

"Assessing readiness for headship within accredited school leader development programmes - a cross-country comparative analysis"

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Reflective statement on areas covered and their links

Introduction

As a student on the EdD programme I feel my professional identity as a practitioner, as a learner and as a researcher has been strengthened. Being part of a 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) has been of tremendous benefit in helping me grapple with difficult theoretical and conceptual frameworks amidst significant changes to my professional life, not least retiring from the headship of an outstanding school in 2013. The opportunity to engage in debate, and to listen to colleagues from a wide range of professional backgrounds, including health and higher education, has widened my vision of professionalism and encouraged me to refine elements of good practice in my own field of school leadership.

The general preoccupation of headship might be expressed as trying to ensure the school community is as happy and successful as it may be. With the core purposes of the organisation being the education and nurturing of the students, the quality of teaching and learning is the major element in those components which combine to secure this aim. In addition, effective leadership - providing a pervading sense of moral purpose to the whole organisation - is the other essential component. On reflection therefore, it is not surprising that the areas covered during the EdD course are very much grounded in key aspects of my professional life: teacher professionalism and efficacy; student engagement in learning; leadership development and assessment.

Module 1: Foundations of Professionalism in Education

My initial assignment grew out of an interest in how teacher professionalism had changed during my own career span. The assignment offered me the opportunity to reflect on those changes, and to attempt my own analysis using particular theoretical and conceptual lenses. It also allowed me to revisit some key historical events within the political arena that had impacted on the professional lives of teachers since 1980. Finally, it afforded me the opportunity to reflect on the evolution of my own professional identity - an opportunity to look back no longer in anger, but in a more detached analytical manner. The process of reflexivity this module introduced me to has sustained me in my professional life and prac-

tice, not only in headship, but in my related HE and NPQH work where, after 32 years in schools, I have had to get used to being less institutionally embedded. Reflecting on my NPQH work in particular nurtured my research interest in school leadership, particularly the challenge of assessing 'readiness' for headship in aspirant headteachers.

An exciting element of this first assignment was the opportunity it afforded me to develop the argument that schools themselves could be the basis for a new emerging teacher professionalism. Being able to utilise key concepts and theories such as that of the ethical professional (Lunt, 2008) and the activist professional (Sachs, 2003) deepened my understanding of how the notion of teacher professionalism has changed over time, and how it might change in the future. In addition, being able to draw on the work of Ball - for example his concept of performativity (Ball, 1994) - has allowed me to develop insights into the key historical events that shaped the educational landscape during the last 30 years, such as the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). My understanding of national government education policy, and the ideological drivers behind it, has also been significantly developed from its starting point. Ball's (2006) analysis of the impact of the ERA on the curriculum, and his dissection of the political processes at work, struck a deep chord with my own 'lived experience'. This gave me the confidence to attempt a critical argument that was grounded in a coherent historical and theoretical perspective.

Module 2: Methods of Enquiry 1: Theoretical and Conceptual Issues in Educational Research

One theme, implicit in my initial assignment, but not developed, was that of widening democratic practices within schools. Being exposed to notions of democratic practice informed the focus for my second assignment and provided a possible emerging underlying theme for the taught course and the assignments. As a first, albeit theoretical, foray into research, I wished to focus on some aspect of Student Voice. Having experienced its emergence and establishment during my professional life, I welcomed the opportunity to review the research literature and to develop a proposal that allowed me to explore how a greater level of student involvement in the design and construction of a learning programme might impact on student learning. In addition, my professional role as

headteacher had made me acutely and almost constantly aware of power relations within the school context. I aimed to develop a proposal that addressed the issue of power both in its theoretical and practical aspects through a discussion of the typologies of Hart (1992) and Fielding (2004). By applying Hart's 'