identity formation and socialisation in schools, which this study explored, are complex and multi-dimensional issues that are contingent on people's lived experiences and social interactions in specific contexts. By adopting the assumption that headteachers' reality is complex and made up of many, and sometimes contradictory, social strands, I drew from what Cohen et al. (2007) describe as *Interpretivism*. Interpretivism subscribes to the idea that reality is a social construct in which people build understanding of their world by providing accounts of what they do and how they interpret or define social situations. Its central endeavour is to understand the subjective world of human experience and to apply meaning to people's actions and interpretations of the world, so as to build a theory grounded in people's experiences (Briggs and Coleman, 2007). The interpretive paradigm is characterised by a concern for the individuals and their different conceptions of reality, which may vary depending on the situations and contexts supporting them. Thus, opposed to the normative paradigm that aims to establish a universal theory for human and social behaviour, within the interpretive paradigm

theory becomes sets of meanings which yield insight and understanding of people's behaviour [and] these theories are likely to be as diverse as the sets of human meanings and understandings that they are to explain (Cohen et al, 2007, p.22).

The interpretive perspective informed the first phase of the study (Phase A) where interviews were conducted with four headteachers so as to gain valuable insights into their early years in headship and identify issues that could be explored in the survey (Phase B). The interpretive worldview was also adopted in the third phase of the study (Phase C), where in-depth interviews and follow-up interviews were conducted with novice headteachers. The educational and the social context in which these headteachers worked, as well as school characteristics, were taken into consideration upon analysing and interpreting the accounts provided by the interviewees. In this way, interviews enabled the researcher to understand the ways in which the professional and organisational

socialisation experiences impacted on heads' attempts to gain credibility and grow professionally in post.

While analysing the data derived from the four pilot interviews in Phase A, I soon became aware of the limited possibilities of following a purely interpretive or qualitative approach. Within this paradigm, an understanding of the field requires an investigation 'from inside' and thorough familiarity with the topic, since 'in qualitative enquiry the researcher is the main research instrument' (Waterhouse, 2007, p.275). Thus, following Phase A where opportunity sampling was used, I repositioned myself within the research process by adopting a more structured and carefully designed data collection technique which would ensure the reliability of the data and reflect the differences within the social group under investigation - new Cypriot primary heads. Hence, the interviewees that participated in Phase C were carefully selected to reflect the differences within new headteachers' population and school contexts in Cyprus.

The pragmatic worldview, which puts emphasis on the solution of practical problems in the 'real world' without devotion to a particular method (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007), could provide an alternative framework to researching problems faced by beginning headteachers in Cyprus. Muijjs (2008) discusses a pragmatic philosophy through which it is difficult to identify a 'definite truth', as it is 'constantly changing and being updated through the process of human problem-solving' (p.6). *Pragmatism* has been defined as:

[...] a deconstructive paradigm that debunks concepts such as 'truth' and 'reality' and focuses instead on 'what works', as the truth regarding the research questions under investigation. Pragmatism rejects the either/or choices associated with the paradigm wars, advocates for the use of mixed methods in research, and acknowledges that the values of the researcher play a large role in interpretation of results (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, p.713).

By adopting a pragmatist perspective, I begin from the assumption that headteachers' reality is complex, varied and made-up of many interconnected strands, as well as situated in context. As there is no systematic formal headship preparation and induction in Cyprus, headteachers' professional and organisational socialisation were heavily influenced by personal socialisation

experiences and contextual factors that have shaped their professional identity and socialisation in schools. Hence, newly appointed heads' 'reality' of early headship seems indeed highly contradictory and confused. Pragmatism supports the integration of different perspectives and approaches 'for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration' (p.123), so as to best address the research questions. Looking into early primary headship and the PS and OS of headteachers through different world perspectives and employing different techniques could offer enriched understanding and vital practitioner insights into headteachers' lived realities during early headship. As I began to analyse the survey data so as to identify emerging themes and patterns, it became clear that mixed-methods research was going to be helpful in dealing with the complexities of the social and educational contexts of headteachers. Thus, employing in-depth interviews during the third phase of the research enlightened the survey findings with missing details and allowed for headteachers' perspectives and the social settings of their headship to be better understood.

For the above reasons, this thesis adopted a mixed-methods approach to deal with the complexity of the social contexts of headteachers and understand the impact of school context on participants' identity formation, socialisation in post and progression through stages of headship. The appropriateness of employing a mixed-methods approach for my study, which was largely determined by the research questions, is explained in the following section.

### **Mixed-methods design**

An exploratory mixed-methods design (Creswell and Clark, 2011) was employed as the best strategy to enable me to study beginning headteachers' perspectives of early headship by adopting a self-reflexive stance throughout the research journey.

The mixed-methods design emerged a few decades ago to provide researchers with an alternative to 'paradigm wars' and the 'false dichotomy' of qualitative and quantitative traditions (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). Over the years, a number of definitions for mixed-methods have emerged emphasising different stances towards various elements in the research process. An early definition of mixed-methods approach emphasised the mixing of quantitative and qualitative methods (Greene, Caracelli and Graham, 1989). Later, mixed-methods was viewed as a methodological orientation to research that combined elements of quantitative and qualitative approaches in all phases of the research process (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). In recent years, the emphasis has shifted to the philosophical orientation of mixed-methods research and the incorporation of diverse viewpoints for breadth and in-depth understanding of the research problem. This viewpoint is reflected in the definition provided by Johnson et al. (2007, p.123) who defined mixed-methods research as:

the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.

Mixed-methods research is widely recognised as an accessible approach to inquiry (Creswell and Clark, 2007, 2011) because it allows for answers to be given to all research questions in service of better understanding of the research problem. The mixed-methods paradigm rests on the assumption that 'the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone' (Creswell and Clark, 2007, p.5). Through the use of various approaches and ways of knowing a 'better understanding of the multifaceted and complex character of social phenomena' is obtained (Greene, 2008, p.20). What Greene (2008, p.20) has called a 'mixed methods way of thinking' is:

an orientation toward social inquiry that actively invites us to participate in dialogue about multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making be valued and cherished.

As Briggs and Coleman (2007) note, mixed-methods research allows the incorporation of the 'insider' and the 'outsider' perspectives to the research problem. Headship is widely recognised as a complex and multifaceted role to fulfil; situated in context and social interactions with various stakeholders. By employing mixed-methods, more than one methodological technique was incorporated to explore the complex reality of headteachers' world and gain valuable insights into their views, reality and socialisation experiences prior to and during early headship. The process of using a variety of sources and methods to verify the accuracy of the collected data and 'explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint' is called triangulation (Cohen et al., 2007, p.141). However, an exploratory sequential design was employed in thesis and not a design triangulation (Briggs and Coleman, 2007). Hence, comparing the results and findings obtained using both quantitative and qualitative methods would portray a more comprehensive picture of the research problem and foster a better understanding of the PS and OS of new heads in Cyprus.

While conducting mixed-methods research, it is therefore critical for researchers to have the methodological awareness as to the reasons that guided the selection of a particular approach and the implications derived from that decision (Briggs and Coleman, 2007). A central concern of mixed-methods is that researchers may choose this approach as a way to balance the limitations of one method and the strengths of another. However, according to Johnson et al. (2007), weighing the strengths and weaknesses of mixed-methods approach should be considered in relation to situational contingencies and with emphasis in strengthening the findings and not as a way to overcome the limitations emerging from another method. As they indicated, using both quantitative and qualitative methods

means data should be collected that will provide all of the information that is potentially relevant to the purpose(s) of the study [...] in a way that results in overall or total design viability and usefulness (Ibid, pp.127-128).

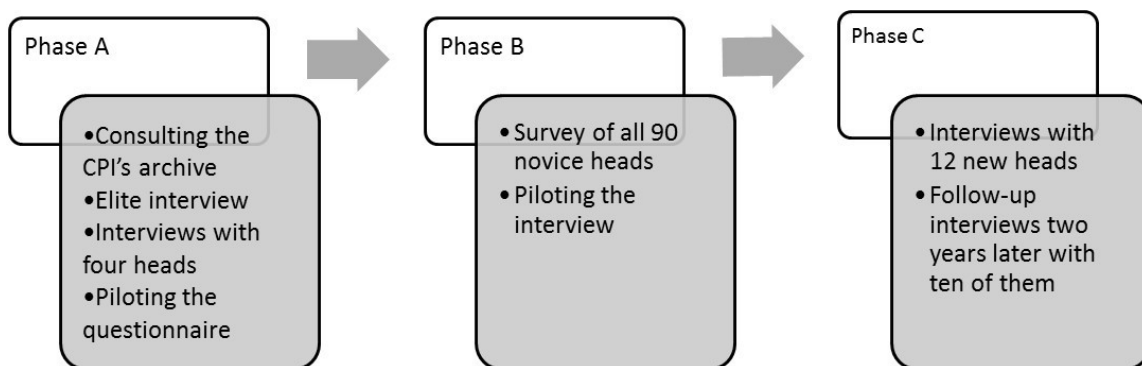
Having established the necessity of a mixed-methods design for answering the research questions guiding this thesis, the following section describes the three phases of the study. In each phase, the participants and the different sampling strategies adopted for selecting the participants are introduced. The instruments used in data collection, such as a questionnaire and interviews, are also presented, the instruments' strengths and weaknesses are set out and the appropriateness for their use in thesis is established.

### The study in three phases

Due to the exploratory nature of the research and the complexities of the phenomena studied, a sequential mixed-methods design was employed (Creswell and Clark, 2011). This is where 'different methods were meant to inform and supplement each other not only because they addressed different aspects of the study (or different layers of the phenomenon)' (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, p.151), but to yield understanding of the complex reality of headteachers during early years in post.

The sequential mixed-methods design encompassed three phases as presented in Figure 6.1 below:

**Figure 6.1: The phases of the study**



The design of the study intentionally focused on capturing the voices and perceptions of new headteachers at various times throughout a period of two



and a half years - just after completing the NITPSL (Phase B), during first/second year in post (Phase C - initial interviews) and during third/fourth year in post (Phase C - follow-up interviews). For this reason, different sampling procedures, as well as different research tools were adopted in each phase of the study.

The study's methodology comprised of six data gathering strands as follows:

- consultation of the CPI's archive
- elite interview with the programme leader of the NITPSL
- four exploratory face to face interviews with headteachers
- a survey of all 90 newly appointed heads
- interviews with 12 heads serving at public primary, pre-primary and special schools
- follow-up interviews with ten heads two years later.

The sequential design provided the flexibility to adapt the research instruments to the findings derived from the previous phase of the study. The first three data gathering strands were carried out concurrently to provide the background for the thesis and the construction of the questionnaire, thus, achieving the timetable for completing this thesis on time. Next, a survey was conducted to explore the research questions by collecting data at the macro (group) level. Afterwards, semi-structured interviews were used to explore the survey findings and research issues in detail at the micro (individual) level. Finally, follow-up interviews were used to enlighten further the emerging research findings, as well as to explore the transition of Cypriot heads through career stages of headship.

Without doubt, the careful selection of the research instruments is important in any research study, and the characteristics of the individuals who are recruited to participate in a data gathering strand must be defined cautiously by the researcher. Next, details regarding the research method and the participants

involved in each phase of the study are provided. Also, issues of validity, trustworthiness and reliability in thesis are discussed.

## **Phase A**

First, four free dialogue interviews with headteachers and an elite interview with the programme leader of the NITPSL were conducted to provide first-hand information regarding headship preparation and induction in Cyprus. Furthermore, the CPI's archive was consulted and official reports and documents were used as documentary sources. All data sources informed the construction of the questionnaire used in Phase B.

### **The interviews**

In the first phase of the study, four exploratory face-to-face interviews were conducted with headteachers who had completed the NITPSL in previous years and had three years of experience in post. The interviews had an open and flexible format which 'might be described as more closely resembling a conversation' (Dowling and Brown, 2010) based around a few key topics. The questions that guided the conversation were the following:

- How did you become a headteacher?
- How would you describe your experience as a new head?
- What do you think about headteachers' role in schools?

During the discussion, headteachers were encouraged to provide detailed accounts of their practices and offer personal narratives of past experience (Holliday, 2007) regarding pathways to headship, the socialisation experiences in post, the challenges encountered in post during early years and the perceptions of their role as headteachers. Hence, interviews provided in-depth practitioner insights into early headship, which supplied 'the detail and depth

needed to ensure that the questionnaire [would] ask valid questions' (Denscombe, 2003, p. 166).

Even though narratives are subjectively personal, less comparable across the interviews and difficult to analyse (Brown and Dowling, 1998), the data collected is more genuine, as 'it recounts events, recalls experiences and relates emotional responses' (Waterhouse, 2007, p.272) to specific social and cultural contexts. The value of narrative descriptions became evident when connected with other forms of data, such as the information derived from elite interview and the CPI's archive, and helped the researcher to understand the voice projected in the interview. As Holliday (2007, p.133) argued 'in the written form of research, the only narrative is that of the researcher' as the personal accounts of the interviewees are produced in response to the elicitations of the researcher and are then incorporated into the researcher's narrative.

All interviews lasted about an hour and were conducted in participants' schools. During interviews, the researcher was taking notes of the issues raised while heads shared their stories of becoming heads and experiences in post, which were elaborated further and clarified later during discussion. Although the four exploratory interviews constituted an important starting point for the thesis, they were not recorded as the primary aim for using interviews in this phase was to explore the applicability of issues identified in the literature, as affecting the PS and OS of heads, in the Cypriot context, so as to inform the construction of the questionnaire (Phase B) and not to analyse interviewees' accounts in relation to the context in which they served. In this way, heads were encouraged to have a friendly and non-threatening conversation during which they shared their stories of becoming headteachers and personal narratives of past experiences and events that had been highly emotional. The interviewees' accounts were constructed by the researcher based on the notes kept during the conversation around key topics and were sent to interviewees a week later, to ensure that their views had been recorded accurately by the researcher.

## **The participants**

Since representativeness of the sample was not important at this stage, convenience sampling was adopted - sometimes called opportunity sampling - which involved 'choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents [...] or those who happen to be available and accessible at the time' (Cohen et al., 2007, pp.113-114). Hence, I chose the sample - three female and a male headteacher - from headteachers to whom I had easy access, either because we had been colleagues in the past or they were known to my colleagues. On understanding cultural categories and assumptions through which people interpret the world, it is sometimes important to determine how many and what kind of people share a specific characteristic. As such, the categories and assumptions being studied - not the interviewees themselves - are significant. For this reason, I purposively chose a headteacher who possessed a doctorate in educational leadership and a male participant. Interviewees were aged between 39 to 55 years. All female headteachers were on their first headship in medium-sized primary schools in the rural area of Nicosia. The male participant was on his second headship in a large-sized primary school in the suburbs of Nicosia.

## **Consulting the Archive**

On entering the research journey, the archive of the CPI was consulted to inform my knowledge in relation to headship provision in Cyprus. At the same time, the official websites of the MOEC and the ESC were searched to find the official reports prepared by each institution on an annual basis. During this thesis, the official reports were consulted yearly.

The consultation of official reports and programme documents, such as official policy documents regarding the NITPSL, programme brochures and internal evaluation reports, provided background information regarding the policy framework of headteachers' preparation and induction in Cyprus. In particular,

they enlightened the aims and content of the NITPSL and provided information about the proposed scheme for the preparation and promotion of heads, as included in the educational reform agenda. Furthermore, the internal evaluation report of the NITPSL (CPI, 2007) offered valuable information about the revision of the NITPSL in light of participants' views.

The consultation of the aforementioned documents was guided by the understanding of the formal dimension of the role of headteacher. It also provided a stimulus for generating questions to be pursued through the survey and interviews. The information obtained from the CPI's archive and the official reports facilitated the construction of the questionnaire to be used in Phase B and provided the basis for interpreting the survey and interview findings in light of the reform changes that are gradually introduced in the CES.

### **The elite interview**

In this phase of the study, an elite interview with an individual who had comprehensive knowledge and experience of the educational field, especially with regards to school leadership and headship preparation, was conducted. The programme leader of the NITPSL who had the responsibility for the content and delivery of the programme was interviewed. According to Gillham (2000, p.63-64), elite interviewing is:

when you interview someone in a position of authority, or especially expert or authoritative, people who are capable of giving answers with insight and a comprehensive grasp of what it is you are researching.

My endeavour to interview this key person in my field of study aided the literature review of the issues under examination and enhanced my understanding of the policy context framing the NITPSL, headteachers' induction and practice. The elite interview complemented the data obtained from the archive of the CPI, such as annual reports and internal evaluation reports, to portray a full picture of leadership development in Cyprus. Moreover, the elite

interview provided further information regarding the aims, the scope, and the philosophy upon which the NITPSL was revised and restructured.

The elite interview, which had a semi-structured format, was used to gather information about headship provision in Cyprus, the government's agenda for the professional development of school leaders, the extent to which headteachers' training needs were addressed and the content and delivery of the NITPSL. The interview schedule, which was developed to gather such information, was sent to the programme leader of the NITPSL prior to the interview (see Appendix B). The semi-structured interview technique provided both structure and flexibility to the discussion, allowing thus for the interview to be completed within the time limits posed by the interviewee and to cover a wide range of issues regarding the NITPSL.

Data triangulation may prove a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity (Cohen et al., 2007) and, in this study, it was achieved by juxtaposing the data elicited from the programme leader of the NITPSL with interview data obtained from novice headteacher and documentary sources about the NITPSL to enhance understanding of early primary headship in Cyprus.

### **Piloting the questionnaire**

Given the interviews with heads, the elite interview and the consultation of the CPI's archive, a great amount of data regarding preparation for headship, organisational socialisation in schools and headteacher's role was gathered. Upon analysing the interview data, issues concerning motivation for becoming headteachers, participation at the NITPSL, headship learning, the challenges met in post and heads' perceived readiness to handle challenges in situ emerged. The elite interview provided the background for understanding the formal dimension of headship, as well as heads' views about the NITPSL and the way it enhanced the professional socialisation of headteachers. The aforementioned themes in relation to themes identified in research literature on

the professional and organisational socialisation of new heads enabled the researcher to establish the necessity of the present study and construct the questionnaire to be used in Phase B.

On designing the questionnaire and prior to data collection, the adequacy of the research instrument was tested through piloting. According to Cohen et al. (2007), piloting a survey enables the researcher to check the clarity and validity of the questionnaire items, instructions and layout; gain feedback on the validity of questionnaire items and the operationalization of the constructs; and eliminate ambiguity in wording or omissions. At this stage and due to the small number of participants among which the questionnaire was piloted no tests of validity were applied on the questionnaire. Rather, its potential to provide a valid measurement of the variables included in the questionnaire, was enhanced through participants' feedback comments.

The questionnaire was piloted among the four interviewees in Phase A and two colleagues possessing postgraduate qualifications in school leadership, who provided feedback concerning the questionnaire items, its design and layout. In light of the feedback comments, the wording of certain items changed, arbitrary words or ambiguous questions that could be interpreted differently among respondents were removed and a few additional options in multiple choice questions were added so as to contain as full a range of potential answers. The revised instrument was reviewed by the two colleagues and the questionnaire items were refined to be clear and comprehensive.

## **Phase B**

In the second phase of the study, a survey of all 90 new heads was employed to elicit their views regarding the NITPSL, motivation for headship, preparation for the post, readiness to handle challenges in situ and future training needs. In March 2010, the questionnaires were administered to headteachers' schools, as

due to the Data Protection Act, headteachers' personal contact details could not be revealed and accessed for the study.

Postal questionnaires are relatively economical in terms of money and time and they can easily be administered to respondents in distant locations. Though, they may be difficult to collect and extra care should be taken to secure high response rates while using postal questionnaires (Cohen et al., 2007). Moreover, their questions are standardised and written for a specific purpose, and they assure the anonymity of the participants. Thus, they are usually completed with honesty and tend to be reliable (Cohen et al., 2007). However, Brundrett and Rhodes (2014) remind us that 'reliability may be compromised when the questions include scales that may be sensitive to respondents' immediate mood or feelings' (p.29). Response bias may also arise due to the non-response questionnaires (Creswell, 2003) or 'prestige bias' may occur in case respondents try to offer the 'right answer' to questions (Thomas, 2009, p.174).

Nevertheless, given the financial and travel constraints of the researcher, postal questionnaires were considered as the most viable way to survey all 90 participants who were located throughout the island. Other ways of conducting the survey would not be feasible, considering Cypriot headteachers' unfamiliarity with internet technologies and their limited availability for a telephone survey, for instance.

In order to avoid non-return of the questionnaires and maximize the response levels, a stamped self-addressed envelope accompanied the questionnaire to facilitate the return of the completed questionnaires. Moreover, a cover letter introducing the scope of the study and explaining how survey data would be treated, so as to assure the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents, was attached (see Appendix C). Two weeks after the initial mailing date, a reminder letter and a copy of the questionnaire were faxed to all participants. A follow-up phone call took place a week afterwards in order to elicit more respondents (Dowling and Brown, 2010). As a result of this activity, the questionnaire returns were quite high and 60 out of the 90 participants



completed and returned the questionnaires (a response rate of 66%). Although there is always the case that a difference could exist between respondents (66%) and non-respondents (34%) in the survey, no further attempt to seek the views of non-respondents was made for two reasons: first, the response rate achieved was satisfactory for a survey and respondents were representative of the population of newly appointed heads between 2008-2010; and second an exploration of the characteristics of non-respondents in comparison to the characteristics of the sample proved that the two groups shared similar characteristics with regards to individual and school variables. Hence, no further attempt was made to contact non-respondents.

Afterwards, the questionnaires were numbered and data was processed using SPSS20, as described in 'Quantitative data analysis' section. Upon analysing the questionnaire survey data, a draft interview schedule was devised and piloted again with the four headteachers participating in phase A.

### **The questionnaire**

The questionnaire consisted of two parts (see Appendix C): the first part aimed to collect information about the profile of novice heads and the schools in which they served, while the second part included 38 questionnaire items related to the eight variables examined in this study and an open-ended questions. These are: (1) Decision for headship, (2) Readiness for the post, (3) Challenges of headship, (4) Leadership development, (5) Knowledge development, (6) Skills development, (7) Opportunities for development, and (8) Further training.

In the first part of the questionnaire, participants' demographic details, such as gender, years in service, academic qualifications, level of education, and the characteristics of schools in which headteachers served, such as type, size and location, were gathered using dichotomous, multiple choice and ratio data questions. Moreover, participants were prompted to provide an alternative answer, by selecting the response category entitled 'Other (please indicate)'.

Questions regarding total years in teaching service, years in deputy headship, years in headship, age, number of teachers and number of pupils in schools were ratio data questions, since they were straightforward for participants to understand, ensuring thus the accuracy of the data.

The key part of the questionnaire consisted of several items organised in six sections with section headings, indicating, thus, the coherence and logic of the questionnaire to the respondents: (a) Decision for headship, (b) Readiness for taking up the post, (c) The challenges of first headship, (d) Leadership and management development, (e) The National In-service Training Programme for School Leaders, and (f) Need for further training. Under the fifth subsection, items regarding the skills and knowledge gained during NITPSL, as well as the opportunities provided for personal development and networking during training were included. The questionnaire items were related to the eight variables, as presented above.

Regarding the layout of the questionnaire, a matrix design was selected to minimise the completion time. A four-point Likert rating scale was used to seek participants' degree of agreement with the questionnaire items, as well as their views on the extent to which certain issues were addressed during the NITPSL using 'Not at all', 'A little', 'Quite a lot' and 'Very much'. Moreover, a 'Not applicable' category was available for respondents to choose while answering the questionnaire items concerning leadership and management development.

Rating scales incorporate a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response and 'combine the opportunity for flexible response with the ability to determine frequencies, correlations and other forms of quantitative analysis' (Cohen et al., 2007, p.328). Hence, they have been proved particularly useful in research for mapping attitudes, perceptions and opinions, although there is no way to verify whether respondents are telling the truth by avoiding response sets or if they wished to add a comment or a different opinion to a question.

For these reasons, additional steps were taken towards safeguarding the validity of postal questionnaires with regards to accuracy during completion. First, one open-ended question seeking respondents' views on the areas they felt they needed further training to carry on their duties efficiently was included at the end of the questionnaire. As Cohen et al. (2007) proposed, open-ended questions are often useful where the questionnaire is exploratory, since they may 'contain the 'gems' of information that otherwise might not be caught in the questionnaire' (p.330). However, they are demanding of respondents' time and often omitted by respondents, which is why only one open-ended question was included. Second, with the intention of minimising the response sets in the questionnaire and, thus, achieving accuracy during completion, two statements with reverse meaning were included which required respondents to read them carefully prior to providing an answer; and the words that required the attention of respondents were highlighted in the questionnaire.

The reliability of the survey data with regards to accuracy during completion was addressed using a set of questionnaire items instead of a single item about a topic. Also, the questionnaire items which were regarded as explaining the same variable were positioned under the same section of the questionnaire. This technique was adopted while structuring the questionnaire and allowed for information to be collected about different aspects of a topic, increasing, thus, the reliability of the collected data using questionnaires (Dowling and Brown, 2010).

### **The survey participants**

A questionnaire survey of all 90 newly appointed Cypriot primary headteachers, with one or two years in post, took place in March 2010. A list of participants was generated from the two sets of attendees at the NITPSL during school

years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010<sup>4</sup>. Table 6.1 summarises the demographics of the 60 headteachers who participated in the study.

**Table 6.1: Demographics of survey respondents**

		N	%
Gender	Male	15	25
	Female	45	75
Years in service	18-24	14	23
	25-29	15	25
	30-34	16	27
	35-38	15	25
Age	40-45	14	24
	46-55	29	48
	56-59	17	28
Level of Education	Pre-primary	7	12
	Primary	53	88
Academic qualification	Bachelor Degree	37	61
	Master's	16	27
	Doctoral	7	12
Years in headship	One	27	45
	Two	33	55
Number of headships	first headship	52	87
	second headship	8	13

(n=60)

As shown in Table 6.1, one fourth of respondents were male (15) and three quarters were female (45). The respondents had either one (45%) or two years (55%) in post as headteachers. The majority of them were primary school headteachers (88%) (two of whom served in special schools), while a small

<sup>4</sup> Questionnaires were not administered to two persons who had been promoted to other posts soon after promotion to primary headship; a female head who had been appointed as an Inspector and a male head who was seconded at the MOEC. The study primarily explored novice headteachers' experiences and views regarding early headship, as well as the difficulties they encountered on taking up the post. Consequently, they would not be in a position to participate in the study, as neither of them had the experience of primary headship.

portion served in pre-primary schools (12%). Furthermore, most headteachers (61%) were qualified with a Bachelor degree and about one-in-four (39%) were holders of postgraduate qualifications such as Master's (27%) and doctoral (12%) degrees. The age of the respondents varied between 40 to 59 years and they had between 18 to 38 years in service. Further information regarding the characteristics of survey participants and the schools in which they served are provided in Appendix E.

### **Phase C**

In this phase of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 headteachers who had attended the NITPSL between 2008 and 2010. Out of these heads, ten were traced and re-interviewed two years later.

The interviews - both initial and follow-up interviews - were arranged and conducted in headteachers' offices, where participants would feel more comfortable and the tape recording would be clear. In one occasion, the interview was scheduled in the afternoon at a quiet place, where the participant would feel relaxed to engage with the interview. Both interviews and follow-up interviews were conducted by the researcher and they were tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees.

The interviewees were contacted by telephone to gain their consent for their participation in the research study. In two occasions where the selected participants were not interested in taking part in the interview, other participants who had the same background characteristics were selected. It is possible that among the interviewees there were some of the non-respondents to the survey. However, this was not possible to be validated as questionnaires were completed anonymously. The interview schedule along with an information leaflet explaining in detail the research procedures were faxed to participants prior to the interview (see Appendices D, F and G).

The data collected through interviews was transcribed and interview transcripts were sent to interviewees to comment on and validate their accounts. Afterwards, pseudonyms were assigned to all interviewees to ensure their anonymity. Moreover, interviewees' personal and school details were kept in a digital file apart from interview transcripts so as to assure that participants would not be traced easily. A detailed explanation of the ethical considerations regarding their selection and participation is found in the last section of this chapter.

### **Initial interviews**

In this phase of the study, 12 semi-structured face-to-face interviews, averaging between 60 to 80 minutes in length, were used to obtain detailed accounts of new primary headteachers' professional and organisational socialisation experiences and pursue further, and in greater detail and depth, issues that emerged during the analysis of the survey data.

The interview method was adopted because interviews encourage participants 'to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and express how they regard situations from their own point of view' (Cohen et al., 2007, p.349) providing, thus, authentic, rich and depth responses. Hence, interviews 'enable the researcher to explore complex issues in detail' and 'facilitate the professional engagement of the researcher in the collection of data' (Brown and Dowling, 1998, p.72). Moreover, using interviews in Phase C enabled the researcher to achieve both 'methodological triangulation' and 'respondent triangulation' (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014) and establish the validity, accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings. Methodological triangulation was established by comparing data obtained from the interviews with questionnaire findings and the information derived from official documents and reports, while using a variety of heads serving in diverse contexts allowed the researcher to draw authentic practitioner insights into early headship in various contexts.

According to Seideman (1998), interviewing offers the necessary avenue of inquiry in order to understand participants' experience and the meaning attached to them, as people's behaviours becomes meaningful and understandable when situated in the context of their lives and those around them. Consequently, this study involved in-depth interviews to ensure that context would be incorporated and the meaning attached to the professional and organisational socialisation experiences of new heads would be comprehensively explored with greater richness and spontaneity.

An interview schedule consisting of open-ended questions, and probes to be used during interviews, was devised. The interview schedule ensured that all interviews had comparable coverage, as well as flexibility with regards to a core of issues to be covered during the interview in the light of the statements of the interviewees (Cohen et al., 2007). In this way, interviews safeguarded the reliability of the collected data (Rapley, 2007).

The interview schedule consisted of two parts (see Appendix F). The first part included items regarding the demographic characteristics of the interviewees and their schools. The second part, which was partly based on survey findings and the reviewed research literature, included open-ended questions to elicit headteachers' views and experience on the following issues:

- pathways to and preparation for headship
- socialisation in school during early years
- the challenges of first headship
- headteachers' conceptions of their role as heads
- the NITPSL
- existing, emerging and potential training needs of Cypriot primary heads.

The majority of the questions posed during the discussion were open-ended descriptive questions, thereby drawing 'on the direct experience of the interviewees and calling for a narrative response' (Brown and Dowling, 1998, p.75). Questions were asked to all participants in a similar way, avoiding any

leading questions that would introduce bias to the interview data. Using a list of carefully selected prompts prepared prior to the interview (Brown and Dowling, 1998), the interviewees were motivated to discuss their thoughts, feelings and experiences and comment on specific aspects of a topic or elaborate on any inconsistencies outlined in their answers. Using carefully selected probes, interviewees were guided to elaborate on themes that emerged during the conversation. Hence, the interviews were tailored to the various influences and the answers provided by the interviewees during the discussion.

The interviewees were encouraged to talk about their paths to headship and their motivation for applying for headship; discussed their preparation for the post and how they developed professionally; and talked about their organisational socialisation experiences. Thus, they provided honest accounts of their early experience in post and described how it feels like to live and breathe the role in each particular school context. For this reason, it was important that the rapport that develops between the interviewer and the interviewee during the interview is controlled. That is why during interviews, I tried to maintain sufficient distance between myself and the interviewees by adopting an outsider's stance which would minimise bias on the interview data. I avoided expressing personal views or commenting on interviewees' accounts. I also tried not to be directive or critical at any stage of the interview, allowing headteachers to structure their own accounts with minimal interruption. Moreover, as non-verbal communication is also critical in interviews, the researcher was extremely careful so as to 'give no hint of judgement, support or condemnation' (Cohen et al., 2007, p.130) by being acutely percipient.

On the other hand, the interview procedure and the direct contact and communication among the interviewer and the interviewee allowed for the collected data to be checked against accuracy as it was collected. At certain points during the discussion, I tried to summarise interviewees' words and provide accounts of their statements, allowing, thus, for any misinterpretation to be clarified and data to be checked for accuracy (Denscombe, 2003; Brundrett



and Rhodes, 2014). Furthermore, during the follow-up interviews, I used quotes from initial interviews with headteachers to elicit more information on certain issues, as well as to validate my understanding of their interpretation on the issues under investigation.

A week later, the interviewees were given the interview transcripts and asked to validate the researcher's interpretation of their written accounts or add additional comments or views on issues that had not been raised. This step was considered necessary in enhancing the accuracy and trustworthiness of interview findings.

### **Follow-up interviews**

Two years later, between May and June 2012, ten of the above interviewees were traced and follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted with them (see Appendix G). Follow-up interviews aimed to throw light on issues emerging from initial interviews and elicit further information regarding heads' conceptions of their role as shaped by school culture and their attempts to promote their vision for school improvement. Novice heads were advised to talk with honesty about the challenges they met on assuming the post and how they coped with them, how they established their professional identity in school and initiated changes towards school improvement, as well as their views and lived reality of headship during early years. Such data would establish the impact of organisational socialisation on heads' professional identity formation and transition through stages of headship within the first four years in post.

According to Denscombe (2003), interview data should not be taken 'at face value' if it is possible to confirm it using triangulation. The comparison of the interview data from initial and follow-up interviews for each participant allowed the researcher to check for consistency among the interviewees' answers, while survey findings complemented interview findings in presenting the lived reality of early headship.

## **The participants**

It was essential for this study to find participants who could offer diverse perspectives into the entry to headship stage of a headteacher's career, as the resulting data would allow for a comprehensive overview of first headship and induction in Cypriot primary schools. As Creswell (2003) acknowledges,

the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question (p.185, emphasis in the original).

Hence, purposive sampling allowed the researcher to handpick the sample that possessed particular characteristics which were satisfactory to the specific needs of the study and gather a cross-section of opinions within the group of novice Cypriot headteachers who had one or two years in post.

For this reason, stratified sampling was employed to certify that interviewees were carefully selected from a representative set of schooling environments to provide a cross-section of opinions within the group of first-time Cypriot headteachers. Participant selection was guided by the desire to identify informants who possessed a wide variety of experiences in a range of school contexts, and it was based on the following variables, namely:

- years in post
- gender
- level of education (primary, pre-primary and special schools)
- school size (large, medium and small schools)
- location (urban, suburban and rural schools in different parts of Cyprus)
- postgraduate qualifications

Initially, new headteachers were divided in two groups according to years in post based on the two lists of the NITPSL's attendees between 2008 and 2010. The new heads in each list (those with one or two years in post) were placed into sub-groups according to gender, level of education and school size. Once, the allocation was completed for each list separately, participants were selected purposively so as to reflect the characteristics of the population of newly

appointed headteachers during 2008-2010 and the schools in which they were appointed. Though, extra care was taken to select participants that possessed postgraduate qualifications and served in schools located in different districts. Also, with the intention of eliciting more memorable and authentic descriptions of new heads' accounts of their experiences during early headship, more participants with one year in post were selected compared to participants having two years in post.

The selection ensured the maximum variability of roles and contexts by including heads in the first or second year in post, schools of different levels, as well as urban and rural schools from various parts of Cyprus. Nevertheless, although Cyprus is a small island and diversity in headteachers' population is limited, selecting participants from different school settings could help address representativeness in the sample not for its own sake, but for a broader understanding of the research topic. Focusing sampling on heterogeneity allows for greater comparison in the field of study to be done. On the other hand, too much heterogeneity may create difficulties in identifying commonalities among the sample (Maxwell, 2005). That's why initial selection was based only on four criteria. Moreover, rich information could help generate conceptual categories and formulate theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) regarding progression through headship. From this point of view, representativeness was a key issue that could add quality and authority to the research findings.

In this study, it was also examined whether research participants constitute a typical group of novice heads with regards to the characteristics new Cypriot headteachers had. It could be argued that the interviewees are representative of the cohort of newly appointed headteachers in Cyprus of the last five years, since the situation earlier was much different with males surpassing their female counterparts and seniority having greater weight in decisions about promotion. Nowadays, it is apparent from recent promotions that the number of qualified candidates for headship with postgraduate degrees is increasing as is the number of promoted female headteachers (Polis, 2013). Thus, participants may

be regarded as representative of recent cohorts of newly appointed heads in Cyprus.

The major characteristics of the participants such as years in headship, gender (M=male, F=female) and school size during the initial interviews are summarised below.

**Table 6.2: The interviewees**

	Small schools		Medium-sized schools		Large schools	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
one year in post	I	A, G		D, K	E	C, J, L
two years in post		H	B	F		

(n=12)

Nine of the 12 participants had been in post for a year and three of them had two years' experience in post. Nine headteachers worked in primary schools, two in pre-primary schools and one in a special school. Four of the 12 were male and eight female headteachers. Two of the initial interviewees were not possible to be reached and re-interviewed in June 2012, as a male headteachers had retired (Participant E) and a female head had been promoted to an executive post within the MOEC (Participant A). Seven heads still served in the same school, while three were in their second headship. Detailed information about the demographics of headteachers and the characteristics of their schools during interviews and follow-up interviews can be found in Appendix I.

Next, a description of the process followed for analysing the quantitative and qualitative data collected through various data gathering strands during all three phases of the study follows.

## **Analysing the data**

As described in previous sections, different forms of data have been accessed and gathered for this thesis, through an elite interview, initial and follow-up interviews with novice heads, a survey of all 90 newly promoted heads and documentary sources obtained from the archive of the CPI. This section considers how the different forms of data were analysed using quantitative, qualitative and documentary analysis techniques.

The data sets collected through various sources during the three phases of the thesis were initially analysed separately, as described in details below. The findings derived from the analysis of each data set informed the next phase of the study and the construction of the research instrument to be used in each phase. During Phase A, the elite interview with the programme leader of the NITPSL and the consultation of the CPI's archive provided background information about the content and structure of the NITPSL and allowed for comparison and better understanding of the four interviewees' accounts about headship preparation and the NITPSL. In addition, the four exploratory interviews informed the construction of the questionnaire with regards to themes identified in the literature, such as decision for headship, motivation for headship, preparation for the post and the challenges encountered in school during first headship. On analysing the survey data during Phase B, it emerged that an important number of participants valued formal leadership experience as acting heads in small schools and individual initiatives for headship preparation to a great extent, while most of them regarded primary headship in large-sized schools as particularly challenging. In addition, respondents' answers to the open question included in the questionnaire regarding areas for further training indicated a preference in instructional leadership and leading multicultural schools. These findings urged me to proceed with in-depth interviews during Phase C to explore further these issues by selecting a variety of participants serving in different contexts to share their views and illuminate headship preparation and socialisation in post. On analysing the interviews conducted

during Phase C, evidence regarding heads' professional identity formation and socialisation in schools emerged. These issues were further explored in follow-up interviews where evidence regarding transition through headship also emerged by comparing participants' answers on the same question posed during the initial and follow-up interviews, as well as through categorisation of difficulties reported by the interviewees at different times during the research study.

At a later stage, blended data analysis was needed to address the research questions guiding this thesis. Describing the complex nature of headship required the blending of both perspectives; the quantitative and the qualitative perspective, as well as the use of findings emerged from different data sets and sources. On interpreting the thesis findings, all data collected during the three phases of the research was used to validate findings, as well as to shed light on headship scene upon which the exploration was made. Hence, the subjective interpretations of the participants through their own words written in the questionnaires and recorded during interviews, along with the documentary analysis, gave glimpses into headteachers' understanding of their professional socialisation experiences and socialisation in schools. Thus, the outsider perspective of the researcher and interpretive linkages among multiple data sources (Stake, 1995) added objectivity to the thesis.

### **Quantitative data analysis**

For the analysis of survey data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed, using the widely accepted Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS20) software.

Prior to entering the data into the analysis software, a number of steps were considered to ensure the accuracy of the data. First, all returned questionnaires were numbered for tracking purposes. Then, data editing was needed (Cohen et al., 2007) for eliminating errors made by the respondents with regards to the

completeness and the accuracy of the answers provided. Afterwards, all answers to questionnaire items were given codes according to the coding framework prepared during the design of the survey to simplify the entry process. However, for the open-ended question included in the questionnaire, the coding was devised after the completion of the survey and its validity was checked by 'using it to code up further sample of the questionnaire' (Cohen et al., 2007). Upon entering the data in SPSS, I went through the questionnaires again to ensure that all data was recorded. Afterwards, the data set was double checked for missing values or typing errors.

In the case of ratio data questions where numerical answers were provided, such as total years in teaching service, years in deputy headship, years in headship, age, number of teachers and number of pupils in schools, a computation of new variables was needed, so as to change the ratio scale data to ordinal data (Cohen et al., 2007). Such transformation would enable the computation of cross-tabulations to determine the impact of these variables on new heads' responses to questionnaire items, which were treated as ordinal data. Also, questionnaire items with reverse meaning were computed again so as to be used along with other items to form new variables.

On applying descriptive statistics, the nominal data gathered in the first part of the questionnaire about dichotomous variables (gender, level of education) and multiple choice questions (type of school, location, postgraduate qualifications etc) was processed using frequencies and percentages. The ratio data collected through variables such as years in service, years in headship, years in deputy headship, number of pupils enrolled in school, number of teachers serving in school was processed in the same way after being transformed into ordinal data as described above. Moreover, the data gathered using rating scales was treated as ordinal data, while it is a common practice in most social science studies to manipulate data as such (Cohen et al., 2007).

At this stage, questionnaire items were grouped together to form the eight variables examined in the study (see Table 6.3 below). On ensuring the

reliability of the survey data, the skewness of the data was portrayed and reliability tests, such as the Cronbach's Alpha and the Test of Normality, were applied to the eight variables.

**Table 6.3: Reliability tests**

	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>N of items</b>
Decision	0,501	9
Readiness	0,602	10
Challenges	0,520	8
Leadership development	0,827	14
Knowledge development	0,917	7
Skills development	0,925	7
Opportunities	0,823	6
Further training	0,863	7

Beyond descriptive statistics, cross tabulations were carried out to explore responses to the questionnaire items and identify patterns of responses between subgroups, in terms of the individual characteristics, such as gender, qualifications (basic, postgraduate), level (primary, pre-primary), years in service (24-, 25-29, 30-34, 35+) and school characteristics, such as size (small, medium, large) and location (urban, rural). However, since the survey items were considered as ordinal data and normal distributions were not obtained, data was further explored through non-parametric tests. In this regard, Mann-Whitney tests were employed to determine statistically significant differences between groups of respondents according to individual and school characteristics with regards to the following variables: leadership development, decision, readiness, skill development and knowledge development. However, statistically significant differences about years in service and school characteristics did not yield from



the analysis. The survey findings were further explored in interviews and follow-up interviews in Phase C.

On presenting the findings, reference is made to U-tests, only when significant differences between groups were obtained. In addition, although answers to the questionnaire items were given on a 4-point scale, for the interpretation and reporting of the findings, the categories 'Quite a lot' and 'Very much' were combined to mean 'A lot'. The other categories 'A little' and 'Not at all' were treated as such. This combining of scales is commonly found in research using attitudinal or preference scales (Cohen et al., 2007).

### **Qualitative data analysis**

The most exciting, time consuming and anxiety provoking part of the research journey was undoubtedly the analysis of the data derived from initial and follow-up interviews, as described below. Qualitative data formed an enriched source of data for exploring headteachers' professional and organisational socialisation and progression through stages of headship.

On completing the interviews, they were transcribed in full and numbered for the purpose of analysis. All participants were given pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity, and their personal and school characteristics were detached from the data and kept in a different digital file to prevent traceability in the study. Transcriptions were verified for context and content accuracy by checking the transcripts while listening to the tape recording for a second time, so as to minimise the risk of bias. A key component for the researcher to gain evidence of the authenticity and credibility of the interview data was to establish the accuracy of the data by sharing the records of the initial and follow-up interviews with the participants. Within a week from each interview, the transcripts were sent to the interviewees to validate their accounts and comment further on some issues. Only two participants added a minor comment to further clarify what had been said, but this did not alter the essence of the interview.

Within the qualitative paradigm, data analysis often proceeds along with data collection rather than beginning on its completion, when interactive data collection techniques, such as interviews, are used. Day (1993, p.38) conceived data collection as:

an interactive process through which the researcher struggles to elicit meaningful interpretations of social action. The resulting analysis is contingent in character, since it in turn stimulates and is modified by the collection and investigation of further data.

Hence, some preliminary analysis was conducted during the data collection to assess the need for further probes to be given to heads so as to achieve a better understanding of headteachers' perspectives, as well as during transcription, which although time-consuming brings the researcher 'closer to the data' (Denscombe, 2003, p.183).

The interpretative analysis of the interview data was conducted within and then across interviews in two stages. First, a descriptive content analysis approach (Miles and Huberman, 1994), involving inductive coding techniques (Seidman, 2006) was followed, where the individual respondent was taken as the unit of analysis. Next, the constant comparative method (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Thomas, 2009) was employed to identify themes across interviews.

First, interview transcripts were read twice to gain initial impressions within and across interviews (Cohen et al., 2007). While reading through the transcripts for a third time, I was aware of the commonalities in wording and phrasing used by headteachers in their accounts. Each significant statement (i.e. word or parts of a sentence) was contrasted with other statements that were unique to a particular participant and similar clusters or phrases were allocated the same code developed to capture its essence. Cohen et al. (2007) described a code as 'a word or abbreviation sufficiently close to that which it is describing for the researcher to see at a glance what it means' (p.478). The codes assigned to categories were both descriptive (summarising the issues addressed in the chunk) and interpretative (reflecting the notions for the conceptual framework). Then, the codes were grouped by similarity, and common themes among

participants' responses began to emerge, as identified in the literature reviewed for this thesis. Initially, six thematic categories emerged.

Second, on analysing each interview individually, I opted for a cross-case analysis of interviews by employing the constant comparative method (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Thomas, 2009). Interviews were charted and compared for evidence and common patterns emerged. The themes identified in each interview were juxtaposed to contextualise similarities and differences across interviews. According to Feilzer (2009, p.12):

analyzing the data sets deductively as well as inductively, separately at first, then moving back and forth between the data sets with the knowledge produced by each one, finally bringing them together, enabled the interpretation of the data from a multidimensional perspective, each data set informed, questioned, and enhanced by the others.

While analysing qualitative data, qualitative researchers aim to go beyond the initial description to the interpretation, the explanation and understanding of the data by re-conceptualising the data into new interconnected concepts. According to Day (1993, p.31):

The concepts we create or employ in classifying the data, and the connections we make between these concepts, provide the basis of a fresh description. The core of qualitative analysis lies in these related processes of describing phenomena, classifying it (sic), and seeing how our concepts interconnect.

The same interpretative process was followed while analysing the follow-up interviews; the inductive content analysis of each follow-up interview was followed by comparative analysis across follow-up interviews. Moreover, analysis was done across initial and follow-up interviews provided by the same participant, so as to validate issues emerging from both interviews and acquire a rich and more comprehensive perspective of headteachers' OS, preparation for headship, professional identity formation and transition through stages of headship. Thomas (2009, p.198) captured the essence of the researcher's role in data analysis in the following statement:

The aim in using an interpretative approach is to emerge with the meanings that are being constructed by the participants – including you – in the situation.

Drawing upon the qualitative analysis of initial and follow-up interviews, field notes and survey findings, further clarification of the thematic categories emerged to uncover new contextual understandings about headteachers' constructs. Hence, the overall interpretative analysis revealed seven thematic categories and other sub-themes as presented below.

**Table 6.4: The thematic categories as emerged from interviews**

<p>1. Motivation for headship</p> <p>2. Pathways to headship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Headship as a professional goal</i></li> <li>■ <i>Headship as a natural step in professional progression</i></li> </ul> <p>3. Preparation for headship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Formal leadership experience</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Acting headship in small schools</li> <li>● Acting head while serving as deputy heads</li> <li>● Deputy headship</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ <i>Self-initiated experience</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Postgraduate studies</li> <li>● Involvement in leadership tasks</li> <li>● Other experiences</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>4. Professional identity formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Initial conceptions prior to appointment</i></li> <li>■ <i>Reshaped conceptions upon appointment</i></li> </ul> <p>5. The NITPSL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>Content</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Skills development</li> <li>● Knowledge development</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ <i>Way of delivery</i></li> <li>■ <i>Networking – training cohort</i></li> </ul> <p>6. Organisational socialisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <i>School culture</i></li> <li>■ <i>Heads attempts to promote vision for the school</i></li> <li>■ <i>Challenges encountered in post</i></li> </ul> <p>7. Professional growth in post</p>
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Within the qualitative framework reliability is 'a measure of the consistency of a coding process when carried out on different occasions and/or by different researchers' (Dowling and Brown, 2010, p.24) and may be an indicator of quality in research. In order to address reliability in data coding and analysis, an attempt was made to be systematic throughout the process by producing a set of instructions for coding and keeping notes in a research log regarding data collection and analysis. The quality of the interpretations was further safeguarded by employing the same interpretive framework for analysing all interviews. Two of the coding categories employed during interview analysis and their definitions are presented in Appendix J, to form an example of the coding process. Thus, the demand of 'reliability' was met by making the data analysis process open to critical inspection by others, through a detailed description of steps taken in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data.

### **Documentary analysis**

Another method deployed in thesis to analyse data derived from copious documentary sources, such as official policy documents, evaluation reports and course brochures obtained from the CPI's archive, was documentary analysis. Although most of these documents have not been written for research purpose, their utilisation in research may provide information as to how situations have evolved over time and be useful in rendering more visible the phenomena under study (Cohen et al., 2007). Furthermore, programme documents, such as course syllabi and evaluation reports, not only increase our knowledge of the induction process of new heads, but they may provide a stimulus for generating questions to be pursued through surveys and interviews. This was the case with the documents obtained from the CPI's archive which comprised key sources of data.

While data from the aforementioned documentary sources existed in different forms (numbers and words), using a standard analytic format for analysing it was not possible. However, as the majority of documents were formal policy

documents containing mostly text, a content analysis was employed to reveal their meaning by reading between and behind the lines.

Adopting a critical stance towards policy documents soon became crucial so as not to impose my own interpretation of the documents. Hence, extra care was taken to interpret the documents in light of the specific contexts in which they were written and the actions or events which they are interpreting. As stated by Cohen et al. (2007) 'understanding their context is crucial to understanding the document' (p.204).

Moreover, most documentary sources are written for a specific purpose other than the one of informing a research study, and, therefore, they are characterised by strong validity. On my part, I should ensure that I would not bias the data by choosing selectively pieces from the documents to present and interpret them in a different way for the thesis. In achieving and maintaining validity and reliability in documents, Scott (1990, cited in Cohen et al., 2007) suggested the following four criteria:

- authenticity
- credibility (including accuracy, legitimacy and sincerity)
- representativeness (including availability and which documents have survived the passage of time)
- meaning (actual and interpreted).

With regards to headship preparation and induction in Cyprus, the documentary analysis provided information on how the NITPSL has evolved over the last two decades with regards to its aims, content and way of delivery. Furthermore, the recent internal evaluation report which had been written by skilled and informed professionals at the Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation of the MOEC (CPI, 2007) contained valuable information and insights into headship provision for primary school leaders. Programme documents and official reports gave information about the context and culture of the CPI and frequently provided another window for the researcher to read between the lines of official

discourse before triangulating information via interviews and survey. The corroboration with other documents was also intended to ensure the validity and reliability of the data derived from documentary sources.

## **Ethical issues**

Ethical issues may stem 'from the kinds of problems investigated by social scientists and the methods they use to obtain valid and reliable data' (Cohen et al., 2007, p.51) and may arise at any stage of a research study, especially when dealing with human participants (Dowling and Brown, 2010). Hence, at a very early stage of the research process, it was essential to address some initial considerations and ethical dilemmas that would be likely to arise during each stage in the research sequence and consider possible ways to handle them. The published ethical guidelines for educational research of the British Educational Research Association (BERA)<sup>5</sup> were adopted to help fashion a personal code of ethical practice, and the ethical approval of the Institute of Education was gained prior to the collection of any data.

On gaining the permission of the MOEC to undertake this study in Cypriot schools and access primary heads in schools, a letter was sent to the appropriate official within the MOEC (Appendix A). The letter included a brief description of the aims and the research design, the potential impact of the study, as well as the extent of time over which the study would take effect. Furthermore, requesting the director's approval for gaining access to the archive of the CPI and conducting an interview with the programme leader of the NITPSL was needed. When permissions were provided, I contacted the CIP to arrange a visit to the archive to study the records regarding the NITPSL and an interview meeting with the programme leader.

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<sup>5</sup> The Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004) of the British Educational Research Association were followed on designing the study and seeking permissions to access, heads, schools and the CPI's archive. On handling and analysing data, as well as presenting the findings, the revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011) were followed.

In addition, respondents' informed consent was gained for their participation in interviews (see Appendix H). Participants' informed consent arises from their right to participate in research after being informed about its aims, procedures and the risks which may entail (Cohen et al., 2007). Participants were informed about the aims and their voluntarily involvement in the study, and they were assured that their data would be treated with confidentiality and solely for the purpose of the study. Also, participants were informed through the information leaflet (see Appendix D) and prior to beginning the interview of their right to withdraw from the study at any time in case they would feel inconvenience or unease to discuss personal experiences in schools. Moreover, respondents' permission was gained for using audiotape recorder to record the interviews for later transcription.

During the analysis and interpretation of the data, extra care was taken to ensure confidentiality and respect participants' anonymity and privacy. According to BERA (2004, p.8), the 'confidential and anonymous treatment of the participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research' unless the participants willingly waive their right to privacy. Questionnaires were completed anonymously and participants were asked not to reveal their personal data in any way during completion. In the case of interviews, identifiers, such as participants' names, gender, years in service and school names, were deleted from interview transcripts during the recording process and kept in a different digital file elsewhere. Also, all digital records of the data were password protected and saved in a disk where only the researcher had access.

On presenting the research findings, pseudonyms were used to represent interviewees and their personal and school data were treated with confidentiality. In addition, issues regarding anonymity or named participation in the study were discussed with the programme leader of the NITPSL during the elite interview, since confidentiality was not able to be assured. However, although the person having the responsibility for the NITPSL would be easily identified and traced in the study, it was agreed to refer to this person as 'the programme leader'.



Interviewees' anonymity and privacy, as well as schools' data would also be maintained while disseminating the findings. On completing the thesis, the MOEC requires a summary of the findings of the thesis to be submitted to the Department of Primary Education in return for the approval given for the conduct of the research study. Moreover, a summary of the findings will be provided to the CPI, as well as to all individuals who kindly participated in the study and asked for being informed of the results.

Another ethical issue that had to be addressed was the fact that the research took place in Cyprus - a Greek speaking country - and the findings are presented in English. The questionnaire, the information leaflet and the interview consent form were written in Greek. Initial and follow-up interviews were also conducted in Greek. In this way, participants were facilitated to participate in the study and express their views with much ease using their mother tongue. The analysis of the survey and interview data was also conducted in Greek, and, afterwards, the results were translated and presented in English by the researcher. In order to ensure reliability and accuracy in reporting the findings, a person with fluency in English as a native speaking person was asked to certify the translation by randomly selecting chunks of quotations regarding participants' views and perceptions and translating them back to Greek.

Finally, a way had to be found of manipulating my role in thesis and ensuring the validity, the trustworthiness and the credibility of the data obtained through all data gathering strands, and especially interviews, as discussed below.

### **Conceptualising my role as a researcher**

In this section I examine my dual role as a teacher (insider perspective) and as a postgraduate researcher (outsider perspective); and how the two perspectives were supportive in unfolding different aspects of socialisation in headship.

On the one hand, my professional background as a primary school teacher, a Teacher Trainer at the CPI and a School Advisor for School Development and School Improvement at the MOEC gave me the 'insider' perspective by providing valuable experience and knowledge regarding a headteacher's role in school, in-service training provision in Cyprus and school improvement, which I bring to the study. However, familiarity with school leadership and teaching, by no means suggests automatic access into heads' world. Perhaps as a primary teacher, one would always be at a disadvantage in understanding heads' reality in schools and such claim may appear as a position of advantage at the surface. On the other hand, I developed the researcher (outsider) perspective derived from my status as a university student. As there is no recipe for a good interview, I gradually gained confidence in conducting interviews and improved my ability in maintaining a distance from the interviewees. Moreover, while reflecting on the interviewees' accounts I created new understanding and increased awareness of their experiences in post.

The combination of the two perspectives was significant for deepening and clarifying my understanding of my role in the study. Waterhouse (2007, p.283) talked about reflexivity in the field that 'includes an awareness of the variety of roles and persona that may be adopted through the research'.

As an 'insider' researcher, I gained access to interview participants who saw me as a colleague and a teacher, as well as their consent to participate in initial and follow-up interviews. Heads considered interviews as a way of reflecting on their lived experiences in post and discuss aspects of school leadership with a person who was knowledgeable of the field. Therefore, they provided rich and authentic information about their socialisation into the role and schools more easily. This had a positive impact on the trustworthiness of the thesis as the quality of the data improved (Robson, 2002).

During interviews, headteachers saw me as a person outside their school, who had the theoretical background and experience to make sense of the hidden aspects of their role in schools. However, due to the small size of the country

and teachers' population, uncovering much details regarding my professional status could possibly affect participants' disposition of providing honest answers regarding challenges met in particular schools and bias the findings. A way to minimise research bias and compromise the validity of interview data was through minimum interaction with heads on a personal level, as well as avoiding expressing personal views about the research topics, so as to keep a distance from heads and the data. This narrative helped them envision me in the role of the researcher, and not as a colleague in another school, thereby ensuring their free will participation and, hopefully, accurate and honest answers in interviews.

Although such stance is hard to maintain when heads seek to gain deep understanding of the context, I tried hard to find the golden mean between researcher's neutrality and involvement in depth discussion with the participants regarding the research topics. Furthermore, extra care was given to dress, demeanour and speech which were relatively formal, so as to reinforce the trust and the confidentiality promised to the respondents. However, a measured informality was needed in cases where the researcher had to reassure heads that the views and narratives shared during the discussion were important components in the development of this study. Unsurprisingly, the balance between formality and informality was adjusted according to the context and the peculiarities of each interview, maintaining, however, the distance between the researcher and the interviewees.

My familiarity with the context also carries some significance in data analysis and the interpretation of the findings, as the study was not taken from a neutral independent perspective. Although, as a teacher (insider) I believed that I was knowledgeable of heads' role at a great extent, as a researcher (outsider) I realised that my understanding was related to my perspective of headship derived from the context I was working in and the day-to-day observation of headship performance. In particular, prior to immersing myself in the thesis, I was not able to understand and explain why leadership enactment in particular contexts was a highly challenging process for heads, or how new heads build

self-confidence in dealing with headship duties and responsibilities. In this respect, the continuous reflection on my experiences and my role in the research process as framed by the two perspectives (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014) helped me realise the multidimensional and complex reality of headship and gain deeper understandings of new heads' socialisation in schools which otherwise I would not be in position to understand.

## **Summary**

In this chapter the theoretical and empirical standpoints for conducting this research study were presented. It began with the aspects of the interpretive paradigm and the pragmatic worldview that this thesis espouses for exploring the professional and organisational socialisation of new primary heads in Cyprus. Next, the sequential mixed-methods research design employed to address the research questions was presented. The three phases of the study were described and the participants and the research tools - survey and semi-structured interviews - selected in each phase were presented. Next, the steps taken towards analysing the data collected through various data sources, such as documents, a survey and interviews, were described in details. The issues of validity, trustworthiness and reliability in research were considered and the ways in which they were achieved were briefly discussed. Afterwards, the ethical dilemmas that emerged throughout the research process were identified and possible solutions for their handling suggested. Finally, the relationship of the researcher to the study was explored.

In the next chapter, the findings which emerged from the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data are presented.

## CHAPTER VII: THE FINDINGS

### Introduction

This study set out to explore the professional and organisational socialisation experiences of new primary heads in Cyprus, in terms of their preparation for headship, professional identity formation, the challenges they encountered on entering headship and their transition through stages of headship.

Learning to become a head begins in the pre-appointment to headship stage of a head's career - 'Stage 0' (Weindling, 2000) - through anticipatory and professional socialisation experiences and continues into early years in post. Professional socialisation involves accumulated leadership experiences gained formally or informally through various activities that inform headteachers' learning of what it is to be a head (Weindling, 2003; Male, 2006). Upon assuming headship, beginning heads also experience organisational socialisation, which includes learning the knowledge, values and behaviour necessary to perform headship in a particular school (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). Organisational socialisation experiences and the challenges faced in schools also impact on novice heads' conceptions of their role (Vandenberghe, 2003) as well as headship enactment. Hence, on their route to headship, headteachers go through a variety of experiences and socialisation stages that enhance their conceptions of their role and enable them to establish themselves in post with confidence.

The analysis of the data set derived from a survey of all 90 newly appointed heads, as well as 12 interviews and ten follow-up interviews with novice primary headteachers in Cyprus aimed to enlighten headship in Cypriot primary schools by providing answers to the following questions:

1. What is known about a) Cypriot primary headteachers' pathways to headship; and b) how well do they think have they been prepared for the post?
2. How do Cypriot novice primary heads shape their professional identity and become socialised into their role during their early years in post?
3. What are the most important challenges that newly appointed primary headteachers in Cyprus face during early headship?
4. Do stage theories of socialisation apply to Cypriot primary headteachers within their first four years in post?

The present chapter provides an overview of the main findings in five sections: a) pathways to headship, b) the professional socialisation of heads (preparation for headship, the NITPSL and professional identity formation), c) the organisational socialisation of new heads (transition to headship – school culture), d) the challenges of first headship, and e) the career-stages of headship. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings.

### **Theme 1: Pathways to headship**

In this section, headteachers' pathways to headship and the reasons given by headteachers for applying for headship are presented. Headteachers identified a range of individuals who influenced their decision to become headteachers and they acknowledged becoming a headteacher for a variety of reasons.

In terms of support for applications, as can be seen from Table 7.1, the vast majority of the 60 headteacher respondents had the support of their family (90%) and colleagues (82%) in applying for headship ('quite a lot', 'very much'), while more than half (55%) heads stated that their previous head had encouraged them to apply for the post. Interestingly, about one-third said 'not at all' in response to the support received from previous heads.

**Table 7.1: Support in applying for headship**

	Not at all		A little		Quite a lot		Very much	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I had the support of my family in applying for headship	5	8	1	2	10	17	44	73
I had the support of my colleagues in applying for headship	7	12	4	6	13	22	36	60
I was encouraged by my previous headteacher to apply for headship	19	32	8	13	6	10	27	45

(n=60)

As illustrated in the comments made below, the interviewees identified the same individuals as having a critical influence on their decision to apply for headship.

My family and especially my husband pushed hard to apply for promotion. Also, my former headteacher encouraged me constantly to ask promotion. Maybe they tried it more than I did. (Interviewee D)

During my professional career, headteachers and some teachers have said I should become a principal. I did not have the confidence or even the desire while I was still enthusiastic in the classroom. My former headteacher gave me specific reasons and encouraged me relentlessly! I also accepted continued pressure from colleagues who urged me to seek a promotion. I am gradually gaining confidence, but headship is hard [...] (Interviewee I)

The importance of the headteacher's spouse in providing support and encouragement in assuming headship was noted by the majority of the interviewees, both male and female. Two male headteachers acknowledged the role of their spouse in providing the time and space for them to focus on their career advancement through self-initiated leadership development activities. As Participant B admitted, *'my wife took over responsibility for the family while I was attending evening classes, seminars and conferences to enhance my preparation for headship'*. In contrast, two female heads (Interviewee A and K) who sought headship early in their career, reported that they tried hard to balance personal and professional life by splitting their time and energy between family commitments and professional development. Although their spouse

supported their decision for professional advancement through postgraduate studies, as well as their decision to apply for promotion, in practice he did not allow time and space for them to focus on preparation for headship. As Interviewee A noted: *'I invested much personal time in preparation for headship after putting children in bed'*.

Regarding their motivation for applying for headship, as Table 7.2 shows, nearly all heads (98%) were of the opinion that as heads they could implement their vision for school improvement and bring about changes in schools.

**Table 7.2: Motivation for taking up headship**

	Not at all		A little		Quite a lot		Very Much	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I took up headship because of the lesser amount of teaching commitment compared to deputy heads	33	55	14	23	6	10	7	12
I took up headship because of the better salary and benefits	17	28	21	35	9	15	13	22
I took up headship because I think I can offer a lot to education from this post	1	2	2	3	14	23	43	72
Taking up headship enables headteachers to implement their vision for the school unit	-	-	1	2	22	36	37	62
Taking up headship could provide opportunities for initiations by the new head within the school unit	1	2	-	-	18	30	41	68
Taking up headship provides opportunities for social recognition	9	15	14	23	11	18	26	44

(n=60)

The vast majority (95%) reported seeking headship because of the capacity the post offered to the education of pupils. Additionally, promotion to headship was seen by over six-out-of-ten (62%) as a great opportunity for social recognition.



Interview findings confirm survey findings concerning heads' views about the moral purpose of education and their role in promoting teaching and learning in schools. As Interviewee L reflecting on her moral values about education noted:

From this post, I will bring about changes to promote teaching and learning across school. Every child has a right for education and a better future. Also, placing staff CPD at the core of leadership activity will add to the quality of teaching and learning.

When asked '*How did you make the decision to become a headteacher?*' eight of the 12 participants mentioned that they regarded headship as a natural progression in their career and only four of them admitted seeking headship as a personal career goal. Those heads who viewed headship as a personal goal in their career - all aged from 39 to 46 - sought headship by developing a personal career development plan, which increased their possibilities for promotion. For instance, participants A and K, aimed to achieve headship early in their career and they prepared themselves for the post by acquiring postgraduate qualifications and leadership experiences from serving in various posts within education, while being involved in school research and writing in internationally recognised professional journals.

Further analysis indicates that the four heads who had planned their professional advancement to headship identified '*instructional leadership*' and '*school improvement*' as the main reasons for becoming headteachers.

It has been a goal in my career. Upon promotion to deputy headship, I felt it was necessary to undertake a master's degree in this field. Then, I aimed for the next target; headship. From this post, I can cater for all pupils' need and work towards school improvement and school effectiveness. (Interviewee H)

On the other hand, the reasons given by heads who did not plan their career advancement to headship (two-thirds of interviewees) were mainly related to social recognition and financial benefits derived from the post. For example:

It was a great pleasure for me to be promoted to headship. I felt an acknowledgement...something that I owed to myself for my entire service in schools and education in general. (Interviewee C)

It is very important for me to get to the highest level before retirement, so as not to leave with reduced benefits and pension. (Interviewee G)

Among those heads who sought headship for social recognition and financial benefits, the most frequently mentioned reason for seeking a change in professional career was being tired in classroom. Even those headteachers who did not seek headship immediately after being eligible to apply for the post reported feelings of fatigue as deputy heads that urged them to apply for headship at a later stage. This finding is summarised in the following statement:

I did not seek promotion to headship immediately. I spent eight years as a deputy head. Though, I was feeling tired in class. Now, I have less teaching time. (Interviewee D)

In depth interviews, headteachers were asked to provide insights into their decision to delay applying for headship. Two pre-primary heads did not apply for headship early in their career due to the small number of available posts. Two male primary heads delayed applying for the post, as they regarded headship would have complicated their personal and professional lives. The following comments reflect their concern of a possible negative impact a promotion would have on their personal and professional lives.

I could apply for promotion three years ago. But, I did not as a promotion would automatically mean a transfer in another school – possibly in a different district - and a change in role and tasks. Thus, I waited until a post in a school nearby my home was available. (Interviewee I)

I did not apply for the post as I had very few transfer credits and a transfer away from my residence could potentially create hardships to my family. (Interviewee E)

## **Theme 2: The professional socialisation of headteachers**

This section synthesises the main findings in relation to the professional socialisation (PS) of headteachers. It focuses on headteachers' PS experiences prior and upon appointment that have shaped their preparation for the post and professional identity formation, and the national induction programme (NITPSL) they attended upon assuming headship.

Initially, the importance of a range of experiences gained from working in various posts in different school contexts and outside education, as well as the

personal initiatives of aspiring headteachers for preparing themselves for headship are presented. Afterwards, the role of the NITPSL in preparing new heads for the demands of headship is explored. The impact of all PS and the NITPSL on shaping headteachers' professional identity is also explored through the eyes of novice primary heads.

### Professional socialisation experiences prior to appointment

The survey explored how headteachers perceived they had learned the role of being a headship and what it entailed. Table 7.3 shows their responses.

**Table 7.3: Professional socialisation experiences prior to appointment**

	Not at all		A little		Quite a lot		Very much	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
My experience as a deputy head was valuable for taking up headship	1	2	15	25	9	15	35	58
I learned the role by shadowing previous heads	1	2	4	6	25	42	30	50
I learned the role by having model headteachers while serving as a deputy head	3	5	13	22	21	35	23	38
Previous experience as an acting head was helpful for taking up headship	5	9	8	13	18	30	29	48
I learned the role through professional development activities for school leadership and management	-	-	9	15	19	32	32	53

(n=60)

As can be seen from table above, the PS experiences that have shaped participants' perceptions of headship and informed their preparation for the post to a great extent ('quite a lot', 'very much') were: shadowing previous heads

(92%), attending professional development activities for school leadership and management (85%), previous experience as acting heads (78%), experience in deputy headship (73%) and having model headteachers while serving as deputy heads (73%).

A further exploration of the data showed that male participants reported higher than their female counterparts on the perceived value of all PS experiences. A Mann-Whitney test for independent samples for male and female heads, found a statistically significant difference ( $U=202.000$ ,  $p=0.010$ ), with the majority of male heads (73%) reporting that previous heads had been positive role models for them to a greater extent compared to female heads (27%). Furthermore, while exploring responses of participants with and without postgraduate qualifications, participants with further qualifications (39%) placed greater value on personal initiatives for leadership development, compared to heads with basic qualifications (61%).

#### Previous headteachers as role models

As Table 7.3 shows, most newly appointed heads emphasised the importance of shadowing their heads on-the-job (92%) and working with model headteachers while serving as deputy heads (73%). Invited to respond to a list of areas with regards to the contribution of past and previous heads on novice headteachers' knowledge, skills and preparation for headship (see Table 7.4), novice heads indicated that they had learnt from previous heads to a great extent ('quite a lot', 'very much') to work and cooperate with the staff (70%), organise and manage the school (61%), as well as to read and understand the school culture (60%). In contrast, four-out-of-ten (41%) headteachers reported that they had learnt 'a little' to use the power and influence derived from their post, lead the school (45%) and lead school improvement (40%).

**Table 7.4: The contribution of previous headteachers**

	Not at all		A little		Quite a lot		Very much	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>From previous heads, I learned:</b>								
(a) to lead the school	8	14	27	45	20	33	5	8
(b) to lead school improvement	10	16	24	40	23	38	4	6
(c) to organise and manage the school	6	10	17	29	29	47	8	14
(d) to work and cooperate with staff	5	9	13	21	32	53	10	17
(e) to use power and influence derived from my post	13	21	24	41	13	22	10	16
(f) to read and understand the school culture	7	12	17	28	23	38	13	22

(n=60)

An exploration of the responses of participants showed that male heads and heads possessing basic qualifications placed greater value on previous heads' impact on all aspects of leadership development than female heads and heads possessing postgraduate qualifications, respectively. A statistically significant difference was found ( $U=284.500$ ,  $p=0.040$ ) between heads with and without postgraduate qualifications on working and cooperating with staff. A cross-tabulation showed that heads possessing basic qualifications (39%) felt more strongly ('very much') that previous heads had afforded them the opportunity to learn how to work and cooperate with staff than heads possessing postgraduate qualifications (4%). A cross-tabulation found that those heads that had been in service from 30 to 35 years were the most positive ('quite a lot', 'very much') about the impact of previous heads on their learning of how to work and cooperate with the staff (24%).

Survey findings were further supported by interviews. When asked about the ways in which they had been prepared for headship, three-quarters of the interviewees acknowledged the importance of their previous heads in providing models and preparing deputies for transition to headship. All interviewees reported having shadowed their former heads while in deputy headship and they noted:

I have learned from their actions and their mistakes to lead and manage the school, to be empathetic to staff and promote changes step by step taking into consideration teachers' expectations and school culture' (Interviewee C).

Furthermore, six of them, three male and three female heads, mentioned that they had experienced coaching from their previous headteacher and past headteachers. These heads had prepared colleagues for their current role by delegating responsibilities for several issues, engaging them in decision making, involving them in school management and by setting a model for them to learn from their actions and mistakes. The following comments were made:

As a teacher, I worked with headteachers who allowed me to get involved in management issues and undertake responsibilities that I could avoid as a teacher. (Interviewee B)

The experience I had the last three years alongside acclaimed headteachers helped me to learn how to handle people and situations. I was next to heads who sought to inspire and I learned from their actions and mistakes. (Interviewee E)

### Acting headship

As noted in Table 7.3 above, working experience as acting heads in schools was identified as a helpful PS experience by two-thirds (42 out of 60) of respondents who had this experience during their teaching career. However, as mentioned by three-fourths of interviewees, deputy headship does not provide opportunities to engage in school leadership and management and gain the appropriate experience needed for headship. Interviewees B and K voiced concerns about the lack of opportunities and time to engage in authentic leadership and management tasks in schools. While serving in large-sized

primary schools as deputies, the opportunities they had to substitute for their heads, although useful for better understanding of headship responsibilities, provided only glimpses about what they would actually encounter in schools due to their short duration. In fact, performing the role made new heads learn headship first-hand. As one head noted:

The experiences I had as a teacher shadowing my headteachers over the years, as well as the opportunities I had as a deputy to replace my headteacher for one or two weeks each year were helpful to understand headship duties. But they provided only narrow perspectives of headship role. If we do not actually take over headship, we cannot learn the role. (Interviewee F)

Furthermore, survey and interview findings indicate leadership experience in small schools as an important PS experience for the majority of headteachers in many aspects.

**Table 7.5: Experience of acting headship in small schools**

	Not at all		A little		Quite a lot		Very much	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>As an acting head in small schools, I learned:</b>								
(a) to lead the school	3	5	8	14	20	33	29	48
(b) to lead school improvement	3	5	11	19	20	33	26	43
(c) to organise and manage the school	3	5	10	17	15	24	33	54
(d) to work and cooperate with staff	3	5	8	14	17	29	32	52
(e) to handle the bureaucratic procedures with the MOEC	3	5	3	5	25	41	29	49
(f) to use power and influence derived from my post	7	12	16	26	20	33	17	29
(g) to read and understand the school culture	6	10	6	10	25	42	23	38

(n=42)

As shown in Table 7.5, two-thirds of interviewees who had worked as acting heads in small schools (42 out of 60) agreed that acting headship helped them 'A lot' to learn how to handle the bureaucracy (90%), lead the school (81%) and cooperate with the staff (81%), read and understand the school culture (80%), lead school improvement (76%), manage and organise the school (78%) and use the power and influence derived from their post (62%).

The analysis of interview data suggests that pre-primary and primary heads with lengthy experience as acting heads in schools perceived themselves to be better prepared for the job and self-confident in a range of personal and technical skills needed in headship. One of the interviewees commented: *'My long service as acting head in small primary schools helped me to develop my confidence that I could run any school'* (Interviewee E). Also, the two pre-primary heads noted that it is usual for pre-primary teachers to serve as acting heads in schools early in their career. When asked to provide insights into their experiences in acting headship in small schools, they indicated that they learned all the bureaucratic procedures entailed in communication with the MOEC and the LEAs, the educational law, processes regarding school management, as well as how to interact with people, such as parents, staff and the local community. Consequently, they took over headship with greater expertise and self-confidence with regards to performing their new role as heads. Participant's J comment illustrates the situation:

I have never worked in a pre-primary school where a headteacher was placed. I always had the responsibility for the school. My long experience as an acting head helped me immensely to develop my confidence long before I was officially promoted to headship. As if I was thrown in deep and had to find my own way and stand on my feet.

Also important is that 30% of all responding headteachers (18 out of 60) did not experience acting headship in small schools during their teaching career. However, further analysis of survey data suggest that respondents' perceived readiness for headship did not differ significantly among heads who had experience acting headship in small primary schools and those who did not.



## Postgraduate studies

Nearly four-in-ten respondents (38%) had undertaken postgraduate studies in school leadership and management, though the proportion of female heads (19 out of 45 or 42%) possessing postgraduate qualifications was higher than the proportion of male heads (four out of 15 or 27%) who undertook postgraduate studies. All these individuals shared the view that their studies were of some help to fulfil the requirements of the post. Over three-quarters of these postgraduates (18 out of 23 or 78%) noted that their studies helped them 'A lot' to respond to the requirements of headship.

Further exploration of the dataset showed that a greater percentage of younger headteachers possessed postgraduate qualifications compared to experienced headteachers (Table 7.6).

**Table 7.6: Qualifications by age group**

Age group	≤45		46 - 55		56+	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Basic qualifications	-	-	20	33	17	29
Postgraduate qualifications	14	23	9	15	-	-
Total	14	23	29	48	17	29

(n=60)

The interviewees' accounts demonstrate that postgraduate studies enhanced novice heads' conceptions of headship and impacted perceived levels of readiness and confidence to deal with the requirements of headship. As participant H noted:

I always had a leading role in schools where I worked, but what really gives you the feeling that you can lead a school is a postgraduate qualification. Although I experienced many difficulties in post during the first months and I regretted being promoted to headship many times, I felt a lot of confidence, that even severe difficulties did not stop me. Deep inside me, I was saying to myself that I could do it, because I was trained for two and a half years for this [headship].

### Other experiences

Beyond postgraduate studies, interviewees opted for alternative ways to prepare themselves for headship, such as reading books, membership in professional associations and active engagement in peer professional networks. Interviewees noted that such experiences contributed to their preparation for headship by providing '*knowledge and the theoretical background that helped them gain confidence*' (Interviewee K) and enhanced their perceived readiness for headship. Further analysis indicated that the four headteachers who aimed for headship early in their career, committed more time and energy in preparation for the post, by engaging in self-initiated PS activities. For instance, Participant K undertook postgraduate studies, joined a professional association regarding school leadership and researched and wrote articles for school leadership journals long before her appointment to the post.

Along with leadership experience in previous school contexts experience and skills obtained from posts outside and inside schools were also highlighted. Two of the interviewees identified experiences and managerial skills obtained from service in different posts prior to entering headship that enabled them to develop self-confidence in carrying out their new role easily. As one of them remarked:

I have high confidence as a person. It stems from the fact that I worked in all educational settings. The alternative experiences I had during secondments, helped me to acquire much more skills than any deputy head in schools. I managed projects, I worked close with deadlines, had the financial control of programmes [...]. Also, my experiences in different types of schools helped me to gain confidence, learn the procedures and succeed in post. (Interviewee A)

In addition, 85% of survey respondents indicated that attending professional development activities in school leadership and management, such as postgraduate studies, seminars, lectures and others had contributed to their PS (see Table 7.3). Also, almost all participants (95%) held that these experiences helped them 'A lot' to feel confidence in headship.

### Professional socialisation experiences upon appointment to headship

The professional socialisation practices that have been found supportive for the PS of novice headteachers while in post are presented below (Table 7.7).

While in post, the vast majority of survey respondents learned the role to a great extent ('quite a lot', 'very much') by doing the job (93%), through networking and collaboration with other heads (90%) and close cooperation with and support by the school inspector (77%). Attending the NITPSL seemed the least helpful for the PS of headteachers, though still regarded as very helpful for nearly two-thirds of heads (61%).

**Table 7.7: Professional socialisation experiences in post**

	Not at all		A little		Quite a lot		Very much	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>I have learned the role as a headteacher:</b>								
(a) by doing the job	-	-	4	7	29	48	27	45
(b) through close cooperation with and support by the inspector of the school	-	-	14	23	28	47	18	30
(c) by attending the NITPSL programme	1	2	22	37	26	43	11	18
(d) through networking and collaboration with other heads	-	-	6	10	26	43	28	47

(n=60)

As illustrated in interviews, on taking full responsibility of headship and encountering the people and the organisation, new headteachers discovered how unprepared they actually were for their new role, and they realised that further skills and knowledge were required to enhance their performance in headship. '*Nothing could have prepared us completely for the role*', Interviewee L noted. Hence, they first opted to learn the administrative and managerial procedures needed to run the school efficiently. As one head admitted:

It took me about two months to learn the bureaucratic procedures of the MOEC concerning the management of schools and the way the LEA worked. (Interviewee H)

While in headship, five participants named many practitioners within education, such as previous headteachers, headteachers from neighbouring schools, other novice heads, the school inspector and deputy heads in their new school, as key PS sources during the early days in post. Such people were considered to have the practical solutions to new heads' problems with regards to allocation of pupils in classrooms and staff responsibilities, ordering books and resources and completing the paperwork required by the MOEC. As Interviewee B recalled:

I remember holding the phone during the first days in post asking guidance from my previous head and the inspector regarding school administrative and managerial issues, such as paperwork, pupils' allocation in classrooms, staff responsibilities, the timetable [...]

The interview findings further emphasise the vital role coaching and support from experienced heads had for novice heads throughout the first year in post.

The following interviewee comment reflects the views of many:

The first year I felt a kind of insecurity. I was theoretically qualified to perform headship, but in practice [...] the more one learns and experiences the better. When I was appointed, I did not know how to handle paperwork and many management and administrative issues, such as division of classes, compilation of the programme, allocation of responsibilities etc. Thus, I phoned a fellow headteacher in a neighbouring school who was experienced in headship and I asked her to be my mentor. We communicated daily, exchanged daily paperwork, co-organised events, and shared thoughts about staff CPD throughout the year. She helped me tremendously to learn the ropes of headship. (Interviewee A)

Finally, the LEAs also contributed to heads' learning and PS with regards to the financial management of schools, budgeting, building maintenance and the provision of resources and equipment. Most heads saw the role of the LEA as related to the management aspect of their role as headteachers, thus emphasising bureaucracy. As a headteacher stated:

The LEA organised a meeting at the beginning of the year, so as to inform headteachers of the procedures followed to handle inquiries. Although, they provided us with the necessary documentation, communication and working with the LEA was time consuming, since they wanted all inquiries to be sent in writing. Our local authority is a large one and they did not respond to our inquiries straight away. (Interviewee D)

Lived experience in post, as well as critical emotional incidents, formed another source for headship learning for newly promoted heads. While encountering the people and the organisation, heads were forced '*to learn a lot at a short time*' (Interviewee H) and identified a number of skills and dispositions that underpin interpersonal relationships and are needed to succeed in post. Those included communication skills, skills for handling conflict and motivating staff, being a good listener and showing empathy. The impact of OS experiences on headship learning and new heads' establishment in post is discussed in detail under Theme 3.

Furthermore, attending the NITPSL was said by most novice heads to be an important PS experience in enhancing their knowledge and skills concerning school management and leadership.

### **The National In-service Training Programme for School Leaders**

The survey aimed to identify which aspects of the NITPSL facilitated the PS of heads and helped them acquire the necessary knowledge and skills required for the post. The survey findings provide insights into the effectiveness of the NITPSL from the perspective of the participants.

With regards to knowledge development, as Table 7.8 shows, about two-thirds of the survey respondents agreed that the NITPSL helped them 'A lot' to develop knowledge and provided support in school organisation and management (68%), reading and understanding the school culture (67%) and strategic planning for school improvement (63%). However, an important portion of headteachers noted that the programme was of little help ('not at all', 'a little') in areas such as handling family problems (67%), ICT in subject teaching and school management (60%), leading multicultural schools and applying school control and discipline (50%). Mann-Whitney tests showed that the NITPSL was considered as more helpful in developing knowledge about strategic planning for school improvement ( $U=97.000$ ,  $p=0.041$ ) for pre-primary (100%) than for

primary (59%) heads. Also, heads with basic qualifications considered NITPSL as helpful in leading schools with migrant pupils (U=306.500, p=0.051), applying school control and discipline (U=263.000, p=0.009) and using ICT in teaching and management (U=294.000, p=0.034).

**Table 7.8: Knowledge developed through NITPSL**

	Not at all		A little		Quite a lot		Very much	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>The Programme helped me to develop my knowledge as a school leader and provided support in:</b>								
(a) school organisation and management	1	2	18	30	25	42	16	26
(b) leading schools with migrant pupils coming for different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds	12	20	25	41	16	27	7	12
(c) applying school control and discipline	2	3	28	47	19	32	11	18
(d) applying new information technologies (ICT) in subject teaching and school management	10	17	26	43	17	28	7	12
(e) strategic planning for school improvement	7	12	15	25	25	42	13	21
(f) reading and understanding the school culture	3	5	17	28	25	42	15	25
(g) handling family problems that may impact on pupils' performance, personality and behaviour	15	25	25	42	13	21	7	12

(n=60)

Similarly, with regards to skills (Table 7.9), the NITPSL helped headteachers 'A lot' in school organisation and management (70%), strategic planning for the school unit (67%), leading school improvement (63%), applying educational law

to school context (58%) and implementing changes in the curriculum (57%). However, the NIPPSL was of little help ('not at all', 'a little') in the use of ICT (72%) and the development of good relationships and cooperation with staff (49%).

**Table 7.9: Skills developed through NIPPSL**

	Not at all		A little		Quite a lot		Very much	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>The Programme helped me to develop my skills as a school leader and provided support in:</b>								
(a) school organisation and management	1	2	17	28	32	53	10	17
(b) using new information technologies (ICT) in school leadership and management	11	18	32	54	11	18	6	10
(c) leading school improvement	7	12	15	25	26	43	12	20
(d) developing good relationships and cooperation with staff	1	2	28	47	17	28	14	23
(e) strategic planning for the school unit	3	5	17	28	28	47	12	20
(f) implementing changes or innovations in the curriculum	4	7	22	36	24	40	10	17
(g) applying educational law to specific situations	3	5	22	37	20	33	15	25

(n=60)

In order to see if differences existed in knowledge and skills development between male and female heads, headteachers holding basic or postgraduate qualifications, as well as between pre-primary and primary heads, further exploration of the data followed through cross-tabulations. Cross-tabulations revealed that respondents with basic qualifications (n=37) and male heads

(n=15) reported higher than other heads in all items in Table 7.8 and Table 7.9. However, although a difference in skills and knowledge development between pre-primary and primary heads was expected due to the extensive administrative experience pre-primary headteachers have in small schools, no significant difference was found between the two groups.

The interview data were interrogated to find possible explanations about the findings. Most heads regarded the NITPSL as being '*too theoretical in nature*' (Interviewee A), as well as of little help in developing the knowledge and skills needed for the new role of heads in schools as instructional leaders and change agents. As indicated in Tables 7.8 and 7.9 above, only half of heads (49%) regarded the NITPSL as helpful in skills relevant to developing good relationships and cooperation with staff - a key area for implementing their role as change agents and instructional leaders, while the programme failed to help them to handle issues relevant to daily practice, such as leading multicultural schools, handling conflict in interpersonal relationships and behavioural problems among pupils. Furthermore, headteachers highlighted the importance of hands-on sessions regarding action planning and strategic planning skills for school improvement, as presented below.

With regards to content, as indicated in Table 7.10 below, the programme provided new heads with opportunities for sharing experience and knowledge (88%) and networking and establishing relationships with other heads (75%). However, the NITPSL did not seem ('not at all', 'a little') to provide opportunities for applying the skills developed through training in schools (58%), implementing strategic planning for school improvement (64%) and sharing experience and knowledge with experienced headteachers (66%). Again, Mann-Whitney tests indicated a significant difference between heads with basic (46%) and postgraduate qualifications (13%) with regards to sharing between new and experienced heads ( $U=221.000$ ,  $p=0.044$ ). Heads with postgraduate qualifications pointed to a greater extent that such opportunities were not provided.



**Table 7.10: The content of the NITPSL**

	Not at all		A little		Quite a lot		Very much	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>The NITPSL provided opportunities for:</b>								
(a) sharing of experience and knowledge among novice headteachers	-	-	7	12	15	25	38	63
(b) sharing of experience and knowledge with experienced headteachers	20	33	20	33	12	20	8	14
(c) the development of strategic planning for school improvement	8	13	18	30	24	40	10	17
(d) the implementation of strategic planning for school improvement	12	20	27	44	15	25	6	10
(e) the application of skills developed through training in schools	6	10	29	48	19	32	6	10
(f) networking with other headteachers and the establishment of good relationships with them	4	7	11	18	28	47	17	28

(n=60)

Along with the survey findings, interviewees' views regarding the value of the NITPSL were divided, though they identified networking and sharing with other novice headteachers as important aspects of the NITPSL. The cohort of heads undertaking the NITPSL was acknowledged as the most valuable source for reshaping novice heads' conceptions of headship in light of the challenges encountered in post. Such interactions also appeared to enhance self-confidence and perceived readiness for headship:

The first year I felt a little insecure. The more one learns and experiences the better. I was looking for the opportunity to meet with other novice heads during the NITPSL and share experiences with them. I am networked with too many

heads now, and I call them anytime and get their support whenever necessary.  
(Interviewee B)

I was looking forward to the day to be there [NITPSL session] to exchange views and practices with fellow novice heads who had the same concerns and fears for the new post, as I did. Sharing concerns, practices and experiences made me realise that other heads were also confronted with the same difficulties. Thus, I gained confidence that I could succeed in post.  
(Interviewee G)

According to the interviewees, the cohort of heads undertaking the training helped them develop a sense of identity, as members of a new community of practice, by validating their pre-conceptions of headship in light of the challenges encountered in post. As Interviewee E indicated, the cohort helped to *'validate my own sense of headship'* and *'realise that the situation was normal and not due to my own incompetence'*.

Furthermore, two survey items sought respondents' views on their readiness for the post. Reflecting on the item 'I feel well-prepared to fulfil the demands of the post', the majority of headteachers ('quite a lot', 'very much') felt well prepared to fulfil the requirements of headship (70%). Though, a large majority of respondents (85%) pointed to the need for further training while reflecting on the question 'I need further training while in headship so as to respond to the requirements of the post'. As Interviewee C mentioned:

Especially in our profession, training should be regular and systematic. Educational issues change rapidly and headteachers should be trained extensively and continuously to cope with many issues and handle situations properly.

As indicated in Table 7.11 below, a large number - over two-thirds – of respondents would like to receive further training in areas such as leading school improvement and raising pupils' achievement (83%), leading multi-cultural schools (80%), leading a change within the school (79%), strategic planning for school improvement (75%), developing a high-quality school culture (70%) and leading staff professional development (66%). Smaller percentages illustrated the need for training in handling conflict and problematic behaviour, personal relationships, ICT and leadership and management issues.

Unsurprisingly, the areas in which heads felt they needed training related to the instructional aspect of their role in schools, as well as anticipated challenges for the near future.

**Table 7.11: Areas for further training**

<b>Area</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%*</b>
Leading school improvement and raising pupils' achievement	50	83
Leading schools where the majority of pupils are foreigners	48	80
Leading a change within the school	47	79
Strategic planning for school improvement	45	75
Developing a high-quality school culture	42	70
Leading staff professional development	40	66
Handling conflict and problematic behaviour	30	50
ICT integration in teaching and school management	28	47
Training in personal relationships	24	40
School management and organisational issues	22	36

(n=60) \*Responses do not total 100% as more than one area could be selected in respondents' answers.

Beyond indicating areas of focus for further training, the majority of the interviewees (10 out of 12) expressed concerns about the perceived lack of flexibility in the content and methodology of the NITPSL, as well as the need for personalisation and quality assurance. Interviewee B suggested that mentoring and networking should be integrated in training:

I want a scheme that allows headteachers to communicate and exchange experiences and knowledge regarding actions in school [...] like a group where I could convey what I do in my school and a critical friend who could give us support and specific tools for school evaluation and improvement.  
(Interviewee B)

Interviewee C also argued about the inclusion of school visits and job shadowing in the NITPSL:

If we could visit schools and shadow heads doing the job, as well as being coached to headship would be helpful. Moreover having a mentor during the first year in post would be critical for handling difficulties in schools.

Furthermore, seven interviewees highlighted the need for refocusing the aims of the NITPSL, so as to align them with the national educational reforms. Three headteachers emphasised the importance of hands-on sessions on action and strategic planning for school improvement – activities that have been attached to their role recently, while all heads suggested that topics related to the instructional aspect of headship should be at the core of the NITPSL. Interviewees also highlighted the need for support in the implementation of instructional leadership:

The NITPSL should focus purely on instructional leadership, such as classroom visits, monitoring teaching and learning, student assessment [...] we also need training in developing school vision, mutual trust and cooperation between staff. (Interviewee K)

More emphasis could be given to staff development, school improvement and quality learning culture. Also, support in designing and implementing strategic planning for school improvement is needed. (Interviewee D)

With regards to delivery, all stressed that an important number of sessions should be delivered prior to taking up the post and not only the two sessions that are concerned with the administrative procedures needed during the first week in school.

Interestingly, headteachers noted that although the NITPSL was simultaneously delivered to primary, pre-primary and special school headteachers, *'its content focused on primary schools and ignored the differences in pre-primary and special schools'* (Interviewee L). As participants indicated, the training was decontextualised and most of the times the instructors made reference to 'ideal' primary schools with no peculiarities. Some of them also *'ignored the fact that the policy and school contexts in Cyprus are very different from those in other countries and used to make reference and provide scenarios of schools located in other cultural and national contexts'* (Interviewee F). However, as Interviewee D commented:

Nobody serves in an ideal school. The situation in our school is very different due to its type, size and location. Providing scenarios of schools located in diverse contexts around Cyprus would facilitate theory's application into practice.

### **Theme 3: The organisational socialisation of new headteachers**

Becoming a headteacher constitutes a challenging step in the career of any teacher and the first months in post are critical for headteachers' organisational socialisation (OS) and establishment in headship. The OS process entails learning the knowledge, values and dispositions necessary to perform headship in a particular school context (Schein, 1968; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Weindling, 2003). In this way, transition to headship is heavily a context-bounded process, and as such it is heavily influenced by organisational context and school culture. Moreover, school leadership is inevitably a process embedded in social interactions between the appointee and people surrounding school, such as pupils, staff, parents and the local community. For this reason, the model provided by Merton (1968) in understanding school leadership as a bi-directional process was used to examine the interaction between the new school leader and the school, with each trying to change and influence the other.

#### **New heads' vision for school improvement**

In interviews, novice headteachers were probed to describe their vision for the school and asked to identify the constraints or facilitating factors that affected the implementation of this vision in schools. All heads were particularly concerned that a vision for the school addresses the learning needs of all pupils. They envisaged school as '*a caring and supporting learning environment for children to learn and develop their personalities*' (Interviewee B). Therefore, it is unsurprising that seven out of the 12 stressed the instructional aspect of their role in schools, while school improvement was viewed in terms of student and staff learning. As mentioned:

Heads not only have managerial roles, but they are the pedagogical leaders in schools. I am visiting classrooms and monitor teaching and learning. I want to promote staff CPD. I invite other teachers to observe my teaching and we discuss afterwards certain aspects of the lesson. (Interviewee J)

Another said:

My goals for this year is to promote staff professional development and maximise the time spent on learning and classroom interaction, so as to promote school effectiveness. (Interviewee C)

Headteachers' concern for student learning and school improvement was also prevalent in the survey where the vast majority of heads reported seeking headship because of the opportunities it affords for improving teaching and learning and implementing their vision for school improvement (see Theme 1).

A conflict among perceptions of how their leadership role would best be established in schools existed. There were those heads who held a traditional perception of heads as 'charismatic' school leaders that inspire others and form examples for their staff through leading by example. Others aimed to establish their credibility in post by enabling teachers to realise their expertise and potential in leading schools efficiently. The comments of the interviewees below illustrate their conceptions for effective headship.

The main characteristic of an effective headteacher today, apart from the knowledge and necessary training, is the gift, the charisma, the personality to inspire confidence. The headteacher must inspire others and lead by example. (Interviewee C)

The prestige one may have as a headteacher should be gained through his/her attitude, professionalism and behaviour. Personal qualities are reflected on our work and thus, we gain respect from others. Headteachers play an important role in school. We should strive for respect through our work, professionalism and seriousness in handling various issues. On the other hand a head has to be supportive and show empathy for colleagues. Thus, he/she will foster the trust needed for working together as a group. (Interviewee L)

Moreover, interviewees' accounts reveal qualities and actions attributed to heads' role, such as '*being a role model*' for teachers (Interviewee C), as well as '*being a listener - a good or active one that foresee and prevent conflict in interpersonal relationships*' (Interviewee E).

Along with heads' vision for the school, their perceptions of headship appeared to impact the way school leadership was enacted. Younger headteachers showed a tendency to adopt a more distributed form of leadership enactment by involving staff in decision making and establishing collaborative structures for working towards common goals, while those with more years in service endorsed a more traditional conception of their role in schools, as discussed under Theme 5.

The interplay between new heads' attempt to introduce changes towards school improvement and school culture is considered below.

### **School culture**

The interaction between the appointee and school culture constitutes a two-way process where each tries to shape the other, with heads aiming to reshape school culture to reflect their vision for school improvement (Lumby and Foskett, 2008). As Interviewee G put it '*re-shaping school culture is at the core of effective school leadership*'. On the other hand, staff inevitably resisted change and new head's intrusion in school.

The analysis of the interviews identified the parameters of school life which headteachers perceived as important in establishing themselves in post and creating the culture for working towards a common vision for school improvement. In terms of prioritising tasks, during the early months in post, it was imperative for all new heads to learn the 'ropes' of school context and accustom themselves with the responsibilities entailed in headship. Thus, they looked for information within the school so as to understand better its culture and way of functioning. Deputy heads and teachers serving in school for a long time provided heads with the necessary information regarding school context.

As Interviewee G admitted:

I had and I still have a lot of help from colleagues who were in school before me. The deputy head is my right hand. He helped me a lot with the management and administrative aspects of headship during the first year and

supported me on bringing about changes in school. I always discuss with him and take his advice on many issues.

Though, for half of the interviewees the OS process began prior to officially taking up headship in a new school, as they visited schools from the previous school year to talk to heads and get valuable information about the school, the staff and the pupils. Their existing heads had an integral role in preparing new headteachers for the anticipated challenges. Participant A noted:

I was pretty nervous for assuming headship in the particular school, although I was theoretically qualified to exercise the role of headteacher. I arranged a visit to school and talked with previous headteacher. He provided some information regarding staff and pupils, the archiving of documents [...] and he gave me some documents I could use the first days to make a start. Thus, I felt better prepared to take up the post in September.

This 'sense making' process necessitated much learning on the part of newcomers and took much of their time and energy upon assuming the post. On entering schools, novice heads opted to learn the administrative and managerial procedures needed to run the school efficiently, by seeking support and guidance from their past headteacher and experienced headteachers who were knowledgeable of the procedures to be followed, as discussed under Theme 2. However, learning to run the school smoothly came at a later stage in their progression to headship, as discussed later under Theme 5. As Interviewee H admitted:

It took me about two months to learn the bureaucratic procedures of the MOEC concerning the management of schools and the way the LEA worked. Though, learning the ropes was a year-long process and I admit I am still learning from my actions and mistakes.

During the first term, they all targeted personal contact and communication with people surrounding school - '*I want to be easily accessible to everyone, pupils, staff and parents*' (Interviewee I). First, they invested time in getting to know their staff at a personal and professional level and established good relationships with everyone, as staff resistance or uncommitted teachers can easily prevent the implementation of any school vision. They also aimed to find out about teachers' expertise or personal circumstances. Through this process



they would be in position to *'treat each teacher with discretion according to his/her personality'* (Interviewee J) and identify teachers' strengths so as to look for alliances in bringing about changes and implementing their vision in schools. Good personal and professional relationships with staff, as well as deputies were acknowledged as central for the success of change implementation initiatives. Otherwise, as headteachers argued *'your hands are tied'* (Interviewee B). As Interviewee C remembers:

I took appointment in this school along with a deputy head with whom I had worked in the past. She was as receptive as I was and encouraged my initiations for school improvement. The other deputy was more subdued than us, but after seeing our enthusiasm he joined into our plans. Hence, it was easier to bring everyone [the teachers] on board.

Beyond interpersonal relationships, more than half heads attempted to establish an academic learning climate and create a shared vision towards common goals. However, it proved a year-long process for most heads to foster trust and collaboration between staff. The following narrative illustrates how Interviewee K shaped the way she enacted school leadership in an attempt to establish trust between herself and staff, prior to proceeding with monitoring teaching and learning.

During the first term in post, I could feel a climate of suspicion against me. At first, I did not realise it but when I raised the issue during staff meeting I was told that teachers were suspicious of me watching them like a 'big brother'. I faced the same difficulty on my attempt to support staff facing difficulties in teaching. Although I had made some lessons in different classrooms and invited teachers to observe them, they were reluctant to allow me in their classroom as they thought I was going to inspect and criticise their teaching. Thus, I decided not to insist on instructional leadership and leave it for next year.

Similarly, three other heads found it particularly demanding to establish a rapport of trust and a positive working culture amongst staff. In attempting to provide an explanation regarding their difficulty to establish a supportive culture between staff, three interviewees indicated that staff rotation is usual in Cypriot schools and teachers' transfers from one school to another cause instability in schools, prevent the development of a common culture and strong relationships

between colleagues, prevailing, thus, schools to work towards school improvement. As a headteacher noted:

I feel frustrated with continuous changes in the synthesis of staff. It disrupts the smooth functioning of the school and prevents teachers from establishing good interpersonal relationships between them so as to work as a team towards common goals. (Interviewee C)

In contrast, another head pointed to the fact that teachers should be rotated after five to six years in post. Otherwise, they develop '*the feeling that school belongs to them, the working culture is vested in their daily practice and it is hard to change afterwards*' (Interviewee L).

In their attempt to establish good relationships with pupils, some new heads had to deal with their aggressive behaviour, disrespect for the school and bullying (Interviewees E, H and F). They aimed to have personal contact with pupils causing problems at school and tried to foster a positive climate in school for foreign pupils to feel acceptance and respect. They also encouraged teachers to participate in specialised programmes to handle diversity, bullying and behavioural problems. On handling pupils' behaviour and underachievement, a headteacher serving in a small rural school found it necessary to get to know parents at a personal level. He said:

I had to visit two families at home during afternoons. Although this process was time consuming and painful, it enabled me to address issues beyond education, such as personal hygiene and problematic behaviour in school due to family problems'. (Interviewee I)

Upon establishing interpersonal relationships within school, heads aimed to achieve good communication and links with people outside school, such as parents and the local community. They aimed for the support of parents and the local community in implementing their vision for the school using various methods. They wanted parents to be aware of school's work and be involved in the teaching and learning process. Thus, they thought they would promote a more positive image of the school as a vivid learning organisation. Some heads invited parents to attend school activities (Interviewees G and K) or they even co-organised events with the local authorities and posted photos in local

newspapers (Interviewees J and K). Examples of headteachers' attempts to seek support from parents and the local community were given:

We opened the doors to parents. We invited them to actively participate in school activities and share their expertise with pupils. Thus, they ultimately understood that we needed them to be part of the teaching and learning process, help and support the school. (Interviewee G)

We launched the project work and aimed to work closely with parents and the local community. Pupils' learning became more experiential, and parents' involvement in school's work became more substantial. They slowly recognised our attempts for school improvement and became more supportive to our work. (Interviewee J)

Informing parents about school work and involving them in decision making for school improvement was highlighted by half of the interviewees as central for their efforts to create a positive image for the school and gain parents' support in implementing changes - *'It is better to have them on the bus, rather than against us'* (Interviewee A). Interviewee E realised the importance placed on contact and collaboration with parents and parents' need for being respected from within school, while encountering a hostile incident the first week in post. He shared the following episode:

I was appointed in an inner city school located in a deprived area, where most parents had low expectations from children and showed little interest regarding their academic achievement. The third day in post, two members of the Parents Association stepped into my office, not to welcome me in school and designate their support for the school, but to declare that they will have an eye on my work in moving school towards improvement. They were of the opinion that heads appointed to this school showed no interest for the school and the pupils.

After that he admitted trying hard *'throughout the year to gain their trust and confidence in the school, by creating opportunities to work together for the best of the school'*.

On the other hand, there were some heads (Interviewees D, H and I) who had to tackle parents' involvement in school functioning and put parents' relationship to school on a different basis than the existing one. The following narrative illustrates this point.

The first day in school, I noticed the strong presence of parents and experienced their involvement in school's procedures and way of functioning. I

was really shocked. My office was full of parents complaining about pupils' allocation in classrooms and administrative matters not directly related to their children. The situation was very bad. I had to ask them to enter the office one person at a time and notify them that our discussion would be merely focused on their child and his/her problem. Gradually, they stopped coming to school and intervene into school functioning. (Interviewee D)

Acknowledging the important role placed on schools in small local communities was necessary so as to establish firm links with parents and the community. As Interviewee K asserted '*school was part of the community and their help and support was important for us [staff] to move the school forward*'. On the other hand, as Interviewee I said: '*our school is located in a village linked with local tradition and history, we can ignore this fact*'. By incorporating the local context and people into school activities, new headteachers gradually gained the appreciation of the local community for the school, as well as their financial support for promoting changes with regards to the infrastructure and resources necessary for improving the quality of teaching and learning.

What the interviewees' accounts reveal is that the amount of support and recognition they received for their work from staff and parents helped novice heads develop professionally and establish their headship role in school. As Interviewee D noted: '*the change in school climate helped minimise parents' intervention in school work, as they trusted us in doing things right*'. Also, those heads who received positive comments from inspectors, parents and staff (Interviewees D and H) about the changes they introduced in schools reported high levels of job satisfaction and self-efficacy in performing headship in any school and continued their attempts for school improvement with even more enthusiasm.

With regards to change implementation, introducing structural changes in school was an easy process for most heads who dealt with it early on. The support of teachers was granted especially in cases new heads informed staff during meetings and explained the reasoning behind their actions. However, while introducing changes regarding the working culture and the way things were

done in particular school contexts, new heads' OS experiences varied according to the nature of the change, teachers' readiness to accept the change and the headship stage during which the change was introduced. When Interviewee G informed teachers of his desire to have less visits and excursions during the school year so as to allow time for all to focus on teaching and learning, they had no objection at all. Though, when Interviewee J attempted to challenge teachers' practice after being in post only for three months and prior to establishing a rapport of trust and collaboration among staff, she faced great resistance. As she noted:

Teachers were used to work with their doors closed and hardly shared their practices and teaching resources. I wanted them to collaborate and share their work, especially those teaching the same year group, though they were reluctant to do so. Hence, I opened my classroom first and invited colleagues to observe my teaching. We discussed it with a critical eye during staff meeting and I encouraged them to do the same. Although they ignored my prompt, I invited them to observe another lesson. It took a year for them to realise that my intention was purely about establishing collaboration, teamwork and sharing expertise. By the end of the year, they trusted me completely and followed my example by inviting me to attend their lessons. The second year, a collaborative working culture was part of the school. (Interviewee J)

While reflecting on her OS experiences, Interviewee H admitted experiencing great resistance from staff during the first months in post, when she attempted to challenge the way things were done in the particular school with uncommitted and incompetent teachers.

I was appointed in a school where teachers' attitude was unacceptable. Three of them used to come to school late finding excuses such as heavy traffic in the motorway, avoided attending local events or meetings with parents after school, stood up while staff meeting was in process and asked for me to stop [...]. It was always their word against mine, no matter what I suggested or how I did things. Some teachers gradually realised that such changes were necessary for the smooth functioning of the school and slowly put these teachers on the side. They ultimately asked for a transfer to another school by the end of the year. (Interviewee H).

Interestingly, the data suggests that interviewees used various metaphors to describe their negative OS experiences once in post. Acknowledging the bi-directional relationship between school culture and the appointee, where heads

try to bring about changes to which staff resists. It was unavoidable for all new heads to experience highly emotional incidents during the first months. Five headteachers used metaphors to illustrate the intensity of feelings or problems experienced while handling problematic situations during their early days in headship. Interviewee H, while reflecting on her early months in post, identified the following incident which she characterised as a traumatic experience:

I will not hide the fact that the first month, I was returning home asking myself 'why should I become a headteacher?'. I was appointed in a school where school culture was particularly challenging. Teachers were annoyed because I was a young female qualified head who had a vision and wanted to change things. I tried hard to keep my dignity, though I was into the lion's den. While driving back home I was crying in the car regretting becoming a head. However, although I could have drowned in the ocean, I learned the hard way. Thus, I have not just floated but I swam to the shore. (Interviewee H).

Other metaphors used include the following: '*I was sitting on burning coals for what I would encounter the next day*' (Interviewee I) and '*I felt like being abandoned in the sea and I had to swim on my own*' (Interviewee G).

Inevitably OS experiences while encountering the people surrounding school, challenged new heads' pre-conceptions of their role and made them come to an understanding of the different values, expectations and perspectives other people had, regarding school functioning and headteacher's role. Such realisation provided eight out of the 12 interviewees with alternative ways to conceive headship as primarily concerned with interpersonal relationships between people holding different values and expectations, and enabled them to identify skills that were 'vital in handling people and situations, such as conflict skills and interpersonal skills' (Interviewee K). They all expressed their concerns with regards to keeping the balance in human relationships among various stakeholders, while promoting their vision for the school.

The greatest challenge every day I come to school is to keep the balance in my relationships with colleagues and parents and be effective at the same time. A key aspect of my role is the harmonious coexistence with others; colleagues, parents, local authorities and those involved in educational work, as well as to tackle everything with humility and respect for different values and expectations. (Interviewee H)

Nevertheless, the challenging school context, handling daily interaction with people and headteachers' inability to balance between different expectations from various stakeholders and adjust their expectations and school vision accordingly, were the main reasons for their failure to become integrated within the organisation. Hence, OS experiences urged some of the new heads to seek headship in another school after a few years in post (Interviewees G, H and I) or choose alternative career pathways, such as Interviewee A.

Along with school culture, new heads faced a number of challenges during the early years in post which shaped their organisational socialisation in schools.

#### **Theme 4: The challenges of first headship**

The study aimed to identify the challenges new headteachers encountered when they were first appointed. Five challenges were presented to survey respondents (Table 7.12) and the interviewees were asked to provide insights into the difficulties they encountered during the entry stage of headship.

As shown in Table 7.12, all headteachers made reference to cooperation with school staff and networking and collaboration with parents and the local authorities as the major components for effective school leadership. Such points have been illustrated with reference to comments from interviewees under Theme 3. Heads found it particularly challenging to handle interpersonal relationships and conflict in school, as well as establishing trust and a positive working culture in school. For instance, Interviewee A was the only one who was new in her school. All teachers served in school from the previous year and faced problems with regards to interpersonal relationships. Hence, although the headteacher admitted putting much energy and effort on community building and establishing trust among staff, it did not work. As she remembers:

A major difficulty I encountered was the bad interpersonal relationships among staff due to differences they had from the previous school year. This situation deprived the dynamics of my staff to work as a team. Although as persons they were working hard, at the group level they could not cooperate. We had

social gatherings, meetings, I even baked cakes for colleagues during breaks [...]. I did everything I could, but my staff had no chemistry to work as a team. Maybe, it had to do with their personalities. (Interviewee A)

Interestingly, all heads admitted being aware of the challenges they would face in post. A small portion of them (37%) regarded large-sized schools as impeding leadership, 45% regarded location as a challenge, while a very small number of them (6%) identified the shadow of their predecessor as a challenge.

**Table 7.12: The challenges of first headship**

	Not at all		A little		Quite a lot		Very much	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
School staff and cooperation with the staff are important factors for effective school leadership	-	-	-	-	5	8	55	92
Networking and collaboration with local authorities and Parents Association important for successful headship	-	-	-	-	18	30	42	70
The shadow of the previous headteacher impacts my attempt to implement my vision for the school	34	57	22	37	2	3	2	3
The location of the school is a challenge for effective headship	9	15	24	40	17	28	10	17
Large-sized schools impede effective headship and the implementation of headteacher's duties	11	18	27	45	16	27	6	10
I was aware of the difficulties and the challenges I would face during the first years in headship	-	-	11	18	25	42	24	40

(n=60)

Also, all respondents had the view that networking and cooperation with local authorities and Parents Association were important features for successful headship to a very great extent (100%). As four interviewees admitted, handling



human relationships was a great challenge, especially where relationships with parents were not firm or of a common orientation towards school improvement, since parents complicated the work of the headteacher by '*looking for explanations and causes for their problems inside schools*' (Interviewee G). The following remarks highlight this point:

The Parents Association saw school's work and functioning with suspicion and they were working upon building a damaging reputation for the school, instead of collaborating with us towards school improvement. They believed that we [head and staff] were responsible for the problems existing in school, such as bullying, behavioural problems, underachievement. (Interviewee B)

It was challenging for me to face the fact that many parents used to come to school, disregarding regular visit hours, to solve problems arisen in the neighbourhood and they conveyed their problems to children, generating, thus, conflicts among them. (Interviewee H)

The next most frequently mentioned challenges for novice heads were school location and size. Almost half of respondents (45%) regarded school location as a great challenge for headship, while 37% indicated leading large-sized schools as a challenge ('quite a lot', 'very much'). Similar views were voiced in interviews.

I was first appointed in one of the largest schools in Cyprus. I faced a chaotic situation at the beginning. I was panicked. (Interviewee B)

Such schools were associated with behavioural problems and underachievement exhibited by pupils and, as such, they were viewed as highly challenging for new heads.

Our school is located in an unprivileged area of the city where migrant workers from Asian and eastern European countries live. Pupils showed disrespect for teachers and the school, and they vandalised school property three to four times a week during the afternoons. (Interviewee E)

I took up headship in a difficult school in special measures in one of the disadvantaged areas of the city. I established excellent relationships with staff and parents, but there were some native and foreign students who were extremely difficult to handle and they were involved in fights daily during breaks. (Interviewee F)

There were also heads who were confronted with many issues on assuming headship in large-sized schools or schools located in economically and socially deprived areas. The following comments typify the situation in which three

novice heads (Interviewees B, D, H) found themselves in on assuming headship in these schools.

On assuming headship, I experienced all the situations a headteacher could be confronted with; conflicts among pupils and between parents and teachers, safety issues since school premises were under reconstruction, limited teaching resources and inadequate infrastructure [...]. I was forced to learn a lot in a short time and apply much knowledge and experience I brought with me in post on daily practice. (Interviewee B)

Interviews also indicate headteachers' preference to serve in small or medium-sized schools upon assuming headship, as they believed that they would encounter fewer challenges there.

I feel happy in this school. Maybe if it was a larger school I would be terrified, but with these numbers I did not feel stressful at all. I felt from the beginning that I could cope and succeed in this school, as challenges would be manageable for a newly appointed head. (Interviewee C)

Surprisingly, over half of headteachers (57%) disagreed with the statement regarding the shadow of the previous headteacher on their attempts to implement their vision for the school, while about one third of them (37%) said that the previous head had a small impact ('a little'). However, interviewees' accounts about the difficulties they faced in post portray a different reality. Heads' predecessor and the way they had been enacting leadership impacted negatively on novice headteachers' OS in schools. The following comments mirror the problems new headteachers encountered in schools.

I faced some difficulties with the regimes that prevailed in the previous culture held in school. Teachers were not used to being observed during teaching and being accountable for teaching and learning. Thus, they regarded me as the 'Big Brother' who wanted to exercise control over their work. (Interviewee K)

I found a bad situation when I first came to school. There were serious disagreements between teachers and teaching assistants, who were accustomed to work in a different way and were unwilling to cooperate with teachers. Also, teachers were working independently and were unwilling to share their teaching practices. (Interviewee J)

Of interest is the fact that two young female headteachers (Interviewees C and H) attributed many of the difficulties encountered during early headship to personal characteristics, such as gender and age. They both experienced unacceptance and felt scrutinised severely by male and older colleagues who

underestimated their abilities and were displeased with having '*a 40-year old lady taking over the school*' (Interviewee H). Interviewee's C comment highlights this point:

I was appointed at a school, where a male deputy head - older than me - served prior to my appointment. By the end of the first term, he told me that he was feeling uncomfortable having a younger female head as a superior. Although seeing my enthusiasm, he supported my plans for school improvement, by the end of the first year he sought a transfer to another school.

Also, four headteachers encountered difficulties associated with the inadequate organisation and management of school, as well as the previous headteacher's inability to handle people and situations effectively. As new heads recalled:

It was annoying to find unfinished work from previous years. The head did not record new equipment in the property book [...] I had to work during holidays to fill the gap. (Interviewee G)

At the beginning of the year I had threatening phone calls from parents that they would report us [head and staff] to the police, regarding a pending issue from previous school year about a child abuse. I had to visit parents at home twice to gain their trust. Finally, they realised that I had no involvement in the incident and things went smoothly. (Interviewee I)

Two heads appointed to a Compulsory All-Day school and a special school identified challenges specifically related to managing such schools, such as budgeting, recruitment of staff, contracting, establishing links with business enterprises etc. Moreover, the special school head had to manage the transportation of pupils to and from school, and make contacts with establishments in which older pupils (15-18 years) had an apprenticeship. These responsibilities proved particularly challenging for new heads, who had to acquire knowledge and technical skills in certain areas so as to respond to the demands of headship, such as budgeting, fund raising, contracting work etc.

Unavoidably, beginning heads made reference to the duality of their role in schools, as teachers and as school leaders in both the initial and follow-up interviews. Two-thirds of participants (eight out of 12) stressed that headteachers should not have teaching commitments at all or only minor

teaching responsibilities, so as to spend energy and time on school management and instructional leadership. They maintained:

The teaching duties of headteachers should be negligible, so as to release time for heads to run the school with greater comfort. It is true that many teaching hours are lost because of headteacher's commitments with several external bodies, such as meetings with the LEA, conferences, visits etc. This is not in favour of pupils. (Interviewee D)

The teaching responsibility limits us from better organising the school, focusing on certain issues with more detail and planning various activities better. Despite having a deputy head and a secretary in school, all work passes through the hands of the headteacher. Year after year the workload increases and the role becomes more demanding as more responsibilities are attached to headship; the administrative time, though, remains the same. (Interviewee J)

The problem with teaching headship is even sharper in pre-primary schools where there are no secretaries on duty to lighten headteachers' administrative workload. As Interviewee L said:

It is extremely difficult for us to have all the administrative and bureaucratic tasks on time, along with heavy teaching duties and at the same time be responsible for the management and leadership of school.

Other challenges mentioned by novice heads included the limited teaching resources and infrastructure, dealing with incompetent staff, as well as the loneliness of the post. The latter was noted by three heads who were appointed to small primary or pre-primary schools and did not have deputies in school to discuss certain issues and claim their support for their initiatives.

Taking into account the PS experiences presented earlier, it is perhaps unsurprising that about eight-out-of-ten (82%) survey respondents mentioned that they were aware of the difficulties they would meet in schools on first headship. What they did not expect was the time and energy needed to handle the anticipated challenges effectively. As findings presented in previous sections (Themes 2 and 3) regarding the PS and the OS of new heads demonstrate, beginning heads sought support from people within and outside school, such as experienced heads who acted as mentors, deputies and teachers, school

inspectors and the LEAs, who had the ‘*practical knowledge needed to tackle the challenges faced in post*’ (Interviewee D). The sources of support are cited in declining order of times mentioned by the interviewees. In particular, the training cohort and informal professional networks were found to help prevent professional isolation. The training cohort also helped in terms of anticipating the difficulties encountered during early months, by providing opportunities for collective reflection on certain issues. The importance of sharing on-the-job learning experiences with cohort peers is illustrated in the following statement:

Networking and discussion with fellow headteachers regarding school management and the handling of several issues was of much help for overcoming difficulties. (Interviewee K)

With regards to encountering probable future challenges in post, Table 7.13 shows that a great majority of survey respondents (94%) indicated their readiness to overcome the difficulties they may face as heads.

**Table 7.13: Readiness to overcome the challenges of headship**

	Not at all		A little		Quite a lot		Very much	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I feel ready to overcome the challenges I may encounter as a headteacher	1	2	3	4	28	47	28	47
I feel comfortable to take up headship in small primary schools	3	5	3	5	14	23	40	67
I feel reluctant to take up headship in large primary schools	17	28	20	34	14	23	9	15

(n=60)

However, an important proportion of survey respondents (38%) felt reluctant to take up headship in large primary schools; they felt more comfortable to serve in small school units (90%).

This finding is consistent with findings presented earlier about heads' preference to serve in small and medium-sized school units. This preference was also prevalent in interviewees' responses regarding the advantages of leading a small school on first headship:

In small schools, headteachers may control things more easily and have a better relationship and contact with everyone; pupils, staff, and parents. Good contact and communication with staff, creates a warmer atmosphere in schools and enables cooperative teamwork. Also, headteachers know all pupils by their name, as well as their families- a fact that may help cater for children needs on a personal level, minimising, thus, discipline problems. (Interviewee I)

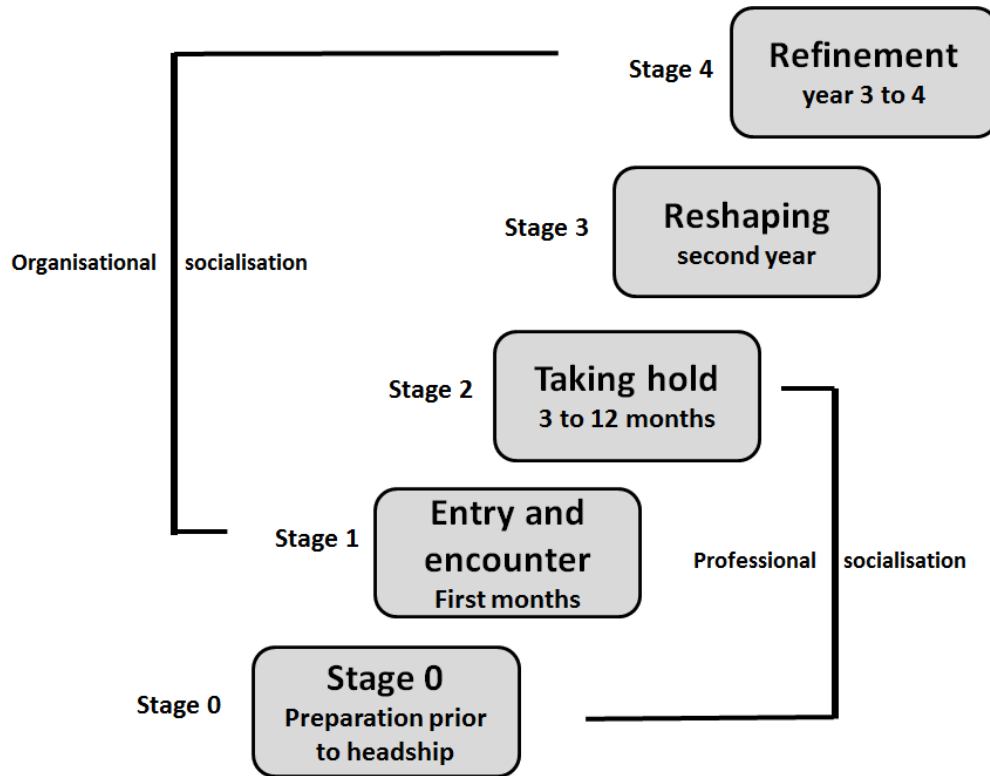
There is a stronger sense of team than in large impersonal schools. Discipline problems are much less; the small number of pupils in class significantly facilitates the learning process; moving pupils outside schools is easier [...] Regarding other issues, mainly bureaucratic, there is no difference compared to larger schools. (Interviewee H)

This section considered the most significant challenges faced by Cypriot heads on entering headship, which along with the OS experiences described earlier, helped heads to find a necessary balance between the leadership, managerial and administrative aspect of their role, so as to proceed with implementing their vision in schools through initiations and alterations as described next.

## **Theme 5: The career-stages of headship**

This thesis aimed to depict the socialisation stages new Cypriot primary heads went through headship over the first four years in post. Their progression through stages of headship is presented below in terms of the six-stage headship model suggested by Weindling (1999, 2000) and Earley and Weindling (2004). Headteachers participating in this study were found to resemble many commonalities with the NFER research heads (1982-1994) regarding preparation for headship, establishing themselves in post, promoting changes in schools and implementing their vision for improving teaching and learning. However, the Earley and Weindling (2004) model was modified to correspond to the time framework of the first four years in post, as shown in Figure 7.1.

**Figure 7.1: Cypriot heads' progression through stages of headship**



Source: Adapted from Earley and Weindling (2004)

Theme 5 summarises the main findings of the study by drawing on the PS and OS experiences of newcomers in post. The PS of new heads was considered as largely concerned with pre-appointment and induction in post and was examined through Stage 0 – ‘preparation prior to headship’, the ‘entry and encounter’ stage (Stage 1) and the ‘taking hold’ stage (Stage 2). Newcomers’ OS, in terms of acquiring the values and norms required to enact headship in a particular school context, began upon assuming the post (Stage 1) and continued until ‘refinement’ (Stage 4). The rotation of staff around the country was found to limit new heads’ attempts to establish trust and collaboration among staff for working towards common goals, as school culture was continuously altered.

### Stage 0 – Preparation prior to appointment

The data analysis showed that the PS of Cypriot headteachers prior to appointment consisted of collective leadership experiences from serving in schools and diverse posts outside schools, as well as self-initiated leadership development, through postgraduate studies, shadowing heads on-the-job, in-depth reading and participation in professional networks. The various leadership experiences gained during the career of prospective headteachers, such as experience in deputy headship and acting headship in small schools, were depicted and their importance in learning the role was underlined by all participants. The importance of their former heads, in encouraging aspirant heads to apply for the post, and head's spouse - especially female spouse – in providing the time and space to prepare for headship was emphasised by all participants. Moreover, working alongside inspiring principals while in deputy headship, shadowing heads on-the-job, as well as coaching from past heads, enhanced their learning to a great extent prior to entering headship.

### Stage 1 – Entry and encounter (first months)

On entering headship, novice headteachers identified the cultural shock of moving into a new leadership role and realised the complexity and multiplicity of tasks headship entails. Heads talked about the issues and the challenges they encountered and had to prioritise and handle during the early days in post. They initially handled issues related to the smooth operation of schools, such as the allocation of subjects, pupils' distribution in classrooms, the heavy paperwork regarding staffing and pupil enrolment, and the management of resources for the new school year.

Headteachers serving in urban schools had to learn the procedures followed by the LEAs of their region and the way communication with them was conducted. Sometimes, LEAs responded to school inquiries with delay or required the



completion of lots of paperwork prior to handling an issue. For example, as one headteacher said:

Every LEA follows different procedures regarding school budgeting, the purchase of teaching resources, recovery of damages and communication with schools. Our LEA follows bureaucratic procedures by asking us to have all communication in writing. Though, they responded to our requests within one or two weeks, due to the large number of schools under their authority. *Can you imagine having a broken door or window in school for two weeks?* (Interviewee D, emphasis in original)

The entry to headship stage was largely occupied by OS while new heads tried to make sense of schools and take charge. At the same time, the school had a new school leader. On entering headship, new heads reported difficulties related to staff conflict, low staff morale, previous headteacher's regimes, discipline issues and loose links with parents and the local community. Headteachers also referred to the panic of assuming headship in large-sized schools where many of the aforementioned challenges are vivid. The following narrative mirrors the problem experienced by a pre-primary head the first week in post.

There were various disagreements between new teachers and the assistant who had been working in school for many years. The assistant was unwilling to change her way of working and cooperate with teachers. She insisted doing things in her own way and teachers kept on complaining. The climate in school was bad and uncooperative. I was in the difficult situation to resolve conflict and I explained to her the duties as prescribed in employment contract. Although, she agreed to cooperate with teachers, it took her some time to understand that cooperation was necessary for pupils benefit. (Interviewee J)

Another head shared the frustration and anxiety she felt during the early days in post with regards to low staff morale, unwillingness to collaborate and the previous head's regime, who had shaped school culture around his image.

I will admit that I had a traumatic experience during the first year in post. They [staff, parents, community] previously had a director of over 56 and suddenly they saw a 40-year old lady to take over, having a vision for the school and willingness to change things. Some teachers had provocative behaviour; were reactive and unsupportive, even though I had right for certain issues. (Interviewee H)

Four heads also pointed to past heads' inability to handle parents and establish discipline, bad management and administration, low staff morale and school

culture that did not endorse trust, collaboration and shared responsibility as being *'inherited as a legacy to school by past heads'* (Interviewee J).

Also, heads appointed in large-sized inner city schools occupied by migrant pupils or schools in socially and economically deprived areas experienced discipline and behaviour problems. As they admitted *'the problem of delinquent behaviour is very intense in some areas, whereas in some others it's trivial'* (Interviewee F). Their argument is best illustrated by the following remark:

The social problems are rife in schools: violence in the family, drugs, mixed marriages, divorces, parents coming from different ethnic backgrounds hold different values regarding education, their children have attitude against schooling [...] Headteachers must know how to handle these issues and minimise their impact on student learning and achievement. (Interviewee E)

Moreover, from the very early days, three headteachers (D, E and H) had to handle parents' interference in school organisation and management. This was regarded as a very delicate issue, as new heads did not yet have the opportunity to get to know parents. Interviewee E referred to an uncomfortable situation with parents stepping into his office and mingling in school's work. For example:

The second day in school, two members of the Parents Association visited me to declare their presence and supervise my work as a school leader, and not for acquaintance and cooperation. They began complaining about some trees that wanted pruning and wanted explanations about the cleaning staff who had not cleaned the school yet. (Interviewee E)

On handling these issues and implementing organisational changes in schools, all novice heads admitted the critical role 'people' had for supporting them in handling various issues effectively in early days. Novice heads to survive in post sought the 'practical' knowledge and skills of their new deputies, experienced heads, and their past heads. Some of them also found the role of the school inspector and the LEA as important for handling the administrative aspects of headship.

On entering schools, beginning heads experienced surprises while encountering several challenges in situ. Such challenges helped them to sketch the complexity map concerning the contextual challenges and tasks they needed to

handle. Moreover, in the light of these challenges new heads realised the difference between their conceptions of headship and the expectations of people surrounding the school leader. Such sense-making enabled novice heads to adjust their expectations accordingly and informed action implementation in handling challenges in situ.

### Stage 2 – Taking hold (3 to 12 months)

Upon solving operational issues, headteachers attempted to cope with the challenges met in schools by incorporating various practices with regards to:

- establishing head's credibility in post
- improving communication with staff, parents and the local community
- establishing discipline
- creating a good public image for the school, and
- establishing a positive working culture in school.

Once in post, three individuals talked about the need for establishing their authority in schools by letting teachers and staff to know them better and realise their potential and abilities for teaching and leading. Although establishing the teaching-expert authority first was easier due to their lengthy service in schools, it was also necessary prior to challenging teachers' practice and performing instructional leadership during Stage 2.

I had to be accepted as a person and as an educator by my staff, prior to introducing any changes to school's culture. Hence, I opened my classroom first to other teachers. When they realised that I did not have superficial knowledge of teaching and they could absolutely trust me as a person who is knowledgeable of things for her post, I earned their trust. When I achieved that, I could introduce changes with ease. (Interviewee J)

On handling interpersonal relationships and conflict, all heads made an attempt to know their staff better on a personal, as well as on professional level, and establish firm personal relationships with them. Moreover, they met each teacher individually in their office and tried to identify their expertise and

strengths. For one head, *'by targeting personal contact, I could keep a very delicate balance in how to behave according to each teacher's personality'* (Interviewee B) while another could *'raise issues that previously would not have been raised about teachers' performance and ways of improving it'* (Interviewee I).

Some interviewees aimed to normalise relationships between staff by handling conflict and provided opportunities for establishing good interpersonal relationships and trust among staff and the head. In the following narrative, a female head, working in a school divided into two cycles, describes her attempt to alleviate the conflict between staff and parents in the two schools.

Headteachers during previous year were in controversy and the relationships between staff were 'cold'. I first tried to normalise the situation that existed between the upper and lower cycle of primary school, by avoiding conflict and discussing problems collectively during staff meetings. I also aimed to work collaboratively with the other headteacher, with whom I shared similar values, for the improvement of 'our' school. The good collaboration between the two cycles, improved the public image of the school. Hence, parents showed more trust in school and their 'invasions' became sporadic. (Interviewee D)

Interviewees emphasised the importance of getting others to 'buy into' the headteacher's vision for the school, especially people in leadership posts, such as deputy heads. Establishing good relationships with deputies and sharing common values were of major importance for implementing changes for school improvement. Otherwise, as heads admitted, their *'hands are tied'* (Interviewee B).

Moreover, headteachers who had a vision for the school (Interviewees A, H, I, J, K, L, M) highlighted how vital it was to have a supporting and cooperative school climate where teachers and the leadership team worked collaboratively towards common goals. They achieved that by adopting from the beginning distributed and democratic forms of leadership and decision making, as well as by giving voice to teachers during staff meetings. In this way they gained teachers and deputies' trust and support and let others buy into their vision for the school. As Interviewee K admitted, she had to adjust the way she enacted leadership so as to have her teachers on board.

At the beginning, there was a feeling of mistrustfulness among the staff regarding me and my actions. When I discussed the issue with my deputy she told me that teachers felt that they were not given a voice and just implemented decisions that were not taken with their consent. It took me the whole year to break the ice, although I immediately aimed to involve them in decision making and the strategic planning process for school improvement.

While establishing firm relationships with staff and parents, at the same time, new heads sought to establishing discipline in school. Particularly in small schools, heads targeted personal communication with pupils and they learned most pupils by first name. Also, contacting parents whom schools struggled most to see, enabled heads to understand the family context that impacted pupils' behaviour and achievement. In this way, handling discipline issues and behavioural problems was made easier.

I made a genuine effort to get to know pupils' parents so as to have access to them to address issues beyond academic achievement, such as behaviour, cleanliness, their interest for children, and the environment in which they live. Although school may have a limited impact on pupils' behaviour, I found this positive for the smooth operation of the school. However, some parents did not want to go into details and open up about these issues. (Interviewee I)

During the 'taking hold' stage of their career, more than half of new head interviewees targeted good relationships with parents and the local community and involved them in decision making regarding school improvement. Moreover, while informing parents about school work and encouraging their involvement in school activities, they targeted parents' appreciation for the school, thus promoting a more positive image for the school. Opening schools to the local community and cooperating with parents were seen as essential by new heads who wanted parents' cooperation and support for school improvement. For example:

We opened the doors to parents. We invited them to attend school performances and participate in school's activities. Thus, we let them slowly understand that they should cooperate with, help and support the school. (Interviewee G)

The following quote describes Interviewee's H attempts to give the school an 'identity' and make it become 'noticeable' within the local context. On establishing a better image for the school, she created a formal image for the school, as well as a good environment for teaching and learning.

I found a school without identity. They had no emblem, uniforms or letterheads with the name of the school printed on them, no sign with the name of the school outside the building [...]. There was also a shortage of basic furniture and resources. We bought football and basketball nets, we introduced recycling in school and we planted the garden with flowers and trees. (Interviewee H)

Interestingly, a headteacher reported having introduced a change in school culture from the first year. Interviewee I, who admitted being against having too many extracurricular activities, managed to persuade staff easily to focus on teaching and learning, by maximising the teaching time.

Teachers were used to spend valuable teaching time on extracurricular activities once or twice a week. Children needed to have sufficient teaching time to acquire some basic knowledge and competences. After discussing it with staff, teachers agreed to minimise the number of visits and to host guest speakers or specialists only when necessary, as they were feeling stressed too by being involved in many activities. (Interviewee I)

In contrast, three heads who attempted to challenge the teaching practice from the first year agreed that *'it takes time to change people's mentality and understand that is not my class and my pupils, but our pupils and our school'* (Interviewee J) and they decided *'not to insist on instructional leadership and leave it for a later stage'* (Interviewees K).

As interviewees noted, the first year in post *'was needed to get accustomed with the staff, the characteristics of the school and the pupils'* (Interviewee A), so as to gain a deeper understanding of the context in which more changes would be introduced next year.

### Stage 3 – Reshaping (second year)

After a year in post, the headteachers achieved an understanding of school culture and the way things were done in school. The seeds planted in the previous stage about improving interpersonal relationships between staff and between teachers and parents, establishing discipline and targeting a more positive image for the school, enabled heads during the second year to proceed with implementing further changes in schools. Examples noted included:

- strengthening the link between school, parents and the local community,
- creating a good public image for the school
- promoting staff development and the development of parents, regarding teaching and learning, as well as handling discipline and bullying,
- introducing aspects of their instructional role in school,
- upgrading school with regards to building facilities, useful teaching resources and ICT.

During the second year, headteachers continued to work closely with parents and the local community. They targeted dissemination and publicity of the good work done in school, by letting parents know about it and involving them in school activities. In this way, heads, especially those serving in schools with a poor image, gained the recognition and support of the local community for the work done in school. The following remarks typify this position.

The second year, the participation of our school in a European Comenius project opened up huge opportunities for working closer with parents and the local community. When our school hosted partner schools in Cyprus, we visited grandmothers and they cooked for us homemade traditional sweets. They were all really enthusiastic and proud of the event. (Interviewee G)

Through project work, we aimed to work closely with parents and the local community. Pupils' learning became more experiential, and parents' involvement in school's work became more substantial. We met the mayor and discussed with him about littering. We managed to clean the local beach in collaboration with parents. Photos from the event were in local newspapers and on school's website. Parents gradually recognised our attempts and thus, they were more supportive to our work. (Interviewee L)

I send parents the monthly calendar with all scheduled activities and I invite some of them to participate or contribute according to their potential and expertise. This made them aware of school life and enhanced their feeling of being closer to the school. (Interviewee F)

Collaboration with parents was also needed in handling bullying and discipline problems. For this reason, two heads (Interviewee H and F) encouraged participation in a project about Bullying (Daphne National Programme), which included lessons for the pupils, workshops and support for teachers and lectures for parents in handling discipline and bullying. Hence, by targeting the development of parents on how to handle discipline, bullying and behavioural problems at home, new heads hoped for their collaboration on handling severe

behavioural issues in school. At the same time, the professional development of staff through the 'Daphne National Programme' was targeted.

Three heads also realised that for improving learning, it was important that parents had expectations for their children's achievement and organised a series of lectures for parents in cooperation with the CPI. Interviewee H recalled:

I met parents who had no expectations from their children and they were ignorant of how to handle them properly. Thus, they used violence. We organised a series of monthly lectures, in cooperation with the CPI, for educating parents on how to raise the expectations they had from their children and handle behavioural problems. Also, all teachers made a great effort to strengthen parents by having regular contacts with them, either face to face or by telephone, regarding the 'good' behaviour exhibited by their children.

After establishing their headship and familiarising themselves with school culture, some heads began to operate more as instructional leaders, by monitoring teaching and learning and providing opportunities for teachers to develop professionally during the second year in school. Four headteachers emphasised their role in the professional development of staff and they provided opportunities for teachers to develop professionally both inside and outside schools. One of them remarked:

My goal for this school year is to give teachers the opportunity to exchange visits, even with teachers in neighbouring schools. I also encouraged them to attend many seminars and conferences. I consider it important for teachers to familiarise themselves with a new method or practice and then dare to implement it in class. (Interviewee C)

Interviewee G appeared to make less of an effort to reshape school culture and implement aspects of her instructional leadership role, as she said:

Where school culture is shouting for a change, you can introduce changes to foster a supporting learning environment for pupils and staff early on!

This effort was easier for those heads who had attempted to challenge school culture without success during the first year (Interviewees H, J and K). Prior to stepping into teachers' classrooms to observe teaching, heads let other teachers observe their teaching first, so as to encourage them to exchange



visits and get involved in lesson observation and provision of feedback to colleagues.

First, I invited colleague to observe my teaching twice and we discussed certain aspects of the lesson during staff meeting, so as to encourage them to exchange visits as well. This allowed them to realise my potential as a teacher and my intention for improvement. It is easier now to visit classrooms and monitor teaching and learning. (Interviewee J)

Additionally, after a year in post, new heads had the time to spot needs and include in the budget the necessary amount for upgrading their schools. Two of them made intensive attempts and communicated frequently with the MOED to get extra funds for their school. Where necessary, heads promoted the expansion of the building with additional classrooms. All heads promoted the technological advancement of the school by purchasing teaching resources and ICT equipment. They bought and installed DLP video projectors or interactive whiteboards in some classrooms and they *'even collaborated with pupils in other countries using ICT tools'* (Interviewee C). Also, pre-primary teachers mentioned the purchase of outdoor toys for the yard and the upgrade of security fence around school for pupils' safety. The following quotes are reflective of the efforts most headteachers made to equip and upgrade their schools.

I wanted the necessary resources and equipment for teaching all subjects to be available to teachers. Both the LEA and Parents Association provided all the money we needed with ease. People in the LEA knew that the money were sent from the ministry due to my intensive efforts for seeking money for the school. I completed all the necessary documents for including my requests for science and music classrooms in the financial budget from the previous school year. (Interviewee C)

Painting school walls, as well as buying new toys for the courtyard and furniture, improved the image of our school substantially. Parents expressed their gratitude for the change. (Interviewee L)

After experiencing two annual cycles of school events, heads had established themselves in post and had made all the structural changes needed for reshaping the school on their image. Thus, they were ready to continue with implementing curriculum changes and acting more as instructional leaders.

#### Stage 4 – Refinement (year 3 to 4)

During this stage, heads who continued to serve in the same school (eight out of 12), reaped the benefits of the seeds they had planted in previous years. As most operational changes were in place (and three heads had even promoted curriculum changes from Stage 3) it was time for all to proceed with instructional leadership to improve teaching and learning. Some previous innovations were refined and the following actions were implemented:

- upgrading school with regards to building new teaching rooms and installing ICT equipment in classrooms
- improving teaching and learning, and
- promoting staff professional development inside and outside school.

At this stage, refinements in changes implemented during previous stages, such as upgrading the school's infrastructure, were made. Heads included their requests for upgrading in the financial budget from the previous year and hence it was easier for them to '*put video projectors, computers and whiteboards in all classrooms*' (Interviewee B) or even '*have the science and music classrooms ready*' (Interviewee C).

On improving the quality of education provided to pupils, Interviewee H upgraded school infrastructure by building a music hall and encouraging the music teacher to organise an orchestra, while during the fourth year, a lot of additions were made to school building, including a borrowing library for parents.

As she said:

We upgraded the school building, by adding a computer lab, a library and basketball and football fields. To enhance parents' learning further, I found the money and run a library for parents to borrow books about raising and educating their children.

Another head, talked about an innovation implemented cautiously last year and more methodologically the third year regarding the leisure time of pupils in school. He commented:

Last year while exploiting pupils' interests, we set out dance as an option. We have around 60 children now who rush to take the equipment out of the

classroom and start dancing. They have learned at least 20 dances so far. We were congratulated from the MOEC and parents for such an attempt and our pupils were invited to dance for the opening ceremony during Cyprus' Presidency of the European Union. (Interviewee B)

Additionally during this stage, all headteachers put emphasis on instructional leadership by focusing on teaching and learning, which was seen as the central aspect of their leadership role in schools. They encouraged lesson observation and feedback provision as a way for improving the quality of teaching and learning, and, simultaneously, staff professional development. Interviewee J managed to launch project work in teaching pre-primary pupils and exchanges between teachers since the second year and as she maintained:

Learning became more experiential for everyone. Pupils are urged to discover knowledge while learning basic skills and abilities needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At the same time, teachers improve their practices, by cooperating with other teachers, sharing resources and exchanging ideas on how to teach certain topics.

Observing other teachers' lessons, providing feedback to colleagues and reflecting collaboratively on the instruction was seen as learning for both teachers, the observer and the one who taught the lesson. As a head admitted, discussing a lesson with colleagues

helped teachers and myself to understand how I perform at work and be open to well-meant criticism and ideas offered from colleague regarding the improvement of my lessons. (Interviewee C)

Also, Interviewee J asked teachers to measure pupils' achievement at the beginning and end of the school year, so as to have an indication of their improvement. Moreover, she found it particularly helpful to teach all year groups in the school. As she maintained:

In this way, I have a more spherical idea of pupils' improvement and a better understanding of their needs. Collecting data first-hand is food for thought for the head who wants to tackle these issues straight away.

At the same time, new curricula for subject teaching had been introduced by the MOEC and the CPI offered many informative sessions during teaching hours to accustom staff with the philosophy of the new curricula. This externally mandated change, forced most heads to spend time during staff meetings to

promote staff's acquaintance with the new curricula, by inviting teachers from the CPI to inform and cooperate with teachers in carrying out lessons using new teaching practices.

Along with staff professional development, Interviewee C was interested in promoting her own professional development, so as to be up to date with current trends in education. Unlike other heads who pointed to the unavailability of in-service training opportunities for heads, she '*seized every opportunity for professional development*'. She '*attended a programme offered by the CPI about the development of critical thinking in pupils utilising a specific software*' and participated in a Comenius In-service training held abroad about effective school leadership.

Four years in post was enough time for new heads to implement structural and curriculum changes and reach consolidation in post. Although, their headship was challenged continuously by staff rotations, dealing with incompetent staff and externally mandated changes, most of them said having reached consolidation in school (or even a plateau), and they needed '*a revival*' (Interviewee I) by seeking a new headship for a variety of reasons - personal or context-related. A female headteacher (Interviewee H) admitted feeling tired and unmotivated in school and wanted to encounter new challenges in another school. A male counterpart was disappointed with an incident caused by parents who were against a foreign pupil holding the flag of the school during the parade organised for the National Independence Day, and decided to seek a new post.

I would like to stay, but I think it is time for me to get a transfer in another school. After four years in post, I can predict things in school [...] I need new challenges, I feel that I gave school all I could give to improve it. It may be best to have someone else as the head who has fresh thoughts or something more to give. (Interviewee H)

## **Summary**

This chapter has presented the main research findings concerning pathways to headship, the professional socialisation of new heads, the organisational

socialisation of new heads, the challenges of first headship, and the socialisation stages headteachers moved through headship within their first four years in post.

Regarding motivation for headship, Cypriot teachers made reference to a number of reasons, including the financial incentives, less teaching commitments, social recognition and the opportunity derived from the post for implementing their vision for the school. On route to headship, aspirants had the support of their family and past heads who encouraged them to apply for headship.

The findings indicate that the professional socialisation of Cypriot headteachers prior to appointment consisted of accumulated formal leadership experiences from serving in schools and diverse posts outside schools, as well as self-initiated leadership learning practices, such as undertaking postgraduate studies, shadowing heads on-the-job, in-depth reading and attending seminars and professional networks. Also, young heads had planned their professional advancement to headship, by acquiring postgraduate qualifications and leadership experiences while serving in various posts, both within and outside education.

The evidence suggests that becoming a headteacher in Cypriot schools is certainly a difficult and challenging time that requires dealing with interpersonal relationships between teachers, parents and local community, and a variety of issues related to the contextual situation in each school, such as limited infrastructure and insufficient equipment, a poor image for the school, loose links with parents and the local community, as well as discipline and administrative issues. The entry to headship stage was also about OS and the interplay between school culture and the new head, each trying to influence the other. School culture and school context provided challenges for the new heads, which were determinant in shaping new headteachers' professional identity and leadership enactment. On solving these problems and establishing trust and a

collaborative working culture among staff, heads' attempts to implement their vision for school improvement were made easier.

The importance of 'people' in providing information, guidance and support to new headteachers during their early days in post was emphasised by all participants. Upon appointment, the NITPSL's cohort provided heads the opportunity to participate in an informal professional network that enhanced their initial conception of headship and supported their self-confidence in dealing with challenges in school. Also, some experienced heads acted as informal mentors to novice heads and alleviated their feeling of unpreparedness to handle challenges, supporting, simultaneously, their professional growth within the first year in post. Thus, people enabled them to structure for themselves a new role in the particular school context.

Finally, headteachers' progression through stages of headship varied significantly based on prior professional socialisation experiences, their conceptions of their role as heads and the situational variables in each school, as determined by the school and local context. Although not all headteachers progressed professionally with the same pace through stages, after four years in post, some who were still in their first headship admitted reaching consolidation in post, or even a plateau, and were thinking of seeking a new start in another school.

In the next chapter, the main findings of the study are discussed further in relation to the findings emerged from other studies into the professional and organisational socialisation and professional progression of heads in post.

## **CHAPTER VIII: DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This study set out to portray primary headship in Cyprus by investigating headteachers' pathways to headship, their professional and organisational socialisation, the challenges novice heads encountered in post and their progression through stages of headship during the first four years in post. This chapter draws on the findings presented under all five themes in Chapter 7 and juxtaposes them with the existing literature to explore how they contribute to the development of theory and the advancement of the knowledge base about first headship. This chapter offers an interpretation of professional and organisational socialisation and new Cypriot heads' professional progression through headship during the first four years in post. The organisational socialisation theory (Merton, 1968; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979) and the career stages of headship as suggested by Weindling (1999, 2000) and Earley and Weindling (2004) offer useful models to portray the early years of primary headship.

The discussion of the findings is presented under five themes: a) pathways to headship; b) the professional socialisation of heads, which involves preparation for headship, professional identity formation and the NITPSL; c) the organisational socialisation of new headteachers; d) the challenges of first headship; and e) the career-stages of headship.

It is important throughout the discussion to keep in mind some major differences in the leadership contexts of Cyprus and other more developed countries, such as the UK or the USA. First, it is imperative to consider the low levels of autonomy enjoyed by Cypriot heads because of the centralised and controlled character of the CES, as described in Chapter 2. Another major difference lies in the absence of an established professional development scheme for teachers at all levels in Cyprus and the lack of support provision at different career levels

for both classroom teachers and staff in leadership posts. Finally, the recent policy decisions regarding heads' role as instructional leaders and change agents stand in contrast to the slow pace of implementing reform changes in the CES, framing, thus, a complex organisational and policy context for new heads to work in.

## **Theme 1: Pathways to headship**

The study aimed to explore new headteachers' pathways that may have enhanced their career advancement towards headship, as well as their motivation for applying for headship. The findings suggest that headteachers' professional journeys to headship followed various routes and their motivations for seeking the post were diverse.

For the vast majority of headteachers, the main reason for becoming a school leader was their aspiration to improve teaching and learning in schools. Apparently, their motivation in becoming heads lies within their values for education, such as concern for the pupils and the life-changing side of education, which influence leadership enactment (Crawford, 2014). Similar rationales for motivation to headship are found in the literature; for example beginning headteachers in Belgium endorsed similar reasons for becoming headteachers and they also believed that they had the right leadership capacities to achieve it (Vandenberghe, 2003).

Evidence from this study shows that new heads' pathways to headship were shaped to a great extent by their perspectives of headship. Two-thirds of the interviewees viewed headship as a natural advancement or step in their career, while a third of them viewed headship as a professional goal. The heads who viewed headship as a goal in their career - all aged from 39 to 46 - were more attracted to instructional leadership and had a vision for improving education and raising student achievement. They all sought headship by engaging themselves in conscious anticipatory socialisation experience, which would



enhance their leadership potential and increase possibilities for promotion. In contrast, heads who did not seek headship as a goal in their professional career provided different insights to explain why they applied for promotion. Unlike survey respondents, the most frequently mentioned reason utilised by interviewees for seeking a change in professional career was being tired in classroom. Moreover, six in ten respondents and half of the interviewees related headship to a reward (social recognition) for their lengthy teaching service. Apparently, these views are underpinned by the notion that headteachers' appraisals, which improve with seniority, are satisfactory requirements for professional advancement to headship (see Chapter 2); and, therefore, headship is perceived as a reward for their length of service. This notion reflects the traditional situation regarding promotions to leadership posts in Cyprus (Menon-Eliophotou, 2002; Theofilides, 2004). However, the situation is slightly different nowadays and findings support the conclusion reached elsewhere that postgraduate qualifications could grant candidates the opportunity for advancement to leadership posts at an earlier stage in their professional career (ESC, 2012; Polis, 2013), as was the case with the four young heads in this study. Nevertheless, as argued in Chapter 2, the promotion system in Cyprus is still mainly based on seniority.

The findings also highlight the critical role past principals had in influencing aspirant headteachers' career decisions, particularly for heads who lacked career perspective. A possible explanation for older heads' reluctance to seek headship soon after being eligible for the post could be attributed to recent changes in the procedure followed for promotion and the demanding nature of headship in recent times. Although a decade ago appointment to a leadership post - deputy headship and headship - was granted to all senior teachers in terms of seniority (Theofilides, 2004), aspirants now need to seek headship by applying for the post. Hence, heads lacking career perspective or those frightened by new tasks and responsibilities attached to the job needed encouragement that they had the leadership potential to succeed in post, as with heads in other studies (Mc'Lay and Brown, 2001; Vandenberghe, 2003).

This finding has apparent implications for heads' role in identifying and developing the leadership capacity of future school leaders. It is therefore critical for headteachers 'to be able to spot suitable candidates at an early stage in their career' (Southworth, 2007, p.186), and 'actively and purposefully support leadership development that encourages staff to take on new roles and to aspire to leadership positions' (Brundrett et al., 2006, p.266) so as to ensure that the leadership pipeline does not get blocked.

This study provides evidence to suggest that parenthood impedes career advancement to headship by delaying heads' decisions for promotion. Two interviewees who delayed applying for headship pointed to the potential negative impact of promotion on their personal and family life. Their decisions could be explained in part by the fact that upon assuming a leadership post, Cypriot appointees are being transferred in another district or a school far from their residence - a fact that often creates hardships on families and increases family expenditure, too - and partly from heads' wish to fit personal circumstances with professional goals, so as to take up headship in a particular school nearer their residence. This finding is in line with Vandenberg's (2003) and O'Mahony and Matthews' (2003) finding that three-in-ten Belgian heads and most Australian heads were highly concerned about the combination of the job with a good family and social life.

The findings also complement evidence emerging from a recent review of promotions to headship in Cyprus within the last six years (Polis, 2013) about gender differences in career advancement to headship. Although none of the interviewees raised directly motherhood as an obstacle to their career advancement, two female heads admitted trying hard to balance personal and professional life, while male heads acknowledged the important role of their spouse in providing the time and space for them to focus on their professional advancement. The latter finding confirms the situation in the British context that in three-quarters of male headteachers' households their partners took the major responsibility for all domestic matters (Coleman, 2007), so as to have the

time to invest on professional matters. Similarly, Browne-Ferrigno (2003), in her study into the professional growth of headteachers in the USA, found that men were more likely to take advantage of preparatory training opportunities for career advancement than women. Nevertheless, although gender differences into career paths to headship have been identified in many studies elsewhere (Coleman, 2002, 2007, 2011; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Kaparou and Bush, 2007), further research into career paths to headship is needed to establish this link in the Cypriot context.

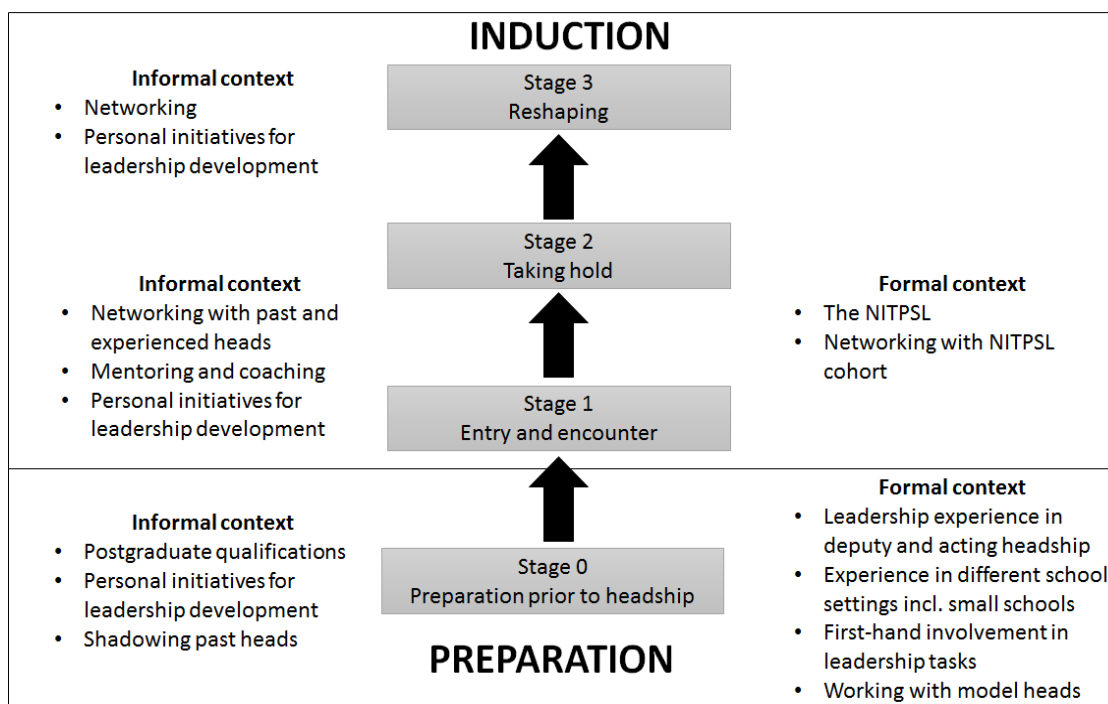
## **Theme 2: The professional socialisation of headteachers**

Research findings confirm the conclusion drawn in Chapter 3 that the professional socialisation of headteachers begins early in their careers, as soon as they assume teaching in schools, and continues into the early years in headship (Crow and Glascock, 1995; Crow, 2006; Male, 2006). Preparation for headship and professional identity formation relied heavily on informal self-initiated leadership learning experiences to inform their leadership practice, as well as experiences in various posts gained throughout their career. The value of the NITPSL in terms of preparing newly promoted heads for their role is also considered.

Figure 8.1 demonstrates the spectrum of experiences that shaped the professional socialisation of Cypriot heads during preparation and induction to headship. Therefore, it appears that the PS of Cypriot heads was shaped by three major contexts: a) less formal and more personally oriented preparation which consisted of postgraduate studies, shadowing heads on the job, seminars and in-depth reading, as well as networking with experienced heads while in post; b) leadership and management experience in a series of posts which proceeded appointment to headship; and c) the NITPSL they attended upon promotion to headship. The PS of Cypriot heads is discussed below in three

sections: 'preparation for headship', 'professional identity formation' and 'the National In-service Training Programme for School Leaders'.

**Figure 8.1: Professional socialisation experiences prior and upon appointment**



Source: Adapted from Weindling (2000)

### Preparation for headship

Research findings confirm the notion that leadership learning as a life-long process often occurs on the workplace and aspiring headteachers are consciously or unconsciously socialised into their prospective role by accumulating leadership learning experiences (Daresh and Male, 2000; Male, 2004) while in service. Heads' routes to headship indicate that new heads had been prepared for their future responsibilities through a range of anticipatory and PS experiences in formal and informal contexts. Hence, given the unavailability of a headship preparatory programme for aspiring heads in Cyprus, the PS of headteachers was self-initiated and unsystematic, consisting of informal, random and variable learning (Greenfield, 1985).

The findings replicate Ylimaki and Jacobson's (2013) regarding the informal context that influences Cypriot headteachers preparation for headship. As presented in Chapter 7, a great majority of respondents engaged in conscious anticipatory socialisation through informal apprenticeships by shadowing their heads on the job (92%) and professional development activities (85%), such as postgraduate studies (38%). Similarly, most interviewees identified job shadowing as a crucial PS experience for headship preparation and admitted learning headship by reflecting on the leadership and management performance of their past heads. The long tenure in service (18 to 38 years) and significant administrative experience as deputy heads (an average of six years), during which new heads had ample opportunities to observe their heads on the job, could explain in part new heads' learning of the role through shadowing. The value of providing aspirants with job-embedded opportunities for job shadowing through internships as part of preparatory training is evident.

In line with heads in the NFER study (Weindling and Earley, 1987; Earley and Weindling, 2004), Cypriot heads noted postgraduate qualifications as a highly significant PS experience. The qualitative findings indicate that headteachers possessing postgraduate qualifications rated themselves as better prepared for the multifaceted role they had in schools than other colleagues, and they demonstrated feelings of perceived readiness and self-confidence in dealing with challenges in post. This could be attributed in part to the fact that their qualifications provided the academic background for understanding school leadership prior to entering the post; and partly to the fact that they achieved headship in a young age, which meant that they had the potential to succeed in post. However, as indicated in other studies (Hart, 1993; Crow and Glascock, 1995; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003), leadership studies alone do not facilitate participants to conceptualise the work of principals or to begin the necessary socialisation process of identifying themselves as heads, such as in the case of Interviewees A and H, who both faced remarkable challenges in establishing their credibility in post. The implications for preparatory training appear to be mainly focused on establishing strong links between universities and schools

(Jackson and Kelley, 2002; Browne-Ferrigno, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al. 2007), as well as providing appropriate learning experiences to enable participants to connect theory to leadership practice and establish their professional identity with confidence in handling challenges in situ.

The findings also highlight the key role of 'doing headship' before taking up a permanent post (Weindling and Earley, 1987; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Male, 2004), as discussed in Chapter 3. It is evident from the findings that aspirant heads took responsibility for their preparation for headship by engaging themselves in school-based leadership and management experiences at a variety of levels and in different posts. According to respondents the key PS experiences for headteachers in the formal context of schools were leadership and management experience in acting headship (78%) and deputy headship (73%). This finding supports evidence from the Cypriot context pointing to the significance of informal learning for professional identity formation (Sophocleous, 2012). Interestingly, two of the interviewees who regarded themselves to be very well prepared in terms of the skills perceived as beneficial for headship, such as managerial and interpersonal skills (Crow and Glascock, 1995; Male, 2004), attributed their readiness and high self-confidence in their engagement in a variety of experiences in different posts inside and outside education.

The analysis provided evidence to suggest that headteachers with previous experience as acting heads in small schools perceived themselves to be well-prepared for the job and self-confident in a range of technical and personal skills needed in post, such as management procedures (90%), school leadership (81%) and management (78%), cooperating with staff (81%), understanding school culture (80%) and leading school improvement (78%). When asking interviewees to provide insights to explain the value of acting headship in small schools, they reported that this PS experience provided authentic opportunities for aspirants to take full responsibility of the school and accumulate the knowledge and understanding needed for the post. That was particularly true for pre-primary heads who had this experience many times during their career, as

explained in Chapter 2, and perceived themselves more capable in a range of skills than their primary counterparts. Therefore findings points to the significance of incorporating field-based activities in authentic school contexts as part of preparatory training, to increase role clarity, enhance expertise and foster the necessary dispositions to perform headship (Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Earley and Jones, 2010; Schleicher, 2012).

In addition experience in deputy headship was regarded as a useful PS experience for about three-fourths of respondents and all interviewees. Informal coaching by previous heads, as well as involvement in leadership and management tasks, were seen by half of the interviewees as vital aspects of their preparation for headship with male heads indicating that working next to model heads while in deputy headship has been of critical importance for their preparation. However, there were voices who expressed concerns about the lack of time and limited opportunities given to deputies to engage in whole-school management and leadership tasks and practise the skills relevant to headship. Therefore, as argued elsewhere, experience in deputy headship was considered as providing a narrow conception of headship (Greenfield, 1985) and prepare prospective heads only partially for headship as they emphasise only the technical aspect of headship (Male, 2006). Apparently, consideration should be given to voices describing experience in deputy headship as inadequate to provide a multidimensional perspective of the headteacher's role, and, therefore, authentic school-based opportunities, such as internships and coaching from experienced heads are needed.

Nevertheless, along with heads in other studies new Cypriot headteachers indicated that neither formal nor informal PS experiences, nor the NITPSL, prepared them for all aspects of their role (Draper and McMichael, 1998, Male, 2006, Shoho and Barnett, 2006). In contrast to the perceived readiness for headship implied in survey findings, interviews illustrate that lived experiences in post urged new heads to realise their unpreparedness for headship and the

need to develop a range of skills to succeed in post. Along with skills related to instructional leadership and strategic planning for school improvement, interpersonal skills, including communication, motivating and working with diverse groups of people, were highly emphasised. This finding is further supported by the study of Crow and Glascock (1995) whose participants identified three types of skills that are required for school heads: interpersonal skills, task skills and leadership skills. Therefore this study indicates needs in interpersonal and task skills rather than leadership skills, which should be addressed through appropriate opportunities for development prior to appointment to headship, or through specialised training in certain skill areas during induction.

Once in post, most of the interviewees admitted seeking guidance in handling administrative and management issues from people whose 'practical' knowledge and expertise were valued to provide practical solutions to facing problems, such as colleagues, experienced heads and the school inspector. One of them established an informal mentoring relationship with an experienced head serving in a neighbouring school and she experienced mentoring and coaching into headship role throughout the first year in service. The importance of people as 'sources' of PS into a new role is also acknowledged in studies from Belgium (Vandenberghe, 2003) and the US (Shoho and Barnett, 2006). As discussed in Chapter 3, the value of coaching and mentoring in the PS of heads is well documented in western countries and the benefits of considering them as part of preparation and induction in Cyprus are apparent.

The PS of novice heads was further enhanced by the formal NITPSL they attended once in headship. A following section entitled 'The National In-service Training Programme for School Leaders' considers heads' views of this programme in relation to preparation for headship and professional identity formation.

Next, the professional identity formation of new Cypriot primary heads through formal and informal PS experiences is discussed.



## **Professional identity formation**

New headteachers entered headship with some pre-conceptions of their role as heads, which were heavily influenced by a number of anticipatory and PS experience in informal and formal settings gained prior to promotion to headship. Experience in deputy headship and acting headship in small rural schools, job shadowing, as well as coaching by previous heads, constituted major sources of role conception for new Cypriot heads that enabled them to create a comprehensive conception of what it means to be a head.

As presented in Chapter 7, job shadowing and reflecting on their heads' practices while in deputy headship informed aspirants' professional identity formation in terms of how leadership is enacted in specific contexts. This finding reinforces evidence from the UK that shadowing heads increases understanding of headship role and leadership enactment (Earley, 2012); and that reflection may enhance the professional identity formation of heads (Earley and Bubb, 2013). The implication of these findings lies in providing aspirants heads with structured opportunities for job shadowing and reflection on professional practice, through internships, as integral parts of a preparatory programme. Also, shadowing mentors during induction and reflecting collaboratively on leadership practice may prove an insightful leadership development opportunity for both, the new head and the mentor.

Moreover, the findings point to the critical role previous heads had in the professional identity formation of aspirants. New heads regarded previous heads as positive role models (73%) and half of them admitted experiencing coaching to headship while serving as deputy heads. However, there is evidence to suggest that informal apprenticeships and coaching from previous heads, as well as long tenure in service, reinforce traditional conceptualisations of headship. Therefore, as not all experienced heads have the potential to serve as effective coaches, the training of these individuals is important in providing aspirants with opportunities to form conceptualisation of headship endorsed in

the contemporary era of accountability and responsibility for student outcomes, as shaped by reform changes in the CES.

Additionally, previous experience in acting headship in small schools was identified as key PS experience for both headship preparation and professional identity formation by a great proportion of primary heads (62%) and all pre-primary heads who took responsibility of headship duties in small schools. While serving in small schools, headteachers developed expertise in a range of technical and personal skill and experienced situations that helped them shape their professional identity with confidence that they could lead any school. However, some of them were forced to reshape their initial conception of headship in light of school culture and contextual challenges met in new schools as appointees.

The findings outlined above confirm the findings of Crow and Glascock (1995) who identified the following sources of role conception on entering headship: (a) socialisation experiences in which aspiring heads witnessed headteachers performing the job, (b) previous experiences in various posts where certain skills and knowledge are perceived as beneficial for headship, and (c) their perception of headteachers with whom they worked. However, my study, like the one by Crow and Glascock (1995), could not determine the strength of each of these sources.

Another key finding emerging for the data is that transition to headship entailed role transformation on the part of novice heads who experienced a modification of self-esteem while encountering school context. Central to the process of establishing their authority with credibility in post and reshaping initial conceptions of headship were experiences in context, feedback provided by various stakeholders regarding heads' work and informal networking with experienced heads and the NITPSL cohort.

Lived experiences in post, as well as critical incidents that occurred during early headship proved valuable headship learning sources for new Cypriot heads.

The unwelcome meeting of Interviewee E of the Parents Association on the first day in school, parents' involvement in school management issues and decisions (Interviewees D and I), as well as staff unwillingness to cooperate with the new head to improve teaching and learning (Interviewees A, H and K) marked their first headship and forced new heads to reshape their conceptions of headship in light of school and community context. Also, leadership enactment was framed accordingly.

Emerging evidence support DeRue and Ashford's (2010) argument that the recognition of headteacher's work in school by various stakeholders strengthen conceptualisations of headship and heads' professional growth in post. As shown in Chapter 7, receiving positive feedback and support from teachers, parents or staff regarding leadership practice enabled new heads to identify themselves as heads and establish their credibility with confidence that they could succeed in post. Such confidence and support also encouraged some of them to proceed with structural changes in school and focus on instructional leadership from the first year in post (Interviewees C and L). Similarly, findings from Belgium confirm that positive and supportive experiences in post enhanced new heads' efficacy and self-confidence in performing headship (Vandenberghe, 2003), while support and recognition for their work, received from staff and parents, helped them develop professionally (Bolam, 2003) and affected the amount of success new heads aimed to achieve (Quong, 2006), as well as their enthusiasm in working towards school improvement.

As headteacher narratives illustrate, informal networking with experienced headteachers and NITPSL's cohort members constituted a key socialisation experience that enabled newcomers to establish their headship with confidence as members of a new community of practice. Interviewees' accounts propose that having the opportunity to share experiences and explore difficulties and dilemmas with fellow heads allowed headteachers to realise that the professional and organisational learning were difficult procedures in any context and not a consequence of personal incapability to perform headship. This

finding is in line with findings from other studies that the sharing of successes or challenges in schools during cohort meetings provides heads with a sense of shared beliefs that helps them 'coalesce into similar visions of the role' (Crow and Glascock, 1995, p.32). The implication is for training providers to incorporate networking and enhance headship learning through online communities of practice for aspirant, novice and experienced headteachers.

What emerges from the findings is that heads saw themselves as navigating the interface of external and personal expectations to establish their professional identity. On the one hand, unlike the four heads who assumed responsibility for improving their schools, two-thirds of interviewees regarded their role as heads as the one of a mediator between school context and policy context rather than change agents and instructional leaders. On the other hand, as described in Chapter 2, the dual role that Cypriot primary heads have as school leaders and teachers prevents them from de-identifying themselves as teachers and identifying themselves as school leaders upon assuming the post. Given the new duties and responsibilities attached to headship recently, aspiring heads should be given opportunities through preparatory training that will enable them to make the shift in roles from teaching to leading a school; a process identified as necessary for successful transition to headship (Crow and Glascock, 1995). Furthermore, according to interviewees, policy decisions with regards to the teaching duties that primary, pre-primary and special school heads have would facilitate such process.

To conclude, the findings arising from this research reinforce the conclusion reached by Ely et al. (2011) that headship learning and professional identity formation are life-long, 'recursive and mutually-reinforcing' processes.

## **The National In-service Training Programme for School Leaders**

This section considers the PS of beginning headteachers in relation to the NITPSL and discusses the findings that provide insights into its role in headship learning and induction in Cyprus.

With regards to NITPSL, evidence from thesis confirm the findings of earlier studies pointing to the gap between the emphases of the NITPSL and novice heads' need for contextualised and personalised support in post (Michaelidou and Pashiardis 2009; Nicolaidou and Petridou, 2011); mainly because the programme is theoretical in nature and not highly relevant to school practices. It is apparent from the findings that an aspect of the NITPSL that training providers and policy makers have to consider is its mission. The programme currently lacks a clear purpose set out against clear competencies or skill standards, which could enable new heads to perform their role as shaped by the reform agenda. Interviewees also reinforced Dimmock and Walker's (2005) argument that leadership perspectives that have been influential in different contexts are not equally effective when applied cross-culturally and proposed that the curriculum of the NITPSL needs to be aligned with the reality of school leadership in the CES.

What the findings arising from this study add to what is known about the NITPSL is that new headteachers do not consider the programme as an effective PS experience for their preparation for headship nor for their induction to the post. Respondents rated the NITPSL as the least helpful experiences for their PS, though it was regarded as helpful for almost two-thirds of heads. There is also evidence to suggest that participants possessing postgraduate qualifications regarded it as less helpful and useful for leadership practice than heads possessing basic qualifications. This may be attributed to the fact that the NITPSL, which is mainly theoretical in nature, provided the theoretical background for heads to perform headship, while heads possessing further academic qualifications in school leadership and management expected the

programme to be as an induction programme that provides support in handling issues emerging from leadership enactment in context.

The findings also demonstrate that headteachers valued most the cohort of the NITPSL rather than its content and methodology. As discussed in previous sections in this chapter, informal networking between heads attending the training cohort appears to be a critical aspect for the PS and OS of novice heads. The cohort group became the basis of a peer network that principals relied on for social and professional support and guidance in handling challenges in situ during early headship. Additionally, networking alleviated the professional isolation of new heads and enabled them to structure their professional identity with confidence. These findings are in line with findings in international research about the importance of 'people' for new heads' PS and OS (Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004; Diamond et al., 2013) and reinforce Darling-Hammond's et al. (2007) argument that effective leadership development programmes require significant resources, especially human resources, to support learning that is embedded in practice through internships, coaching and mentoring.

Another important aspect highlighted by participants was the lack of support in implementing changes in school regarding their emerging role as instructional leaders (CPI, 2012), as well as in enacting leadership in various school contexts. This finding is in line with the conclusion of Mujis et al. (2006) who argued that centrally designed training programmes are less expected to be effective or have an impact on developing schools, staff and pupils, as they are decontextualised and less effective to cater for participants' needs. Given research evidence supporting the view that leadership learning is context-specific (Kelly and Jackson, 2002; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003), strong links between training provision and schools should be established to enable new principals to develop the context-specific knowledge, skills and disposition necessary to enact headship successfully in particular settings. Moreover, interviewees asked for a variety of field-based learning strategies to be

embedded in this programme, such as mentoring, internships, school visits and job shadowing, which have been well documented in the literature (Earley and Jones, 2010; Crawford and Earley, 2011; Schleicher, 2012) as enhancing preparation for headship, heads' socialisation into a new community of practice, role clarification and the development of skills and behaviours necessary for the role (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Crow 2006). Taking in consideration that Cypriot heads' preparation for headship has been informal and unsystematic, such opportunities would enable new heads to establish their professional identity with more confidence with regards to their new role as instructional leaders and mediators for change implementation in schools.

With regards to headteachers' needs for further training, these may be summarised in terms of interpersonal and technical skills needed to perform their role as instructional leaders, as discussed in previous sections. The need for those skills is necessitated from the educational reform in the CES (MOEC, 2007) and the directives imposed on headteachers with regards to strategic and action planning for the improvement of teaching and learning.

### **Theme 3: The organisational socialisation of new headteachers**

Taking up headship involves gaining knowledge, skills and dispositions to settle into a new professional role in a specific school context. In this view, transition to headship entails socialisation into a school and into a new role. This section discusses the OS of Cypriot heads in terms of two key issues: headteachers' conceptions of their role that informed leadership enactment and shaped their vision for the school; and interaction between new heads and school culture on introducing changes in schools and establishing themselves in post.

With regards to self-perceptions for headship, headteachers' accounts suggest that confusion existed in their perceptions of their role as instructional leaders. All heads envisaged their role as central in '*creating learning environments which support the education and growth of all pupils*' (Interviewee C), while only

four emphasised staff CPD. Although this conceptualisation was expected as teaching and learning is perceived as the core function of schooling, it provides a narrow perspective of the responsibility attached to headship for improving pupils' outcomes and schools (MOEC, 2014). Traditionally Cypriot headteachers' role focused on teaching and school management and only recently instructional leadership has been attached to their duties. In addition, there are no standards of excellence in subject teaching underpinning the national curricula. Taken together, these facts portray a picture in which heads are left trying to understand what the role attached to them, as instructional leaders and change agents, means in terms of headship enactment.

Headteachers' accounts also suggest that a conflict was evident among heads' conceptions of headship and leadership enactment. The younger headteachers who possessed postgraduate qualifications appeared to adopt a distributed perspective of leadership and involve staff and parents in decision making through democratic processes. In contrast, heads with more years in service endorsed a more traditional conception of their role in schools, which was far away from the recent conception of school leadership as pedagogical leadership or leadership for learning that is about promoting the learning of students, staff, the organisation and the local community (Hallinger 2012; Male and Palaiologou, 2012). A possible explanation for younger heads being more receptive in adopting the national reform agenda and moving their schools forward by incorporating more distributed forms of leadership may partly lie in the fact that young headteachers may have been nurtured with different values than previous generations of heads and partly to the reality of younger heads being in post for a decade or two prior to retirement; thus, re-shaping leadership enactment according to policy agenda would be necessary for success in post. However, further research is needed to provide explanations of these findings and establish a relationship between conceptions of headship and leadership enactment.



Interviews revealed that the first days and months in post were overwhelmed with 'sense making' (Weindling, 2000) as new heads familiarised themselves with the school context and the responsibilities of headship. Some of them visited schools from the previous school year to get information about the school and its functioning, while others aimed to learn 'the ropes' from the first day. The findings identify teachers and deputies as the key 'people' who helped headteachers to create an interpretive schema (Louis, 1980) or a cognitive map of the people, problems and school culture (Earley and Weindling, 2007). Hence, they had a critical role in the process of socialising and accepting the new headteacher, and supported the head during vision implementation in school. The implication from these findings is for training providers to provide school-based opportunities that will facilitate the OS of first-time heads in schools, such as internships in schools in which candidate heads are going to be appointed, and involve staff in the process of socialising the new head.

On handling the people and contextual challenges in post, 'significant others', such as experienced heads, mentors and deputies serving in school before them, school inspectors and the LEA proved critical OS sources for new heads and provided guidance, resources, first-hand advice and 'workable' solutions to their daily problems. These findings are in line with findings from Belgium and the US (Shoho and Barnett, 2006; Vandenberghe, 2003) that new principals preferred to approach people whom they respect and admire or people whose knowledge and expertise were valued to provide practical solutions to facing problems. As discussed extensively under Theme 2, networking and collaboration with new and experienced heads appeared to resemble supportive strategies to enhance headship learning during the early months (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Earley and Jones, 2010). Networking with other heads and informal mentoring by previous headteachers also proved important features for the OS of new heads, as they provided a way to reconcile the demands of headship with personal transition to a new role. As highlighted in a recent report of National College (Diamond et al., 2013, p.26):

Once someone moves into a headship position the support trainees gain from a professional partner is seen by trainees and governors as very important, therefore this support should also be included in any future programmes. Often this support worked well with the professional partner adopting a mentoring role in the early stages of the relationship, changing to a coaching role as the relationship developed and the support requirements of the new headteacher evolved. Both types of support - mentoring and coaching - are important to the successful delivery of this element of support.

In addition, the training cohort of the NITPSL proved a key mechanism for overcoming professional isolation, as it constituted a safe learning environment for new heads to share their OS experiences and realise the complexity of headship. The importance of formal or informal peer support networks in alleviating professional isolation and helping new heads establish themselves in post has been recognised in many studies (Weindling and Earley, 1987; Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004; OECD, 2007).

As with findings in other studies, on entering headship, new Cypriot heads experienced both anxiety and zeal (Draper and McMichael, 2000; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003) in implementing their vision for school improvement. However, the findings demonstrate that re-culturing schools to promote school improvement (Crow, 2006) proved a particularly challenging process for new heads, especially for heads who sought to implement changes prior to gain teachers' trust and establish themselves in post as expert teachers and effective school leaders. In cases where headteachers seemed to overlook such issues and challenged school culture and the teaching practice early on, staff demonstrated resistance and feelings of suspicion over heads, resulting in heads experiencing huge emotional incidents and personal modification in self-esteem (Interviewees A, H and K). The role of mentoring and coaching is of particular importance here for providing beginning heads with the support and guidance needed for reshaping school culture and handling staff resistance.

The findings also confirm an apparent but often neglected characteristic of headship that headteachers have to work within the restrictions imposed by school and local contexts. Hence, even though heads were eager to proceed with instructional leadership - especially the younger heads - their headship

enactment was framed by issues they had to address first, such as low staff morale, behavioural problems and bullying, inadequate resources, conflicts between staff and loose links with parents and the local community (Interviewees A, C, D, H, J, L). This finding along with findings from England (Southworth, 2004) support the argument that school contextual variables shape leadership enactment in schools.

Furthermore, what the qualitative findings suggest is that the successful implementation of a heads' vision for school improvement depends upon its endorsement by various stakeholders, both inside and outside school. That is why once in post, headteachers spent time to get to know teachers at a personal level, targeted good contact and established commitment to agreed goals among stakeholders, as well as avenues of collaboration with teachers, parents and the local community (Day and Bakioglu, 1996; Oplatka, 2004; MacBeath et al., 2004). Adopting participatory leadership practices and involving key stakeholders in collaborative decision-making processes were considered key practices for most heads, particularly those serving in schools located in unprevailed areas or facing behavioural problems. Such practices resemble successful British heads' practices as identified in the ISSPP study that have been proved critical in enhancing organisation capacity and gaining community acceptance (Crow, 2007a).

Research findings also point to personal features of new heads, such as gender and age, as factors explaining their difficulty to establish themselves in post. Two young qualified female headteachers experienced unacceptance and felt scrutinised severely by male colleagues and older colleagues who were dissatisfied with having a female head in charge of the school. This finding suggests that Cypriot female heads not only face underrepresentation in appointments to leadership posts, as found elsewhere (Kaparou and Bush, 2007; ESC, 2012; Polis, 2013), but once appointed they may also experience discrimination and unacceptance (Coleman, 2002). Such findings, point to teachers' uneasiness to de-identify headship from the old male figure of school

leaders, and accept young and more enthusiastic female school leaders, who were appointed in post mainly due to their qualifications and leadership capacity.

The findings also endorse the conclusion of Crow and Matthews (1998) that teachers, parents and pupils may have a tremendous amount of influence on new headteachers' learning. Teachers challenged the OS of beginning heads by presenting dilemmas for the new headteachers and testing their authority and values (Crow and Matthews, 1998). In addition, students and parents also served as socialising agents for the new school leader. Although they have been traditionally ignored in research regarding new headteachers' socialisation in school, the findings indicate that parents are a major socialising source in the school by creating problems, challenges and opportunities that help define the PS and the OS of new principals in post (Crow, 2006). In the same way, students influenced new Cypriot heads' acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed in headship, by creating challenges, such as vandalism in school buildings, behavioural problems and underachievement, that forced heads to acquire more skills and adopt different dispositions in leading the particular schools towards improvement.

Taken together the findings confirm the OS as a two-way process between the new heads and the context and highlight peer support, networking and mentoring as key OS mechanisms for new heads.

#### **Theme 4: The challenges of first headship**

This study explored headteachers' views and experiences in post regarding the challenges they met in schools and their readiness to handle these challenges in post. New heads' accounts of their OS experiences and the challenges they faced as they came to terms with the reality of headship reveal more similarities than differences; though the particularities of each school context are important.

The findings of this study confirm that the typical OS of Cypriot primary headteachers is associated with their need to cope with a wide range of tasks and responsibilities derived from headteacher's role in school (Parkay and Hall, 1992; Crow, 2006). New heads noted a number of issues, some of which stood out as defining headship enactment and professional identity formation. These are: the shortage of resources and facilities, handling financial issues and budgeting, the need to familiarise with regulations and policies for the school, feelings of isolation, handling issues inherited from the previous headteacher, as well as handling interpersonal relationships, as discussed below. The findings demonstrate that being bombarded with all the responsibilities that an experienced headteacher had to deal with created high levels of stress and led to unreflective practices with regards to headship learning, as most heads mentioned that they were still learning from their actions and mistakes. The implication of this finding lies in decision makers and training providers to consider deputy headship as a mediated entry for headship and outline clearly deputy heads' duties about their leadership role in schools (in a similar way to the deputy headteacher position in England). As Crow (2006, p.318) suggested, reinvigorating deputy headship could 'strengthen the organizational socialization for beginning principals, as well as contributing to the school's learning capacity'.

On assuming the post, handling interpersonal relationships and conflict, as well as establishing firm links with staff and parents were regarded as particularly challenging processes for new heads; though necessary for establishing collaboration and commitment for working towards common goals at a later stage. Four heads (Interviewees B, D, H, G) had to handle parents' involvement in school work and their suspicion that head and staff were incapable of handling school problems. Others had to resolve conflict among staff (Interviewees A, D, J, L) or discipline issues in schools (Interviewees H, I). Evidence suggest that dealing with parents' involvement in school work and trying to maintain the balance in interpersonal relationships between various stakeholders have been highly emotional processes for new heads who experienced frustration, as well as a modification of self-esteem and confidence.

This situation was illustrated in heads' narratives through metaphors used to describe the emotional intensity of the incidents they lived. According to headteachers, specialised training in interpersonal skills (Crow and Glascock, 1995; Male, 2004) and school-based leadership development opportunities such as internships and mentoring could help alleviate the emotional impact of such incidents on new heads.

Although survey findings indicate that an important proportion of heads had learned from their previous heads and while leading small schools to work and cooperate with staff (70% and 81% respectively) and read and understand the school culture (60% and 80% respectively), interviewees' accounts suggest that establishing a collaborative working culture towards common goals in school was a difficult process for new heads. There is evidence to suggest that changes in staff composition as dictated by the rotation policy prevented re-culturing in schools (Schein, 1996; Crow, 2006), as it did not allow teachers to develop links with the school and work as a team towards school improvement. For instance, in Interviewee's H school, staff did not support head's actions for establishing links with parents and the local context beyond school timetable, as they were travelling to school from other districts, and therefore, they would serve in school only for a year or two. Given policy emphasis on school improvement, this is an issue that has to be considered within the context of reform changes in the CES.

The findings of this study reinforce those in international literature which portray school leadership in large-sized schools as a particularly challenging experience for a newly promoted head (Male, 2004; Southworth, 2004). In particular, the survey findings propose that school size (45%) and location (37%) shaped to a great extent the difficulties beginning Cypriot heads encountered in schools. The qualitative findings show that headteachers who assumed headship in large-sized schools or schools located in economically or socially deprived areas (Interviewees B, E, H) expressed feelings of panic and self-modification with regards to the range and the intensity of issues they had to deal with. In contrast,

new heads indicated their preference in leading a small (90%) or a medium-sized school instead of a large one, where heads have the opportunity through teaching, stronger relationships and collaboration between staff and parents, to impact teaching and learning more directly (Clarke and Wildy, 2004). However, as heads in other contexts (Southworth, 2004; Wilson and Brundrett, 2005), Cypriot novice heads characterised teaching headship in small schools as a difficult and isolating role to fulfil. An apparent implication for training providers is to consider the role of internships and job shadowing for the preparation of heads and mentoring and coaching through headship for their support once they assume headship in schools.

The duality of headship as a teaching-leading job was raised by two-thirds of interviewees who illustrated that headship responsibilities should be restricted to school leadership and management as the administrative workload increases every year as well as the tasks and responsibilities attached to the role. The issue was more evident in pre-primary schools where heads are burdened with the administrative work as well. This issue could be included in the reform agenda of the CES and considered in relation to changes in the working conditions and responsibilities of headteachers.

Unlike survey findings that suggest that dealing with the legacy of previous heads did not affect new heads' performance in school (6%), interviewees' accounts prove that the shadow of the previous head affected new heads' initiatives to re-culture schools (Crow, 2006). Three new heads argued that the way their predecessor enacted leadership in school impeded their attempts to introduce changes related to school culture. As the findings suggest, another factor found to contribute to the complexity of headship is the increasing multicultural school context in which headship is assumed. For some heads, leading multicultural schools was a major challenge both in terms of handling cultural diversity and promoting pupils' learning, mainly due to the fact that heads were socialised, as pupils and teachers, in homogenous school contexts and lacked skills and knowledge in leading such schools. However, although, as

most heads indicated, the MOEC does not afford schools teaching hours and staff to help foreign pupils to learn the language and adapt to Cypriot context prior to entering classrooms, new heads showed cultural sensitivity and willingness to ensure those pupils' learning (Crow, 2006).

Another challenge new heads faced in schools was related to the responsibility and accountability attached to headship as part of the reform agenda and their role as change agents and instructional leaders. The findings suggest that on attempting to initiate changes in schools and reshape school culture and ways of working with staff, new heads experienced resistance and their establishment in post was challenged for two reasons. First, they faced major resistance from staff while attempting to enter classrooms and monitor teaching and learning; a fact pointing to the unpreparedness of teachers to assume responsibility for students' learning. Second, while it was easier for new heads to establish their teaching-expert authority due to their lengthy service as teachers, establishing their leading-expert authority with regards to instructional leadership was difficult partly because of the diversity of issues they had to handle, which consumed their time and energy, and partly because of the skills they needed to develop in terms of implementing instructional leadership and school improvement, as discussed under Theme 2.

In conclusion, regardless of formal and informal PS experiences and adequate leadership experience in a variety of school contexts, this study's findings indicate that on assuming headship all appointees experienced the 'bumpy ride of reality' (Draper and McMichael, 1998, p.207) by encountering challenges in their new role, as shaped by school context and culture. Despite challenges, and with few exceptions, after a year or two in post, the large majority of heads felt well prepared to handle anticipated difficulties in headship and determined to improve their schools and pupils' learning. Their responses were expected as they had experienced a full year in post and had survived challenges with the support of 'significant others' through informal mentoring or peer-support networks, such as the NITPSL cohort. In this way, lived experiences during the



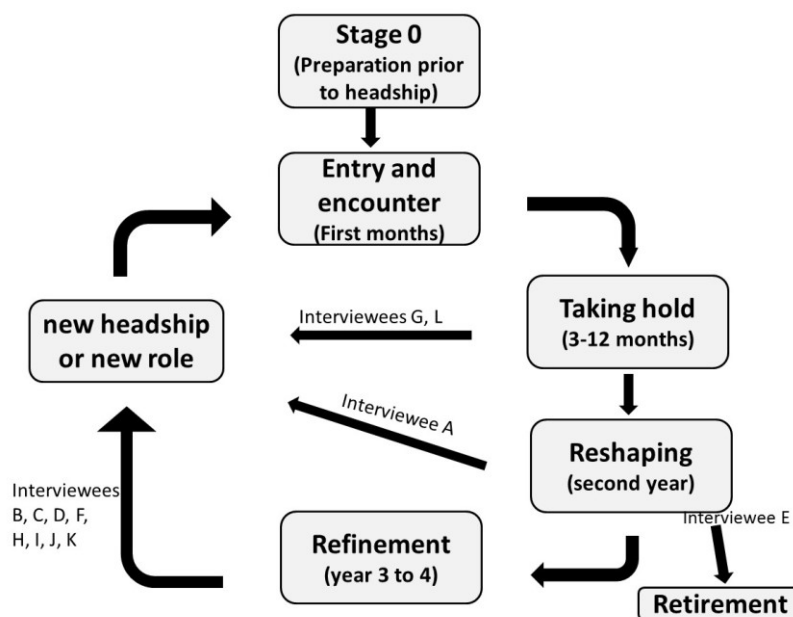
OS process, enabled new heads to establish themselves in headship and shaped their professional identity with confidence with regards to what headship entails, as found elsewhere (OECD, 2007; Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004).

### Theme 5: The career-stages of headship

This study adopted the socialisation model as suggested by Weindling (1999, 2000) and Earley and Weindling (2004) and verified the applicability of the first four stages in the Cypriot context. Due to the limited timescale of the study, the data from initial and follow-up interviews with heads was used to explore new heads' progression through Stages 0 to 4. However, not all heads moved up to Stage 4 - Refinement, due to their transfer to another school, seeking a new post or retirement.

From the findings, the following model (Figure 8.2) of Cypriot heads' transition through stages of headship within their first four years in headship emerged.

Figure 8.2: Transition through headship in Cypriot primary schools



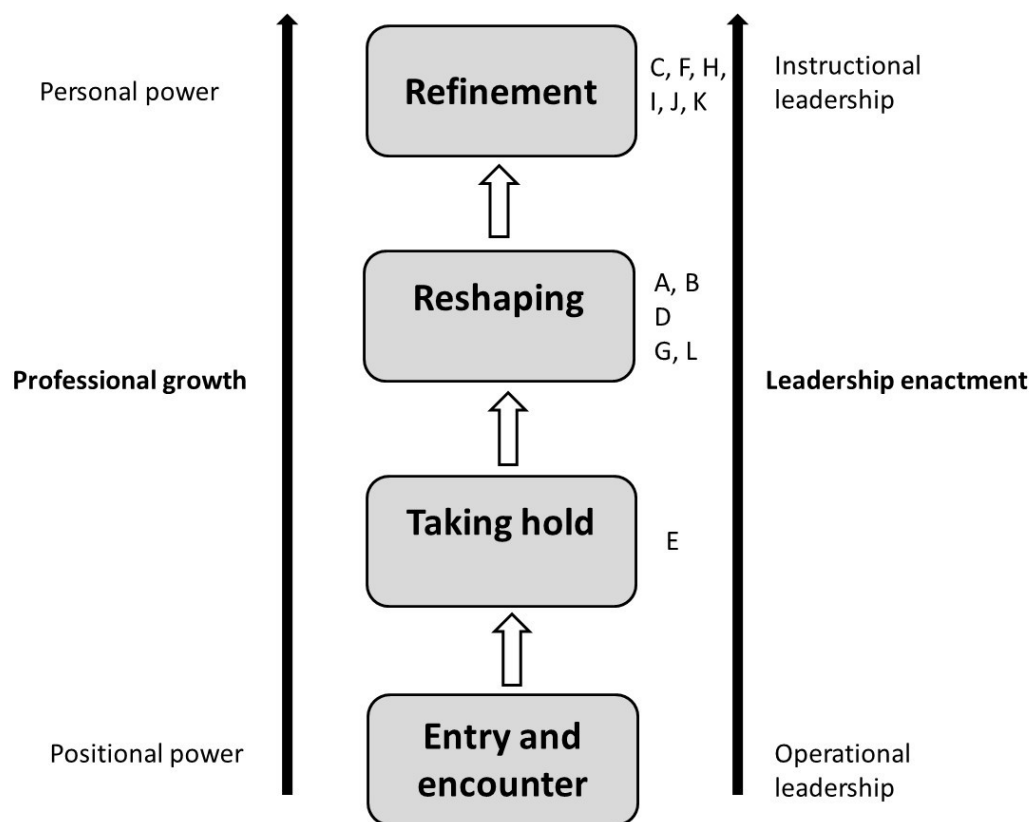
Source: Adapted from Earley and Weindling (2004)

It is important to note that heads professional growth through stages of headship was not linear and interestingly not all achieved the refinement stage in headship or passed through stages at the same pace. Two of them (Interviewees G and L) were moved to another school after a year in post: the former for medical reasons and the second for educational reasons, as she was regarded as a capable leader to take over headship in a 'difficult' school' in the same district. Thus, they both made a new start on their second headship at Stage 1. Another participant (Interviewee A) was promoted within the MOEC after two years in post. Although she introduced aspects of her instructional leadership role from the first year in post, she did not reach the refinement stage of headship. Also, Interviewee E retired after two years in post without introducing aspects of his instructional role. This could be attributed to the fact that he assumed headship in one of the largest primary schools in Cyprus, which was located in a financially deprived area of the city; or to his short tenure in post. The majority of heads spent four years in post prior to moving into another school. On entering the second headship, heads reverted to Stage 1, as organisational socialisation into a new school and a new context was necessary (Earley and Weindling, 2004).

It is evident from the findings that the central allocation of heads to schools by the ESC prevented headteachers from reaching consolidation in a school. Heads were transferred to another school by the ESC prior to refining operational changes and implementing aspects of instructional leadership in the first school, while some of them sought a transfer closer to their residence after a year or two in a school. Nevertheless, it seems that four years in post in the same school was a sufficient amount of time for heads to initiate changes and implement their vision for school improvement. They worked close with teachers who were willing to work towards achieving common goals and they saw a cohort of pupils learning in a collaborative school culture with upgraded infrastructure and numerous resources. While harvesting the seeds planted in previous years, they wanted to move on to a second headship, so as to be motivated to remain in headship (Interviewees H, I).

With regards to professional growth in post, Crow (2007a, p.73) maintained that applying a developmental understanding both to school leader and school context could provide an improved portrayal of the complexity of school leadership and heads' professional growth through stages of headship. It is evident from the findings that headteachers progressed through stages of headship with different pace or speed according to the amount of leadership experience they accumulated during the PS stage of headship, school context and the level of support they gained from staff and parents.

**Figure 8.3: Cypriot heads' progression through stages of headship**



Source: Adapted from Parkey and Hall (1992), Earley and Weindling (2004)

In Figure 8.3 above, new heads progression through headship during the first four years in post is marked on a continuum from 'positional power' to 'personal power' and 'operational leadership' to 'instructional leadership' while progressing from Stage 1 – Entry and encounter to Stage 4 – Refinement in

headship. What emerged from the findings is the fact that diverse leadership practices were adopted by new heads at different stages of their headship career to maintain the balance and good relationship at various levels between teachers, staff and the head, as well as the community and the school. The findings indicate that most heads adopted instructional leadership practices during the 'reshaping' and 'refinement' stages of headship, while three of them succeeded to transform their schools into vibrant learning communities while moving towards refinement, as discussed later in this section.

During Stage 1, new heads adopted a managerial leadership style (Leithwood et al., 1999), as they had to take decisions with regards to functions, tasks and behaviours from the first day in post. This approach was compatible with new heads' needs and tasks, such as managing resources, assignment of teachers, and allocation of pupils in classrooms and budgeting. On entering headship, beginning headteachers found themselves being torn between experiences of success and external criticism that increases the threat of vulnerability. Prioritising tasks and handling them effectively was critical in establishing new heads' ability as effective managers (Parkay and Hall, 1992; Day and Bakioglu 1996). Following initial surprise, reflection on the incidents and challenges faced regarding interpersonal relationships, and staff morale, necessitated much headship learning on the part of the new heads (Louis, 1980) and enabled most heads to reshape their pre-conceptions of headship in light of the challenges met to reach understanding of the school context.

Moreover, the actual experience of school leadership enabled heads to adjust their own expectations to meet the expectations imposed on them by others, such as staff, parents, the local community and the government. Interviewee K managed to 'decode the signals' and make sense of school culture, altering her leadership style to involve teachers through more democratic and distributed forms of leadership. Similarly, although Interviewee H faced teachers' strong resistance in proceeding with operational changes from the first months in post, she insisted proceeding with many structural changes in school, such as

improving the infrastructure and facilities, establishing links with parents and the community and working for the good image of the school, straight away. The endorsement of her actions by parents and the school community allowed her to establish her credibility in post and proceed with further changes.

During Stage 2, novice heads targeted personal communication and collaboration with staff and parents, as well as developing and communicating common goals for school improvement. Hence, they adopted participative leadership practices (Leithwood et al., 1999; MacBeath et al., 2004) by involving teachers, parents and the local community in decision making and action implementation for school improvement. Moreover, experiencing social recognition for their work in school enabled beginning headteachers to develop a positive self-esteem and a feeling of control over the school structure (Day and Bakiglu 1996; Weindling 1999) that enabled them to establish an expert-based authority (Parkay and Hall, 1992; Leithwood et al., 1999) as heads. This gave them credibility and confidence to proceed with introducing aspects of their role as instructional leaders during the second year in post.

In thesis, there is also evidence that speak to the importance of PS experiences gained from various contexts for the professional growth of new heads in post. The data suggests that heads who had served as acting heads in small schools were informed of the 'practical' knowledge and skills needed to handle administrative issues and school management; that's why they went through stages with faster pace compared to their counterparts with relatively less leadership experiences. For instance, Interviewee C who had served as an acting head in a number of schools did not feel panicked by the number and complexity of tasks undertaken during the early months and proceeded with organisational changes in school from the first year, after establishing trust and collaboration in relationships with teachers and parents.

During Stage 3, having mastered management skills and established themselves in post, heads refined changes introduced the previous year and proceeded with instructional leadership. New heads found the energy and the

desire to promote their vision for the school by bringing about changes that would establish an academic learning climate (Interviewees H, L), such as staff professional development, parents' development, upgrading school's infrastructure and resources. Having experienced people for a full school year, headteachers came to an understanding of their deputies' and teachers' strengths and weaknesses and it was easier for them to distribute leadership and involve them in leadership tasks, such as strategic planning for school improvement. Nevertheless, although heads serving in diverse contexts shared similar perceptions about headteachers' role and vision for improving educational outcomes, implementing aspects of their instructional role in schools, such as challenging teachers' practice and monitoring teaching and learning, proved particularly challenging for all heads. As Cypriot teachers are not used to be monitored and observed during teaching, heads experienced resistance in their attempt to facilitate quality instruction and provide support and guidance to teachers; while others highlighted their need for specialised training in skills related to instructional leadership.

On Stage 4, having refined structural changes in schools and being in school for three to four years, the six heads had shaped the school on their vision and were ready to focus on teaching and learning. This view is also supported by other studies indicating that headteachers at the established-stage of headship tend to develop their school in accordance with their instructional vision and are consolidated by the introduction of many instruction-related changes (Day and Bakioglu 1996; Weindling 1999; Earley and Weindling, 2004; Oplatka, 2004).

During this stage, it was easier for novice heads to adopt aspects of their instructional leadership role in schools, such as visiting classrooms, staff professional development, monitoring pupils' progress and observing lessons and reflecting collaboratively on instruction, as well as for staff to accept these changes. As pointed out by Crow, 'learning headship does not occur in the vacuum of a profession or an organization' (2006, p.322) and the policy context in which headship was assumed appears to impact new heads' initiatives to

build trust into collaboration among staff and a common consensus towards school improvement. Staff rotation, as discussed in previous section, frustrated new heads who had to develop attitudes and bonds between people (teachers, parents, pupils), as well as 'to design a pattern of roles and responsibilities that will accomplish collective goals' (Crawford, 2014, p.40). Therefore, a period of two years in post was necessary for heads to develop a sense of direction and commitment for the achievement of common goals.

As the central focus of educational organisations is learning, it was expected that heads at the 'refinement' stage would increasingly focus on teaching and learning by adopting instructional and transformational leadership practices as they move towards professional fulfilment (Southworth, 2007; Bush, 2011). Although evidence concerning transformational leadership in the research is weak, two heads adopted aspects of the transformational leadership style (Leithwood et. al., 1999) while acting as role models for their teachers and offering individual support to staff (Interviewee C and J). Interviewee H, despite the hostile school culture she experienced on assuming the post, she succeeded in influencing school outcomes by creating a productive school culture, building a common vision and establishing common goals towards school improvement. According to Oplatka (2004), only after heads have experienced their own professional growth and development, they are competent enough to serve as positive role models for teachers in school.

## **Summary**

This chapter discussed the findings related to headteachers' routes to headship, their professional and organisational socialisation, the challenges encountered in schools and their progression through the various stages of headship to illuminate the induction stage of headship in Cypriot schools.

The findings indicate that Cypriot heads achieve headship with various leadership experiences that enhanced their PS and OS into a new post. Self-

initiated PS experiences, such as postgraduate studies and shadowing their head on-the-job, as well as leadership experiences gained from serving in various posts within and outside education, enhanced heads' professional identity formation and prepared heads for their new role as heads. People, especially past heads, appeared to have a central role in the PS of Cypriot heads, through allocating leadership tasks and coaching them into their new role, or by acting as role models for aspirant heads.

Upon assuming headship, the findings confirm that the early stages are occupied by OS and may be very challenging for newcomers in various ways. All beginning heads faced context-specific challenges, related to school culture, the unavailability of infrastructure and teaching resources, regimes of past heads, and feelings of professional isolation. In light of these challenges and support provided by 'significant others', new heads' pre-conceptions of headship were reshaped and they were helped to establish themselves in post with confidence. People possessing 'practical' knowledge and skills appear to have a critical role in the OS of newcomers, through informal networking, mentoring and support in handling challenges in situ. With regards to implementing their vision for the school, all beginning heads experienced resistance in introducing changes in schools, especially changes focusing on teaching practice and school culture. The contextual peculiarities and new heads' leadership experiences brought to headship were decisive for their progression through stages of headship, which varied significantly among heads. Moreover, although the policy context in Cyprus emphasises the instructional role of school leaders, new heads adopted different leadership practices according to the headship stage they found themselves in, as well as school context.

To end with, the main findings of the thesis as discussed in this chapter signify the importance of pre-appointment preparation for aspirant heads and support provision in post; and point to a number of implications for headship preparation and induction, as well as recommendations for future research, as outlined in the next chapter.



# CHAPTER IX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Introduction

This thesis is the first exploratory study on primary headteachers' professional and organisational socialisation in Cyprus. Its central concern has been to explore preparation for headship, professional identity formation, the challenges newcomers meet as they come to terms with the reality of being a head and their progression through the various stages of headship. A sequential-mixed methods approach was adopted to combine survey data with qualitative investigations, via in-depth interviews, of the socialisation experiences of new heads prior and upon appointment to headship.

A number of themes emerged from the data analysis which confirm findings in international research literature; yet at the same time go beyond them in particularising the influence of policy and school contexts and people upon heads' preparation, professional identity formation and establishment in headship. The thesis adds to the currently limited local leadership research and enriches our understanding of the entry to headship stage of a headteacher's career. It also provides first-hand evidence for further research into headteachers' preparation and induction in Cyprus through a theoretically grounded explanation of how individuals' anticipatory and professional socialisation experiences, as well as experiences occurring directly within schools, help shape professional identity formation and establishment in post with confidence for first-time heads. The findings have both theoretical and methodological implications for academics, practitioners and policy makers, as well as to the researcher herself in improving her knowledge, enhancing her expertise and enriching her understandings in the above issues.

This final chapter begins with a synopsis of the most significant findings of the study that portray early primary headship in Cyprus. Then, in light of these findings, three further areas are considered: the implications for the leadership development of headteachers; the limitations of the thesis; and, finally, recommendations for further research.

## **Looking into early primary headship in Cypriot schools**

The thesis set out to illuminate primary headship in the Cypriot context, by exploring the socialisation experiences of novice headteachers during early years in post. Below, primary headship in Cypriot schools is portrayed through the findings emerging from the views and lived experiences of novice heads in various contexts.

First, on routes to headship, Cypriot primary heads followed diverse pathways with younger heads seeking headship as a professional goal in their career, through self-initiating leadership development opportunities, such as postgraduate studies. Research evidence also suggest that gender difference into professional progression to headship may exist. In addition, the role of colleagues and previous principals was found to be critical in influencing headteacher's career decisions, especially for heads who did not plan their pathways to headship or were unaware of their leadership potential until it had been identified by others. Half of heads also admitted being coached to headship by past or previous heads, who have been identified as role-models for aspirants - particularly for male heads. These findings have apparent implications for heads' role in identifying and developing the leadership capacity of individuals in school, so as to ensure that a pool of individuals possessing the leadership potential needed for headship is available.

Second, the professional socialisation of Cypriot headteachers relied heavily on three major contexts that informed their preparation for the post and enhanced professional identity formation: a) less formal and more personally oriented

preparation which consisted of postgraduate studies, shadowing heads on the job, seminars and personal reading; b) leadership and management experience in a series of posts prior to appointment to headship; and c) the NITPSL programme which all first-time heads attended upon assuming the post.

The findings demonstrate that Cypriot primary heads' experiences in informal and formal settings, both prior and during early headship while attending the NITPSL, had a discernible and significant influence on the development of a comprehensive conception of headship and what it entails. Prior experiences in deputy headship, informal coaching by previous heads, shadowing heads on-the-job, as well as experiencing headship and its responsibilities in full as acting heads in small schools, were highlighted by respondents as important PS experiences for their preparation for the post.

On preparation for headship, young heads who sought headship as a goal in their professional career accelerated their route to the top by undertaking postgraduate studies. Although the findings suggest that additional academic qualifications did not prepare new heads better for the myriad of challenges faced in post nor provided the skills needed to succeed in headship, they enable them to structure their professional identity with the confidence that they could lead a school effectively during the all-important early days. This finding, along with the increasing number of aspirants seeking postgraduate qualifications prior to appointment to headship (Polis, 2009, 2013) signify the need for formal headship preparation to be provided in the Cypriot context.

Taken together the findings, therefore, indicate that the PS of new heads was largely shaped by experiences prior to appointment in formal and informal context, while the NITPSL was inadequate in providing support for new heads on appointment to headship. Some interviewees expressed concerns about the perceived lack of flexibility in the content and methodology of the particular scheme, as well as personalisation and quality assurance; and pointed to the incorporation of context-based personalised leadership development strategies, such as internships, school visits, job-shadowing and mentoring, to enhance

headship learning. Novice heads valued peer-support through the informal NITPSL cohort as the most valuable aspect of the NITPSL.

Third, findings from this thesis verify the importance of people as sources of PS for aspiring and beginning headteachers. Headteachers were influenced by many 'people' in developing a conception of headship; among them past and former headteachers who influenced their early professional self-concepts. New headteachers reported learning the role of being a head through leadership and management experience in various contexts, by shadowing their heads on-the-job and through informal coaching from their previous heads while in deputy headship. These experiences, which were both encouraging and formative for headship learning and professional identity and establishment in post, illustrate the importance of headteachers in developing the leadership capacity of teachers and aspirant heads. Hence, strategies incorporating people, such as job-shadowing, mentoring and coaching that have been identified as effective practices enhancing heads' professional identity formation in other contexts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; PwC, 2007; Schleicher, 2012) could be also incorporated as part of headship preparatory programmes in Cyprus.

Fourth, irrespective of new heads' leadership background, gender and qualifications, participants' accounts suggest that making the transition to headship constituted a life-changing event for all heads who experienced the cultural shock and surprise of moving into a new role and assuming full responsibility of headship. Novice heads were confronted with conflict in interpersonal relationships between staff and parents, inadequate resources, behavioural problems, low staff morale and issues concerning their role as instructional leaders and change agents. This finding confirms Earley and Weindling's (2004) assertion that when school leaders take on a new formal leadership role, prior PS experiences and knowledge may not help them anticipate the difficulties in situ, and, therefore, more attention should be given to the induction stage of headship and the provision of support to new heads during early days, especially in terms of handling issues related to particular

school contexts. Internships could help alleviate the feeling of unpreparedness new heads experience on assuming headship.

Furthermore, findings emerging from this thesis portray primary headship as an increasingly challenging and demanding job to fulfil. The increasingly multicultural context of Cypriot schools and the emphasis posed on school improvement and raising student achievement to meet international standards frame a new context for leadership enactment and suggest an obvious need for highly qualified headteachers who can implement the reform agenda. That is why once in post, they experienced feelings of unpreparedness for the duties entailed in headship and the range of responsibilities - strategic planning, monitoring teaching and learning, staff professional development, action planning, etc – that have been attached to headteacher's role recently. Given the importance of school leadership for improving the educational system, the personal and professional skills (Male, 2004) identified by novice heads as necessary for enacting instructional leadership and engaging staff and school community in moving school towards improvement should be included in NITPSL or offered as specialised training to enhance headship performance within the new policy context.

Fifth, all novice heads experienced organisational socialisation as a two-way process between themselves and school culture, as well as a number of challenges most of which reformed their initial conceptions of headship and enabled them to establish their credibility in post. The study illustrates the significant dilemmas headteachers had to confront in order to meet the occupational and societal expectations of diverse contexts, as well as the personal and emotional impact teachers' resistance and unsupportive school culture had on new heads. On dealing with daily challenges, novice headteachers again turned to people with expertise and practical knowledge for support and guidance throughout the first year in post. Their previous and past headteachers, fellow headteachers, the school inspector and other people in school were all important here, pointing to an apparent implication for

incorporating OS practices that involve people who have experienced the situation that new heads are in and can offer opinion and guidance from the perspective of new heads. Hence, networking and mentoring, which have been identified as key OS socialisation mechanism for novice heads, could become integral components of headship induction.

Sixth, headteachers progressed through stages of headship at various pace according to the contextual characteristics of each school, prior leadership and management experience and self-confidence in performing the role. The rotation policy for staffing schools was of importance here as it impacted heads' professional growth through stages of headship in two ways: first, the frequent transfers of teachers around schools made it difficult for heads to establish collaboration and a rapport of trust and commitment towards common goals among staff, so as to proceed with instructional leadership; and second, heads who were transferred to another school after a year or two entered the stage cycle from Stage 1, therefore they did not experience a full cycle in post, so as to have the opportunity to proceed with instructional leadership. While the present study focuses on the induction stage of headship, a longitudinal research framework could be applied to prospective studies with young heads so as to follow their professional progression through all stages of headship.

Finally, although this study is contextually bounded, it is significant for researchers, policy makers, training providers and practitioners around the world, as its findings enlighten early headship in terms of the professional and organisational experiences that affect professional identity formation, establishment in headship and vision implementation during early headship. In light of its findings, a number of implications for headship preparation and induction are discussed below.

## **Implications for headship preparation and induction**

The findings of the thesis demonstrate that headship learning and professional identity formation were influenced mainly by personally oriented preparation through study for academic qualifications and other methods, as well as leadership and management experience in diverse posts inside and outside schools, and less from the NITPSL they attended upon appointment to headship. Hence, beginning primary heads reached headship with diverse levels of preparation and readiness to respond to their duties. A number of important theoretical and methodological implications for leadership development emerged from the findings that apply to other contexts as well. These are discussed below in two key areas: (a) headship preparation and induction, and (b) the NITPSL.

With regards to the preparation of new heads and their induction and support throughout the first year, the findings illustrate that novice headteachers' training needs would be better addressed through two programmes - a preparatory programme and an induction programme - each having a different focus, as discussed below. In addition, job-embedded practices that incorporate 'people' as sources of socialisations, such as job shadowing, coaching, networking and mentoring, as well as specialised training in certain content and skill areas could enhance headteachers' preparation and induction as part of these programmes.

Although findings point to informal preparation through postgraduate studies as impacting new headteachers' perceived levels of readiness and confidence to deal with the requirements of headship, heads possessing postgraduate qualifications also faced challenges in post for which they were not prepared. However, the key professional socialisation experience for Cypriot heads was leadership experience as acting heads in small schools, where aspirants had the opportunity to experience in full the responsibilities of headship. Therefore, an apparent implication of this finding for headship preparatory programmes is the need to combine classroom-delivered content with situated learning. Such programmes through site-based components, such as internships, job

shadowing and coaching, may enable aspirant heads to link theory to practice and enhance their skills and dispositions to perform headship efficiently in diverse school contexts, alleviating, thus, the feeling of unpreparedness they experience upon assuming the post. Participants should be given ample opportunities through internships to explore diverse school contexts and be coached in post while working next to experienced headteachers during the pre-entry stage of headship.

Also, a significant number of headteachers admitted being coached to headship by past headteachers, who also formed role-models for aspirant heads. Such an experience enabled new heads to form their conceptions of headship and understand the duties entailed in headship. Leadership coaching, as a reflective, empowering and goal-focused professional relationship between experienced and novice heads (Rhodes, 2012), is vital for identifying the leadership capacity of aspirants and enhancing their progression to and through headship. However, as 'not all principals - even the effective ones - have the needed dispositions and skills to serve as role models for aspiring headteachers' (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003, p.496), the training of headteachers acting as coaches is vital for creating a pool of talented leaders willing to assume headship in schools.

As 'people' were found to enhance heavily the PS of new heads and professional identity construction, headship preparatory programmes need to establish the socialisation mechanisms for the development of support networks from the very beginning of preparation. As Ylimaki and Jacobson (2013) proposed, creating structures for supporting job-embedded social networks outside the training cohort could potentially enable headteachers to construct and form their professional identity as heads in teams. This situation is familiar in the Scandinavian countries where social support job-embedded networks are core components of semi-formal leadership preparation programmes.

Another major implication arising from the findings lies within the provision of an induction programme which will facilitate newcomers' socialisation in schools and lighten their feelings of unpreparedness by providing support in dealing with



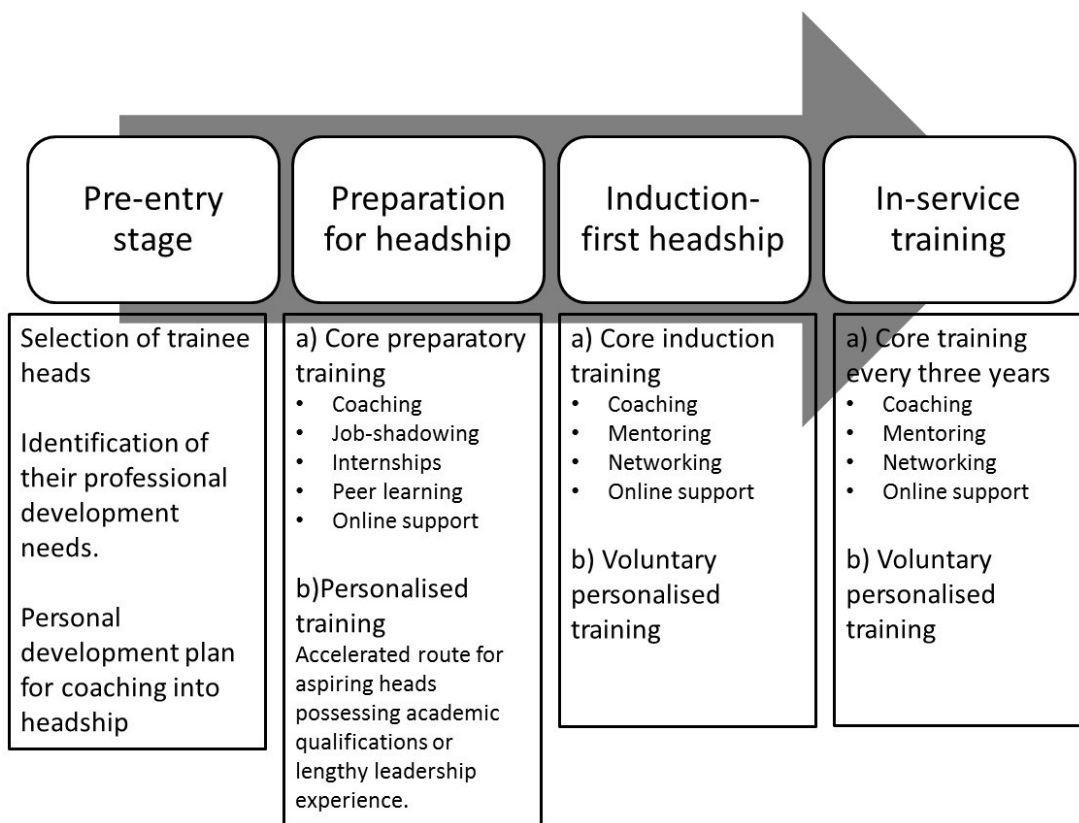
challenges encountered in situ. Instead of approaching OS in schools as one-size-fits-all or, as in this study, formal and collective (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979), perhaps it would be better to adopt 'customised and context-focused leadership learning' approaches (Moorosi and Bush, 2011, p.70) that socialise newcomers into a new role and a new school. Visiting and establishing links with schools prior to official appointment and engaging school staff in the OS of new heads could facilitate newcomers to feel part of the school and establish themselves in post easier and more quickly.

Findings from this thesis along with findings from international leadership studies speak to the significance of networking and mentoring as part of induction programmes (Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004; Diamond et al., 2013), for the support of novitiates to become accustomed to headship duties and establish their professional identity as heads. Since 2013, mentoring has been attached to NITPSL to support beginning headteachers' learning. Participants are allocated mentor headteachers who have the responsibility to act as critical friends and enhance the administrative, leading and instructional work of newly appointed headteachers. However, the careful selection and training of mentors is important to assure that critical functions are performed and the support and guidance new headteachers need from experienced colleagues provided (Crow and Matthews, 1998; Male, 2004).

Taken together, the findings emerging from this thesis illustrate the need for incorporating a holistic, long-term approach to the professional development of all headteachers within the framework of life-long learning, by providing individualised and contextualised leadership development opportunities for headteachers at various stages of headship. This approach may be particularly necessary for the Cypriot context, where the leadership development of aspiring, new and existing headteachers could constitute the core of reform success within the new policy context (MOEC, 2014). For this reason, the thesis attempts to provide a leadership development framework encompassing preparatory, induction and in-service training for headteachers at various stages

of their professional career (Figure 9.1 below), by underlining the benefits of customised training for headship preparation and induction. The framework, which is based on evidence emerging from the field with regards to contemporary novice headteachers' training need for working effectively in the new policy context, could also inform the leadership curriculum of the Leadership Academy in Cyprus.

**Figure 9.1: The leadership development framework**



Source: adapted from OECD (2007)

In line with the findings discussed above is a proposed model offered by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), encompassing a wide range of leadership development opportunities for headteachers to 'select according to their career stage, their personal and professional needs and the needs of their school and the wider system' (OECD, 2007, p.63). The OECD model for headteachers' development was adjusted to

the Cypriot educational context, in light of the educational reform proposal and the main thesis findings to form the leadership development framework presented above (Figure 9.1).

The leadership development framework proposes that during the pre-entry stage participants may attend activities to stimulate their interest in headship so as to wish to apply for the post. As indicated by the findings of this thesis, headteachers have a key role to perform in identifying the leadership potential of teachers in their schools and promoting their leadership development through coaching, so as to create a pool of qualified personnel for headship. In the preparatory phase of the programme as 'trainee headteachers', they may follow a personal development plan comprising of core and personalised leadership development activities leading to a qualification for headship. For individuals who possess postgraduate qualifications in school leadership and management and those carrying numerous leadership experiences from various posts, an accelerated personalised route to headship could be available to complement trainee headteachers' leadership experiences with meaningful opportunities to link leadership theory to practice.

On entering schools, it is proposed that the coaching of newcomers should continue into the first headship and mentoring should be provided to enhance headteachers' leadership and management performance. As findings show, specialised training in certain skill areas may enhance headteachers' performance in handling the people, the contextual peculiarities and the policy demands imposed on headteachers. As it has been argued, the making of a headteacher continues beyond selection, preparation and appointment to induction and 'continuous career-long professional development' (Kelley and Peterson, 2000, p.20). Therefore, in-service leadership provision and personalised training should be available to help established heads to be tuned with emerging policy, societal and school changes that challenge headship. Unlike other countries, such as the UK, the USA and Australia, there are no signs of a shortage of headship candidates in Cyprus, as posts have been filled

with many young heads who are expected to be in post for an average of 20 years (Polis, 2013). Hence, issues of sustaining people in headship for a long time and providing systematic professional development opportunities for experienced headteachers may arise.

Given the importance of people as major PS and OS sources for new heads, the establishment of an online peer-support network for school leaders by an official provider - either the MOEC or the CPI - that would promote networking and collaboration at various levels is recommended. Both experienced headteachers and newcomers would have the opportunity to exchange first-hand practical information in handling various issues, as well as resources regarding headteachers' work in general. Thus, the platform would promote learning in self-directed peer groups, by encouraging the exchange of best practices and cooperative links between headteachers and schools.

With regards to the NITPSL, the study also points to two key implications for policymakers and training providers. First, the design, quality and impact of the NITPSL could be significantly shaped by purposeful policy agendas at the state level, particularly when these take a comprehensive approach to leadership development, as proposed above (Figure 9.1). Though, prior to forming relevant policies for leader and leadership development, it is necessary to address the question 'What kind of headteachers do we want to develop?' It is also essential that a clearly articulated purpose and expected outcomes need to be defined and shared among those delivering the NITPSL and communicated to the participants.

Second, research findings signify that the NITPSL must be redesigned to provide the theoretical knowledge and practical experience that prepare school leaders for the reality of headship, as well as the support needed on entering schools. Given that support strategies are not equally effective for all new headteachers who may be at different stages of professional development or face varying contextual challenges, headship preparation should be approached from a broader perspective that considers the contextual characteristics of and

peculiarities in Cypriot schools, as well as aspirants' accumulated skills, knowledge and leadership experiences brought to headship while designing induction programmes. This thesis provide significant evidence that could be used to shape headship preparation and induction, so as to ensure that training and support provision are flexible and tailored to the personal and contextual needs of beginning heads.

Furthermore, as findings indicate, supporting strategies found in international literature as enhancing headship learning and readiness to handle challenges in post, such as coaching, job-shadowing, mentoring and networking, should be incorporated into the NITPSL. Also, as leadership development occurs more and more in context as a collective capacity, school-based experiential components such as internships could be considered as part of a preparatory programme. Moreover, specialised training in certain skill areas, such as leadership and task skills (Crow and Glascock, 1995), as well as interpersonal and technical skills (Male, 2004) concerning heads' role as instructional leaders and change agents in schools, could be offered to complement formal and informal leadership and management experience, enhancing, thus, headteachers' performance and socialisation in schools.

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, which is the sole provider of in-service training for newly appointed headteachers in Cyprus, has a vital role in headteachers' preparation and induction. Both, survey respondents and interviewees provided helpful suggestions about NITPSL's content, delivery and focus, yet ultimately quality assurance lies with the provider of the programme, so as to ensure its capacity to respond to participants' needs serving in diverse schools and schools of different type (pre-primary, primary and special schools) as shaped by policy, social and school context in the CES; and not promoting solely the government's educational policy agenda (Earley and Evans, 2004; MOEC, 2007).

Nevertheless, the implications for headship preparation and induction as discussed above should be considered within the broader framework of

education reform in Cyprus (MOEC, 2014), which incorporate changes related to staff CPD, the evaluation and promotion system, the decentralisation of the educational system and school autonomy. The existing policy context of schooling in Cyprus and the heavily centralised character of the educational system, as described in Chapter 2, may prevent the implementation of some of the strategies recommended above. However, given that headship is a key factor to effective schools, the importance of headship preparation and induction as a school reform strategy for policymakers and training providers to consider is highlighted.

### **Reflection on limitations**

The findings should be interpreted in light of the study's context and possible biases. Below a number of limitations and problems regarding the present study are acknowledged.

To begin with, the choices concerning the methodological aspects of the study are considered. This thesis relied heavily on a single researcher for collecting, analysing and interpreting the data. To overcome the possibility that certain of my characteristics, dispositions or experiences might bias what I 'saw', I decided to use triangulation of methods to contrast survey data with data collected through interviews and documents, as well as a variety of interviewees drawn from the NITPSLs cohort to gain additional perspectives on issues under examination. In addition I returned interview transcripts to heads to check them for accuracy and add comments or supplementary information. However, having more than one person analysing the data and interpret findings, would have made the study more trustworthy. This could have been achieved by having a colleague who was aware of headship research and literature to analyse and interpret the data along with me so as to validate the findings.

This study aimed to describe the situation in Cyprus in relation to early years in headship from the perspective of newly appointed headteachers. However,

although data gathered through survey and initial and follow-up interviews provided rich insights into headteachers' socialisation in schools, it would have been interesting to seek the views of teachers and other stakeholders, such as parents, school inspectors and the LEA, on the same issue. A case study approach could have helped overcome this limitation; though financial and time constraints, as well as the focus of the study, did not allow a comprehensive approach to this issue.

Second, I was aware that my 'insider' status as a primary school teacher could affect the emotional state of the interviewees during the interview. Thus, I tried to adopt the researcher's perspective seeking to keep an 'outsider' status during the interviews, distancing, thus, myself from headteachers (Patton, 2002). Hence, the use of an interview schedule enabled the researcher to cover common themes for all the participants, therefore, providing the opportunity easily to compare their answers in findings common patterns in their professional and organisational socialisation in headship.

Third, the study also sought to identify the PS experiences that new heads viewed as helpful for headship learning and professional identity formation. From this standpoint, the NITPSL was considered as an integral component for the leadership development of heads. However, although it was not the purpose of this study to assess participants' learning resulting from training, the absence of the competencies to be developed or leadership standards to be achieved at the end of the training were critical omissions that made this endeavour problematic in terms of the collected data. The latter reflect headteachers' views on the skills and knowledge they have learned by attending the NITPSL and which were regarded as helpful for their socialisation in post.

Fourth, although the early days and first months in post constitute a critical period of organisational socialisation, it had been difficult to obtain access from gatekeepers and headteachers themselves to collect data regarding the first three months in post. This was due to the workload newly appointed heads had at the beginning of school year and my work commitment as a primary school

teacher. Hence, data about this decisive period in a novice head's career was collected at the end of the first year in written and oral form, by asking heads to reflect retrospectively on their early experiences. Therefore, there is a possibility of heads recalling only major incidents or those which were emotionally intensive. Furthermore, observing participants in schools or new heads' reflections on daily practice through journals could have provided richer accounts about their school socialisation experiences during the all-important early days in headship.

Finally, another aspect of the study was to examine if the stages headteachers experience during headship (Weindling, 1999, 2000; Earley and Weindling, 2004) are applicable in the Cypriot context. Even though the study included a survey and initial interviews at the end of the first or second year, as well as follow-up interviews at the end of the third or fourth year, the data collected were not sufficient to validate all six stages of the headship cycle, especially the last two stages of the transition cycle. The reasons were twofold: first, such an attempt would require extra time devoted to this study so as to follow headteachers as their headship progresses; and second, some headteachers moved into a second headship, thus, beginning the cycle again and preventing the opportunity to pass through all phases of the stage cycle. However, a follow-up interview with the participants in five years' time would provide further data so as to examine their transition through all career stages of headship.

## **Recommendations for future research**

This study raises several possible avenues for future research, both in terms of its limitations and findings, which could enrich understanding of beginning heads' professional and organisational socialisation in Cyprus and perhaps in other national contexts.

First, additional multi-perspective studies are needed at all levels of education - pre-primary and secondary schools - as well as at other areas of the country - to



explore more deeply the socialisation experiences of new heads in specific school contexts within the same national context. Such studies will help to understand the differences and similarities between headship contexts in the same country. It would also be useful to look at new heads assuming headship in schools which are deemed as successful, considerably challenging or highly demanding; and examine how the socialisation process varies or resembles across such schools. This might allow the identification of key qualities, skills and the support provision needed during the entry to headship stage in diverse contexts.

In addition, it would be interesting to study headteachers at different stages of their career within a longitudinal study framework. A follow-up study with heads who participated in this thesis would allow an examination of the way they were socialised during second and subsequent headships and an opportunity to compare their practices in different school contexts. Alternatively, a retrospective approach to transition through stages of headship would also permit an examination of the transition of headteachers through all career stages, as well as socialisation and re-socialisation in schools. Future research could also apply the career stage professional framework to secondary heads, so as to compare whether they move through stages at the same pace as their primary counterparts or whether contextual, social or personal factors impact differently on their professional growth and career in headship.

Second, in order to understand better the organisational socialisation as a two-way process, it would be interesting to conduct a study echoing the voices of teachers, parents and the local community in schools in which novice heads take up headship. Such a study would examine how the school community impacts the socialisation process of new heads and explore how various stakeholders interpret new heads' attempts to establish themselves in post and promote changes in schools.

Third, another area to investigate is how and in which ways the policy of rotating teachers and headteachers affects heads' progression through stages of

headship and their socialisation in schools. Given that organisational socialisation is a bi-directional process, research into how experienced headteachers are socialised during second and subsequent headships in different schools is needed to provide evidence about support strategies that are key to the re-socialisation of heads in schools.

Fourth, further research also needs to consider how the socialisation of individuals who are appointed in a school of the same type as their previous one or are promoted internally within the same school differs from the socialisation of heads who are appointed in new contexts. As headteachers in this study appeared reluctant to take up headship in large-sized schools, future research might also focus on how the socialisation of novice heads in small schools might differ from socialisation in large-sized units, where novice heads are likely to face additional complexities.

A fifth recommendation for future research is related to the study of metaphors used by headteachers to describe their early experiences in post. Many interesting metaphors have come out of interviews and follow-up interviews with Cypriot beginning headteachers. These were used to illustrate the intensity of the feelings or issues experienced while handling problematic situations and challenges during first headship. Studying the metaphors used during early days in post or at each stage of a headteacher's career could provide interesting insights into how headteachers internalise positive and negative experiences at every stage of headship or during each subsequent headship.

Sixth, there is evidence to suggest that further research on career trajectories of Cypriot headteachers could shed lights on the role of gender in professional advancement to headship. Also, seeking the views of female heads who did not achieve headship may reveal the factors impeding female career advancement in Cyprus.

A final recommendation for further investigation concerns longitudinal research. This is needed to understand how successful leaders develop over time from

preparation to effective leadership practice, so as to identify supportive strategies that would potentially enhance professional growth at each stage of headship. Research findings suggest that primary heads possessing postgraduate qualifications and accumulated leadership experience from serving in various contexts may move through the stages of headship more quickly and successfully than their counterparts who assumed the post without such experiences or preparation. Therefore, further research is needed to establish a possible relationship between preparation for the post and professional growth in post.

## **Concluding comments**

I embarked on this thesis with the expectation to produce a truthful, authentic and reliable study that would provide valuable insights into early headship from novice headteachers' perspective. This would contribute towards understanding of the early years in post and describe the professional growth of new heads through career stages, so as to, hopefully, influence headship preparation and induction in Cyprus.

The analysis of the various data sets helped to illuminate headship landscape in Cypriot primary schools, by providing evidence about preparation for headship, the socialisation process in schools, professional identity formation, the challenges met in post and heads' progression through stages of headship. To summarise, the significant findings of the thesis are:

- Individuals who seek headship as a professional career goal accelerate their routes to headship through self-initiated leadership development activities (academic qualifications, accumulated leadership experiences from various posts, job-shadowing, attending conferences, reading, etc).
- The professional socialisation of Cypriot primary heads relied on three contexts: a) personal initiatives for leadership development, such as

postgraduate studies and participation in professional networks, b) accumulated leadership experiences in various posts inside and outside schools, and c) attending the NITPSL.

- The key professional socialisation experience that enhanced Cypriot heads' knowledge and skills in performing headship was leadership experience as acting heads in small schools, while postgraduate qualifications helped new heads to develop their self-confidence in leading schools effectively.
- Along with the NITPSL's training cohort, mentoring from past heads and networking with experienced headteachers supported new heads to handle challenges in situ, and alleviated their professional isolation. It also enhanced professional identity formation by allowing new heads to realise their role in schools and the fact that they were faced with similar challenges as other heads.
- The contextual peculiarities and the challenges met in post forced new heads to reshape their initial conceptions of headship and adjust their actions in shaping school culture accordingly. Heads serving in particularly challenging school contexts proceeded only with some aspects of their role as instructional leaders, such as monitoring teaching and learning.
- Large-sized schools, as well as schools located in financially deprived areas or areas hosting many migrant workers, were found particularly challenging for new heads, in terms of management and establishing firm interpersonal relationships with staff, parents and the local community. In addition, behavioural problems and bullying were often intense in those schools.
- In establishing themselves in post, all heads implemented the same steps, beginning with introducing managerial changes, establishing personal relationships and developing trust in working with staff, parents

and the local community. Establishing discipline and a positive image for the school, as well as upgrading school infrastructure and teaching resources proceeded heads' attempts for applying aspects of their role as instructional leaders.

- Heads progressed through the various stages of headship at a different pace, according to prior leadership experience and confidence in performing headship, contextual peculiarities and the length of their headship in school.

Although, the thesis was conducted within the contextual and cultural factors of a very specific context - Cypriot primary schools - a number of important implications emerged from the findings that may apply in other contexts as well. Hence, the significance of the thesis and ways it adds to the discipline's knowledge base is twofold.

On the one hand, by exploring the organisational and professional socialisation experiences of new heads and the way they progressed professionally through headship, the study contributes to the development and expansion of knowledge and theory about how teachers become 'head' teachers. The findings illuminate the induction stage of headship and add to the body of knowledge about new heads' socialisation experiences during first headship in contexts that are largely shaped by reform agendas. More important, the findings underscore the role of headship preparation and support provision during early headship to prepare heads appropriately to face contextual challenges and lead schools towards improvement. They also reinforce the importance of incorporating strategies and school-based components into training that enhances headteachers' socialisation in schools and strengthens the formation of their professional identity as heads. These might include job-shadowing, internships, coaching, mentoring and networking. It is hoped that the findings of this study will enrich the work of others in the field of school socialisation, headship preparation and induction and encourage ongoing efforts to better understand early headship.

On the other hand, although thesis' empirical findings largely replicate and reinforce many of the findings in international studies into early headship, it is the first study that echoes Cypriot heads' views and portrays their experiences during the first four years in post. Thus, it makes a significant contribution to the knowledge base about headship preparation and induction, the challenges met in post and progression through stages of headship in the Cypriot context. The findings provide for the first time an empirically-based picture of the professional and organisational socialisation of new Cypriot primary heads, which could inform leadership development provision and strategies to promote and support headteachers' learning and their preparation for the post. The thesis also confirms the applicability of the stage theories in the Cypriot context and adds evidence to enhance understanding of professional growth in post and heads' attempts to establish their credibility in headship within a centralised educational system such as Cyprus's.

Furthermore, the conceptual and practical features identified in this thesis for the socialisation of new headteachers suggest several possible areas for research that could further enrich understanding of early socialisation experiences in Cypriot schools and internationally.

In conclusion, in an era of increased accountability and pressure towards school improvement, the nurturing and support of school leaders to meet the challenges of headship are considerably greater nowadays than they have been before. As noted by Bush (2011, p.12), developing the 'appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding to lead educational organizations in an increasingly global economy [...] is a particularly important requirement for leading self-managed schools'. Therefore, it is vital for the Directorate of Education in Cyprus to understand that government should invest significant time and resources in filling the pipeline of school leadership through systematic selection, recruitment and training of the next generation of headteachers; and take meaningful steps to ensure that first-time headteachers are prepared to meet the contemporary demands of headship through preparatory training and

support in post. However, the greatest challenge is to ensure that 'a system of reviewing the content and delivery of programmes is in place' (Diamond et al., p.26) to guarantee that training programmes are responsive to emerging leadership roles and aspiring and new headteachers' training needs as framed by situational determinants and the national and international policy agendas.

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# APPENDICES

## **Appendix A: Letter asking for permission to carry out field work (Translated version)**

Ministry of Education and Culture

Head of Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation

Dear Madame,

I kindly ask for your permission to carry out a research study with the title: 'Looking into early headship: the socialisation experiences of new primary headteachers in Cyprus'. The study aims to explore the day-to-day practices of novice headteachers in Cypriot primary schools. The study, which employs a mixed-methods approach, will be carried out in three phases during academic years 2010 to 2012. First, unstructured interviews will be used to inform the construction of the questionnaire to be used next to survey all newly appointed heads with one or two years in post. Finally, interviews will be used to validate survey findings and explore in depth the issues under examination. A proposed framework for conducting the study is the following:

• A survey all newly appointed heads	March - April 2010
• Interviews with heads	June - August 2010
• Follow-up interviews with heads	April- June 2012

I assure you that the study will not disturb the smooth operation of schools. The informed consent of headteachers for their participation in the study will also be obtained. Specific attention will be paid regarding the anonymity and the non-traceability of the participants and their schools. Attached is the questionnaire and the interview schedule, as well as the information leaflet to be given to participants about the study. Thank you in advance.

Valentina Theodosiou

(PhD Candidate, Institute of Education, University of London)

## **Appendix B: Elite Interview with the programme leader of the NITPSL**

### ***Interview schedule***

Dear participant,

The interview will focus upon the following issues regarding the National In-service Training Programme for School Leaders (NITPSL).

#### Characteristics of the training

- Duration
- Period offered
- Academics
- Participants
- What is the role of the Division of Primary Education (MOEC) in the provision of NITPSL?

#### Content of the training

- Structure
- Aims
- Thematic units
- Philosophy upon which the programme was revised
- What changes have been made in the programme?

#### Other issues

- Is the programme evaluated? By whom?
- Are there any considerations for providing headship preparatory training?
- Are there any considerations for the provision of in-service training for established heads?
- How about leadership development programmes for primary deputy heads?

## Appendix C: The questionnaire



Dear Sir/Madam

As part of the requirements for a PhD from the Institute of Education-University of London, I am conducting a study aiming to explore headteachers' preparation for headship and their early years in post, as well as to identify the challenges of first headship and heads' progression through stages of headship during the early years.

For the purpose of the study, I would appreciate it if you could complete the following questionnaire and send it back to me using the enclosed stamped self-addressed envelope.

The data collected from the survey will be carefully coded and analysed solely for the purpose of the study. Extra precaution is taken regarding the anonymity and the non-traceability of the participants, thus please do not write on any part of the questionnaire any information disclosing your identity.

Further information regarding the study is provided in the enclosed information sheet. If you wish to discuss any aspects of the study, please do not hesitate to contact me (tel. 99545612).

I would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Valentina Theodosiou'.

## Part A

Please complete the following information by ticking the appropriate box. Where needed please specify by giving further information.

### Demographic Data

#### Gender

Male   
 Female

#### Level of Education

Primary   
 Pre-primary

Age .....

Years in service .....

Years in service as head .....

Years in service as deputy head .....

Years in service in this school .....

#### Qualifications (Please tick all applicable items)

Bachelor   
 Master  .....

Doctorate  .....

Diploma  .....

Second Degree  .....

Other  .....

### School Characteristics

#### District

Nicosia   
 Limassol   
 Larnaca   
 Paphos   
 Famagusta

#### School Characteristics (Please tick all applicable items)

School operating with normal timetable   
 Compulsory All-Day School   
 Optional All-Day School   
 Special School   
 School with pupils coming from ethnic, religious or cultural minorities   
 (Please specify) .....

#### Area

Urban   
 Sub-urban   
 Rural

**Number of pupils enrolled** .....

**Number of staff** .....

The school is in the same district as my home address Yes  No

The school is in the **same district** as the one I served as a deputy head Yes  No

The school is the **same school** as the one I served as a deputy head Yes  No

## Part B

*Please indicate to what extent the following statements regarding decision for headship, readiness for the post, the challenges of first headship and leadership development opportunities are applicable for you. In case where a statement is not applicable, please choose 9.*

**1=Not at all      2=A little      3=Quite a lot      4=Very much      9= Not applicable**

Note: For the purpose of the study, the term 'Headteacher' refers to a person who holds an appointed primary school leadership post as a 'Primary School Headteacher'.

### **Decision for taking up headship**

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1) I had the support of my family in taking up headship  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2) I had the support of my colleagues in taking up headship  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3) I was encouraged by my previous headteacher to take up headship                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4) I took up headship because I think I can offer a lot to education from this post                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5) I took up headship because of the lesser amount of teaching commitment compared to deputy heads       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6) Taking up headship enables headteachers to implement their vision for the school unit                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7) I took up headship because of the better salary and benefits derived from the post                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8) Taking up headship could provide opportunities for initiations by the new head within the school unit | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9) Taking up headship provides opportunities for social recognition                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

### **Readiness for taking up the post**

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) I feel well prepared to fulfill the demands of the post                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2) I need further training while in headship so as to respond to the requirements of the post | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3) My experience as a deputy head was valuable for taking up headship                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |



4)	I feel ready to overcome the challenges I may encounter as a headteacher	1	2	3	4
5)	I feel reluctant to take up headship in large primary schools	1	2	3	4
6)	I feel comfortable to take up headship in small primary schools	1	2	3	4
7)	I regard the National In-service Training Programme for School Leaders suitable for headteachers' preparation to take up headship	1	2	3	4
8)	I have the necessary <b>Knowledge</b> needed to lead the school efficiently	1	2	3	4
9)	I have the necessary <b>skills</b> needed to lead the school effectively	1	2	3	4
10)	Personal initiatives for professional development (postgraduate studies, seminars, reading, etc) helped me to feel confident in taking up headship	1	2	3	4

#### **The challenges of first headship**

1)	I was aware of the difficulties and the challenges I would face during the first years in headship	1	2	3	4
2)	I do not feel adequately prepared to face the difficulties and the challenges I may encounter during headship	1	2	3	4
3)	School staff and cooperation with the staff are important factors for effective school leadership	1	2	3	4
4)	I regard the socio-economic background of pupils attending the school as important for successful headship	1	2	3	4
5)	I regard networking and collaboration with local authorities and Parents Association as important for successful headship	1	2	3	4
6)	The shadow of the previous headteacher impacts my attempt to implement my vision for the school	1	2	3	4
7)	The location of the school is a challenge for effective headship	1	2	3	4

8)	Large-sized schools impede effective headship and the implementation of headteacher's duties	1	2	3	4
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**Leadership and management development**

1)	<u>I believe that one learns the role as head :</u>					
	(a) by doing the job	1	2	3	4	
	(b) by attending the NITPSL	1	2	3	4	
	(c) through close cooperation with and support by the inspector of the school	1	2	3	4	
	(d) through networking and collaboration with other heads	1	2	3	4	
	(e) by having model headteachers while serving as a deputy head	1	2	3	4	
	(f) by attending professional development activities for school leadership and management (e.g. postgraduate studies, seminars, lectures, workshops, etc)	1	2	3	4	
	(g) by shadowing previous heads in post	1	2	3	4	
2)	<u>From previous heads, I learned:</u>					
	(a) to lead the school	1	2	3	4	9
	(b) to lead school improvement	1	2	3	4	9
	(c) to organise and manage the school					
	(d) to work and cooperate with staff	1	2	3	4	9
	(e) to use power and influence derived from my post	1	2	3	4	9
	(f) to read and understand the school culture	1	2	3	4	9
3)	The training I attended soon after promotion regarding school leadership was helpful for taking up headship	1	2	3	4	9
4)	Previous experience as an acting head was helpful for taking up headship	1	2	3	4	9
5)	<u>As an acting head in small schools, I learned:</u>					
	(a) to lead the school	1	2	3	4	9

(b) to lead school improvement	1	2	3	4	9
(c) to organise and manage the school	1	2	3	4	9
(d) to work and cooperate with staff	1	2	3	4	9
(e) to handle the bureaucratic procedures with the Ministry of Education (completion of forms, communication procedures, etc)	1	2	3	4	9
(f) to use power and influence derived from my post	1	2	3	4	9
(g) to read and understand the school culture	1	2	3	4	9
6) Undertaking postgraduate studies in school leadership and management helped me to fulfill the requirements of the post	1	2	3	4	9

**The National In-service Training Programme for School Leaders (NITPSL)**

*Various headship programmes consider the following elements to be important for headteacher's role. Please indicate to what extent the NITPSL helped you to develop your knowledge and skills in the following areas.*

**1=Not at all      2=A little      3=Quite a lot      4=Very much**

1) <u>The Programme helped me to develop my <b>knowledge</b> as a school leader and provided support in:</u>				
(a) school organisation and management	1	2	3	4
(b) leading schools with pupils coming from different socio-economical and cultural backgrounds	1	2	3	4
(c) applying school control and discipline	1	2	3	4
(d) applying new information technologies (ICT) in subject teaching and school management	1	2	3	4
(e) strategic planning for school improvement	1	2	3	4
(f) reading and understanding the school culture	1	2	3	4
(g) handling family problems that may impact on pupils' performance, personality and behaviour.	1	2	3	4

2)	<u>The Programme helped me to develop my <b>skills</b> as a school leader and provided support in:</u>				
	(a) school organisation and management	1	2	3	4
	(b) using new information technologies (ICT) in school leadership and management	1	2	3	4
	(c) leading school improvement	1	2	3	4
	(d) developing good relationships and cooperation with staff	1	2	3	4
	(e) strategic planning for the school unit	1	2	3	4
	(f) implementing changes or innovations in the curriculum	1	2	3	4
	(g) applying educational law to specific situations	1	2	3	4
3)	<u>The NITPSL provided opportunities for:</u>				
	(a) sharing of experience and knowledge <b>among novice headteachers</b>	1	2	3	4
	(b) sharing of experience and knowledge <b>with experienced headteachers</b>	1	2	3	4
	(c) the <b>development</b> of strategic planning for school improvement	1	2	3	4
	(d) the <b>implementation</b> of strategic planning for school improvement	1	2	3	4
	(e) the application of skills developed through training in schools	1	2	3	4
	(f) networking with other headteachers and the establishment of good relationships with them	1	2	3	4

**Need for further training**

*Please indicate by ticking the box in which areas of development would you consider you need further training:*

- (a) interpersonal relationships

- (b) leading a change within the school
- (c) developing a high-quality school culture
- (d) strategic planning for school improvement
- (e) leading school improvement and raising pupils' achievement
- (f) leading schools where the majority of pupils come from different socio-economic or cultural backgrounds
- (g) staff professional development and support

Please indicate other areas of development would you consider you need further training in order to carry on your duties efficiently.

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Thank you for your cooperation.

## **Appendix D: Information sheet for participants**

### **Looking into early headship: the socialisation experiences of new primary headteachers in Cyprus**

*This leaflet informs you about a study undertaken as part of the requirements for a PhD at the Institute of Education, University of London. Here is some information you might want to think before you decide about participating in the study.*

#### **Why is this study being done?**

The study aims to illuminate the area of headship preparation and induction in Cyprus by exploring the professional and organisational socialisation experiences of new Cypriot primary heads, as well as to identify the challenges they encounter in post and their progression through stages of headship.

#### **Who will be in the project?**

Participants will be newly appointed Cypriot primary headteachers who have been in post for one or two years.

#### **What will happen during the study?**

A survey of all newly appointed primary headteachers with one or two years in post will be conducted, by administering questionnaires to schools in which these heads serve. Afterwards, open-ended interviews and follow-up interviews will follow with 12 headteachers serving in schools across Cyprus. The interviewees will be selected purposely so as to represent the gender of the heads, their years in headship, qualifications and age, as well as the type of school in which they serve, its location and size. Interviews, which may be tape recorded, will have a duration of approximately 40 minutes.

#### **Could there be problems for you if you take part?**

A special care is taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Thus, pseudonyms will be used for the presentation of the findings and personal data will not be disclosed to anyone. However, some people may feel upset when talking about personal initiatives or incidents. Please feel free to avoid answering any question being asked during the interview. In case you feel you want to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason, you have the right to do so.

#### **What questions will be asked during the interview?**

The questions raised during the interview will be related to new heads' experiences of leading and managing a school, their preparation for headship, their organisational socialisation in schools and the challenges they encounter in post.

**How your attendance in this study will help you?**

The study will mainly draw on new heads' experiences and explore their views so as to illuminate the area of headship preparation and induction in Cyprus. The findings may be proved valuable for the recommendation of a comprehensive scheme for the leadership development of aspiring, newly promoted and experienced headteachers, as well as for the design of supporting structures for the induction of new heads in schools.

**Will you know about the research results?**

The Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute will be informed about the results of the study. Additionally, the researcher will present the results in local and national conferences and journals.

**Thank you for reading this leaflet.**

*I hope you find it useful, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you have about any aspect of the study.*

Valentina Theodosiou, 14 Photiou & Limisi, Arediou, Nicosia

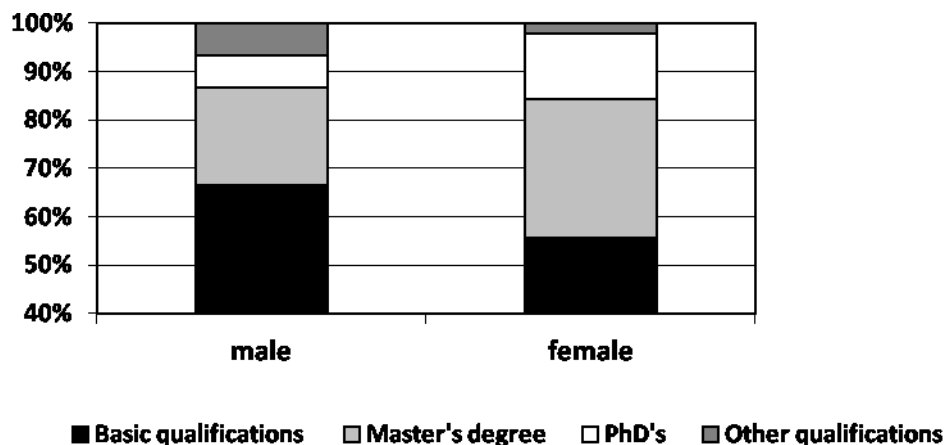
[vtheodosiou@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:vtheodosiou@ioe.ac.uk)

## Appendix E: An overview of survey respondents

This section provides additional information about the survey respondents.

From the description provided in Chapter 6, it is obvious that an important proportion of heads (39%) possessed postgraduate qualifications such as Master's (27%) and doctoral (12%) degrees. As shown in Figure E1, apart from basic academic qualifications, a small number of heads (5%) had other qualifications, such as a second degree (3%) or a diploma (2%). Also, out of the 45 female participants, 19 had further qualifications such a Master or doctoral degrees (42%).

**Figure E1: Qualifications possessed by headteachers**



The age of the respondents varied between 40 to 59 years. As can be seen in Table E1, 24% of the respondents were aged between 40-45 years, while a significant percentage (30%) of primary heads aged above 55 years.

Headteachers' years in service also varied between 18 to 38 years (see Table E2 below). Nearly one-quarter of the respondents (23%) had between 18 and 24 years in service, all of whom were primary heads. One fourth of the participants had above 35 years in service and the major portion of pre-primary headteachers (43%) had between 30 and 34 years in service.



**Table E1: Age of headteachers**

Age group	40-45		46 - 55		56-59		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All heads	14	24	29	48	17	28	60	100
Primary	14	26	23	44	16	30	53	100
Pre-primary	-	-	6	86	1	14	7	100

(n=60)

**Table E2: Years in service**

Number of years in service	18-24		25-29		30-34		35+		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All heads	14	23	15	25	16	27	15	25	60	100
Primary	14	26	13	25	13	24	13	25	53	100
Pre-primary	-	-	2	29	3	43	2	28	7	100

(n=60)

Heads served between three to ten years as deputy heads prior to promotion to headship. Over one-third of headteachers (38%) were promoted early having spent five or less years as deputy heads. The majority of them (55%) had to serve between 6 to 8 years as deputy heads prior to their promotion. Only a small percentage (7%) spent 9 or 10 years in service as deputy heads prior to their promotion.

According to Table E3, pre-primary heads served an average of 4.86 years as deputy heads prior to their promotion, whereas primary heads served longer (6.28 years) prior headship.

**Table E3: Average number of years served in different posts**

	All headteachers		Pre-primary heads		Primary heads	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Deputy headteacher</i>	6.11	1.69	4.86	1.21	6.28	1.68
<i>In service</i>	29.35	5.42	32.00	3.65	29.00	5.55

(n=60)

The characteristics of schools, such as location, type and school size, in which heads served are presented in Table E4 below. The schools in which newly appointed headteachers served were located around the island with the majority being situated in Limassol (32%), Nicosia (26%) and Larnaca (22%). The greatest part of Famagusta district is occupied by Turkey since the Turkish invasion to the island in 1974 and only a few schools operate in the district. That's why a very small number of participants (3%) served in Famagusta district. For analysis purpose, these schools were merged with schools in Larnaca district comprising one-quarter of schools allocated a novice head (25%). Most of the schools in which heads served were urban (42%) and rural (43%) schools. Furthermore, the majority of schools (63%) operated with a normal timetable from 7:30a.m. to 1:05p.m. and only 5% of the schools were Compulsory All-day Schools. Around three-in-ten schools (32%) were operating as Optional All-day Schools from 1:05-4:00p.m. Also, most schools in which novice headteachers served were medium-sized (65%) schools, while a significant number of them served in large-sized schools (27%).

**Table E4: School characteristics**

		N	%
Area	Urban	25	42
	Sun-urban	9	15
	Rural	26	43
District	Nicosia	16	26
	Limassol	19	32
	Larnaca	15	25
	Paphos	10	17
Type of school	Normal timetable	38	63
	Compulsory All-day	3	5
	Optional All-Day	19	32
School size	≤ 6 teachers (small)	5	8
	7-16 teachers (medium-sized)	39	65
	≥ 17 teachers (large-sized)	16	27
School district	same as home address	39	65
	different district	21	35

(n=60)

Although the majority of heads (65%) served in schools which were located in the same district as their home address, a great number of novice heads (35%) were transferred to schools outside their district. Additionally, only 10% of heads mentioned that the school in which they were appointed as heads was the same school as the one they served as deputy heads. As it is usual, in Cyprus, for new heads to be transferred to another school in a different district after promotion, it was not surprising to meet deputy heads and headteachers from Nicosia to serve in Limassol and Larnaca; headteachers from Limassol are

transferred to Paphos and heads from Larnaca work in Limassol. The allocation of new heads in schools is based on the transfer credit system that exists in Cyprus, which holds that the individuals possessing a small number of transfer credits are usually sent to serve in a different district than the one they live in. The allocation of novice heads in schools in Limassol could also be explained by the fact that the population of teachers in Nicosia is greater than the one needed to staff the schools in the district, and consequently many teachers are obliged to serve in a different district for at least two years.

Moreover, 60% of headteachers served in school for the first year and 40% for the second year. Although, there is a tendency to allow headteachers to serve for at least two years in a school prior to their transfer to another school, it appears that the number of heads who served in school for the first year (36 heads, 60%) exceeded the number of newly appointed heads with one year experience in post (27 heads, 45%), resulting, thus in 15% of heads being in second headship during their second year in post. A possible explanation for transferring heads to new schools by the Educational Commission soon after completing only a year in post may be the staff needs of schools or medical reasons on the part of the head.

The number of pupils in schools in which novice heads served varied from 30 to 389 pupils in big urban schools. Around a quarter of the heads served in schools with less than 80 pupils. An equivalent number of heads served in schools with more than 151 pupils and the majority of heads (48%) served in schools with 81-150 pupils. The fact that very large primary schools in Cyprus are divided in two cycles - the lower cycle consisting of grades A, B and C and the upper circle consisting of grades D, E and St - and operate as two independent units with two different headteachers increased the number of primary schools with 81-150 pupils. Otherwise, it would be expected to have many large-sized schools and many small-sized schools, since most of the newly appointed heads served in urban and rural schools, respectively.

## Appendix F: Interview schedule-Phase C (initial interviews)

Participant:..... Date:.....

### School Characteristics

#### District

- Nicosia   
Limassol   
Larnaca   
Paphos   
Famagusta

#### School Characteristics (Please tick all applicable items)

- School operating with normal timetable   
Compulsory All-Day School   
Optional All-Day School   
Special School   
School with pupils coming from ethnic, religious or cultural minorities (Please specify).....

#### Area

- Urban   
Sub-urban   
Rural

**Number of pupils** .....

**Number of staff** .....

Actions/Programmes:.....

Other characteristics:.....

### Personal Characteristics

#### Gender

- Male   
Female

Age .....

#### Level of Education

- Primary   
Pre-primary

#### Qualifications (Please tick all applicable items)

- Bachelor   
Master  .....
- PhD  .....
- Diploma  .....
- Second Degree  .....
- Other (Please specify)  .....

Years in service .....

Years in service as Head .....

Years as Deputy Head .....

Years in this school .....

Interests/actions:.....

## ***Interview Schedule***

### Motivation to undertake headship

How did you make the decision to become a headteacher?

What support did you receive in applying for headship?

### Leadership development

What do you think helped you most to develop the knowledge and skills needed for leading and managing a school? (Experience in deputy or acting headship, leadership tasks, postgraduate studies, the NITPSL etc)

How experience in previous posts helped you in leading and managing this school on your first headship?

### Impact of the NITPSL on headship

How well did the programme prepare you for headship? (in terms of knowledge, skills and dispositions)

Which elements of the programme/aspects/characteristics/knowledge/skills/attributes were most beneficial for headship practice? Why?

Was anything missing from the programme that should have been included?

### Socialisation experiences during early headship

How would you describe the experience of first headship?

What challenges did you meet in school on assuming headship?

How is it like to lead a large/medium/small-sized school on first headship?

What was the most challenging issue or critical incident you experienced during the first year in post? (Incidents, people involved, feeling, etc)

In what ways this challenge shaped your headship performance?

Support in handling challenges

Which of these socialisation sources/factors did you draw upon handling challenges during headship?

- In-service training
- Senior management team
- Previous leadership experience
- Interaction-networking with other heads (novice and experienced)
- Cooperation/relationship with staff
- Communication with LEA
- School inspector

Future training needs

What do you see as your future development needs?

## **Appendix G: Interview schedule-Phase C (follow-up interviews)**

### ***Interview Schedule***

#### Developing leadership capacity and management skills

What is it like to lead this primary school for three/four years?

From your experience in headship, what would you say has helped you most to lead this school?

#### Organisational socialisation/school vision/changes

What difficulties/challenges you encountered in this school and what actions did you take to face them?

Did you receive any support from people inside and outside school (colleagues, leadership team, parents association, local authorities, etc)? To what extent?

How did you promote changes and school vision in school unit?

- What enhanced/encouraged your initiative to implement and fulfil school vision?
- What difficulties/problems did you meet in implementing school vision and introducing changes in school?
- In what ways these challenges shaped your leadership performance and the introduction of changes in school?

What changes would you like to promote in school in the future?



## Appendix H: Interview consent form

### *Interview Consent Form*

I, ..... headteacher of .....,  
agree to participate in an interview conducted by Valentina Theodosiou as part of her  
thesis titled 'Looking into early headship: the socialisation experiences of new primary  
headteachers in Cyprus'.

I have read the information leaflet about the research.  (please tick)

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher.  (please tick)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have discussed the project with the above interviewee and answered any further  
questions regarding its aims and the manipulation of the collected data. Issues of  
anonymity and traceability in research were also discussed.

Researcher's name: Valentina Theodosiou

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix I: An overview of the interviewees

Table I1: Interview participants (initial interview)

	Gender (M/F)	Age	Years in service	Years as head	Qualifications		Headship	School context/ pupils/staff
					Basic (B) Postgraduate (P)			
A	F	40	19	1	P		1 <sup>st</sup>	Small rural primary/63*/8**
B	M	58	31	2	B		2 <sup>nd</sup>	Medium urban primary/130/13
C	F	44	23	1	P		1 <sup>st</sup>	Large rural primary/146/11
D	F	58	36	1	B		1 <sup>st</sup>	Medium urban primary/140/12
E	M	56	33	1	B		1 <sup>st</sup>	Large urban primary/165/15
F	M	44	21	2	P		2 <sup>nd</sup>	Medium urban primary/109/10
G	F	48	26	1	P		1 <sup>st</sup>	Small urban special/47/18
H	F	46	25	2	P		1 <sup>st</sup>	Small rural primary/59/12
I	M	51	28	1	B		1 <sup>st</sup>	Small rural primary/75/12
J	F	51	30	1	B		1 <sup>st</sup>	Large pre- primary/125/9
K	F	39	18	1	P		1 <sup>st</sup>	Medium urban primary/83/11
L	F	53	32	1	B		1 <sup>st</sup>	Large pre- primary/99/7

\*=number of pupils enrolled in school, \*\*=number of teachers serving in school

### **Participant A**

The first participant was a young female first-time headteacher in a small rural primary school of 63 pupils. She had 19 years in service and she possessed a Master's degree and a PhD in Educational Leadership. The school was operating as an All-Day Option school I for the pupils of the 4<sup>th</sup>, the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The school participated in Environmental Schools' Programme and in the Programme of European Network of Schools for the promotion of Health. The headteacher was an active researcher and she had published her work about ICT, professional development and the management and leadership of schools in numerous recognised international journals. Prior to her promotion, she had been appointed to the Ministry of Education and Culture for many years. This participant was not available for a follow-up interview, since she had been promoted to an executive post within the MOEC.

### **Participant B**

Participant B was a male headteacher with 31 years in service and he was on his second headship at the time of conducting initial interviews. He was first appointed in one of the largest primary schools in Cyprus. His second headship was in a large primary school at the periphery of the capital, which consisted of two cycles. He was the head of the upper circle (grades 4, 5 and 6) with 140 pupils. He had served in that school in the past as a deputy head. The school participated in Comenius Programme and in Environmental Schools' Programme and it had a bilateral partnership with a Greek primary school. During the follow-up interviews, he was still in second headship.

### **Participant C**

The third participant was a young female first-time headteacher with 23 years in service. She possessed a Master degree in Education with specialisation in Curriculum Development and School Management and Leadership. The school in which she served was a large rural primary school of 146 pupils. It participated in Comenius Programme and in Environmental Schools'

Programme. In the past, she had been appointed to the MOEC for 8 years as a teacher advisor. She was actively involved in the editorial team of a children's magazine. She was still in her first headship and she would continue working in that school.

### **Participant D**

Participant D was a female headteacher with 36 years in service. She served in a large urban primary school which was located in the heart of the city. She was the head of the lower circle (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) consisting of 140 pupils. The school used to be among the best schools in the capital, but at the time of the study an important number of its pupils (18%) were children of migrant workers and they faced various difficulties in school. The school was located in an old neighbourhood and it had a small yard. It participated in Comenius Programme. The headteacher was about to retire, after the follow-up interview took place.

### **Participant E**

This was a male first-time headteacher with 33 years in service. He served in a large urban primary school which was located in a disadvantaged area of the second largest city in Cyprus. He was the headteacher of the upper circle with 165 pupils coming from different countries. The school participated in Environmental Schools' Programme and they had applied for the Programme of European Network of Schools for the promotion of Emotional Health. Most of its pupils were children of Cypriot refugees, which had been displaced from their villages during the Turkish invasion in 1974, or children of migrant workers from Philippines, Egypt and many eastern European countries. Twenty of its pupils attended Greek language classes for foreign learners and supplementary courses for foreign language pupils. The socio-economic background of the inhabitants of the area around the school was low and pupils in school faced a lot of behavioural problems. In the afternoons, the school premises and property were vandalised and many thefts happened during his headship. The headteacher was coming from a different district and he had to drive to school

daily. Unfortunately, this participant retired a year after the initial interview, and, thus, he was not available for a follow-up interview.

### **Participant F**

This participant was a male headteacher with 21 years in service and two years of experience in headteacher's post. He was on his second headship during initial interviews. His first headship was in a large urban primary school in another district and his second headship was in a medium-sized urban primary school in the same district as his residence. The school had 109 pupils and it was under reconstruction and renovation. The school applied for the European Comenius Programme and it was a member of the Environmental Schools' Programme. It also participated in Daphne programme for managing bullying in schools. The headteacher had a Master's degree in Education and a special interest in sports and politics. He used ICT in teaching and managing school at a great extent. During the follow-up interview, he was still in his second headship and he would continue to work at the same school.

### **Participant G**

Participant G was a first-time female headteacher with 26 years of experience. She had a Bachelor in Special Education and a Master in Educational Management. She served in private education for some years and as a special education teacher in public primary schools for many years. Prior to her promotion, she had been appointed at the MOEC as an advisor for special schools. Her first headship was in an urban special school with 47 pupils aged between 5 and 21. The school participated in a European Comenius programme, the programme AGORA for pupils' transition to work after school and in many events organised by the municipality. The head was coming from another district and she was driving to school daily. After a year in that school, she moved onto her second headship in an urban special school in the same district as her residence. That school was specialised for children facing mental and severe behavioural problems, aged between 14 and 21. It had 52 pupils and it

was staffed with 27 teachers, including a music therapist, two special PE teachers, two occupational therapists and a speech pathologist. The school operated as an Optional All-day school for 20 pupils and it participated in the Programme of European Network of Schools for the promotion of Health. In special schools, the head, deputies and teachers are appointed by the ESC, while the head is responsible for recruiting teachers of other specialities, such as speech pathologists, occupational therapists, a physiotherapist, music therapists, special PE teachers and psychologists, who work for the school on contract.

### **Participant H**

This was a female headteacher with 25 years in service. She was the head of a small rural primary school which operated as a Compulsory All-Day School for all pupils. It was one of the fifteen Compulsory All-Day Schools which operated around the island with timetable from 7.45a.m. to 4.00p.m. The school operated as a regional school for pupils coming from two other villages and for children of migrant workers who lived in an industrial area near the school. It had 59 pupils, most of which were children of Cypriot refugees coming from the occupied part of the island. The school participates in the European Comenius Programme and in the Programme of European Network of Schools for the promotion of Health. It also participated in Daphne programme for dealing with bullying in schools. Apart from teaching staff allocated to school by the ESC, nine teachers were hired on contract for the following subjects: ballet, French language, taekwondo, music, English language, sports, theatre and drama education. The headteacher had a Master in Education and she was a distinguished writer and poet, as she had been awarded many prizes for her work. She served that school for four years and she was about to move into her second headship, just after the follow-up interview.

### **Participant I**

This participant was a male headteacher with 28 years of experience and he was a first-time head in a medium-sized rural primary school. He lived in a village nearby the school. The school was situated in a traditional village on the mountains and it was a regional school for pupils coming from seven villages in the area. It had 75 pupils. Three fourths of the children in school were from the village, two children were from Latvia and the others were coming from the neighbouring villages. The school participated in the Programme of European Network of Schools for the promotion of Health. It was built in the middle of a village with long tradition, a fact that impacted school's actions. The socio-cultural background of the village was acknowledged by the school and the village's tradition in lace making, silverware, goldsmith and agro-tourism was taken into consideration. After spending four years in that school, the headteacher was about to move into his second headship, just after the follow-up interview.

### **Participant J**

This participant was a new female pre-primary headteacher in a large school in Limassol. She had 30 years of experience and she was coming from the same district. Prior to her appointment in public schools, she had worked in private schools. The school in which she served was located in a suburb, it had 125 pupils and it was staffed by nine teachers. It participated in a Museum Education programme and a programme of the National Orchestra. As she mentioned, she served that school for three years and she would continue to work in the same school until retirement.

### **Participant K**

Participant K was a young female first-time headteacher with 18 years of experience. She had further academic qualifications in education, such as a Master's and a PhD in Educational management. She was also an active researcher and an author of two books regarding school pedagogy. She had

published much of her work in recognised international journals and magazines. Her first headship was in a school of 83 pupils at the outskirts of the capital, which was divided in two circles. The participant was the headteacher of the lower circle (grades 1-3). Almost one third of the pupils in school were foreigners and faced difficulties attending school lessons in Greek language. The school participated in Environmental Schools' Programme and the Programme of European Network of Schools for the promotion of Health.

### **Participant L**

The last participant was a new female pre-primary head with 32 years in service. She was appointed internally as a head, after being an acting head for five years in that school. The school was located in the city centre, it had 99 pupils and six teachers. There was no deputy head appointed in school. Moreover, around 20% of pupils were foreigners, since the school was built in the city centre - an area easily accessible to foreign inhabitants. It participated in Museum Education programme and the Programme of European Network of Schools for the promotion of Health. After a year in post, she moved onto her second headship in a large regional rural school in the same district. The second school had 105 pupils and it was staffed with 5 teachers. Within the school, a special education unit was operating and it was staffed with two special education teachers and a speech pathologist. The school participated in Environmental Schools' Programme and many of its actions were firmly related to the community. As she admitted, she wished to spend the remaining of her career in that school.



**Table I2: Participants in follow-up interviews**

	<b>Gender</b> (M/F)	<b>Age</b>	<b>Years</b> <b>in</b> <b>service</b>	<b>Years</b> <b>as</b> <b>head</b>	<b>Headship</b>	<b>Qualification</b> Basic (B) Postgraduate (P)	<b>School context/ no.pupils/no.staff</b>
A							Promoted to an executive post
B	M	60	33	4	2 <sup>nd</sup>	B	Medium urban primary/130*/13**
C	F	46	25	3	1 <sup>st</sup>	P	Large rural primary school/146/11
D	F	60	38	3	1 <sup>st</sup>	B	Medium-sized urban primary school/140/12
E							Retired
F	M	46	23	4	2 <sup>nd</sup>	P	Medium-sized urban primary school/109/10
G	F	50	28	3	2 <sup>nd</sup>	P	Medium-sized urban special school/52/27
H	F	48	27	4	1 <sup>st</sup>	P	Small rural primary school/59/12
I	M	53	30	3	1 <sup>st</sup>	B	Small rural primary school/75/12
J	F	53	32	3	1 <sup>st</sup>	B	Large pre-primary school/125/9
K	F	41	20	3	1 <sup>st</sup>	P	Medium-sized urban primary school/83/11
L	F	55	34	3	2 <sup>nd</sup>	B	Large sub-urban pre-primary school/105/5

(n=12)

\*=number of pupils enrolled in school

\*\*=number of teachers serving in school

## Appendix J: Definition of coding categories

During the analysis of the data, a coding framework was employed consisting of seven thematic categories and other sub-categories. Two of the coding categories and their definitions are presented below, to form an example of the coding process.

**Table J.1: Coding categories and their definitions**

### **Preparation for headship**

Preparation for headship encompass the way new heads have acquired the skills, the knowledge and dispositions needed to perform headship effectively, through numerous formal and informal anticipatory and professional socialisation experiences.

#### *Formal leadership experience*

Leadership experience that enhanced the leadership development of individuals gained formally in service, such as experience in deputy headship, acting headship and while serving in small schools.

#### *Self-initiated experience*

Experiences gained informally that enhanced the development of the leadership capacity of individuals, such as personal involvement in leadership tasks, postgraduate studies and various experiences in different contexts inside and outside schools.

### **Professional identity formation**

Professional identity formation is the process through which aspiring and new heads structure for themselves a conception of the role to perform in post.

#### *Initial conceptions prior to appointment*

On paths to headship, anticipatory and professional socialisation experiences shape heads' initial conceptions of headship and their responsibilities in post. Formal headship preparation has been found to make such conceptions more solid.

#### *Reshaped conceptions upon appointment*

On assuming headship, initial conceptions of headship are revised in light of the contextual circumstances and school culture. Thus, new head structure a new role for themselves in post, shaping, thus leadership enactment in schools.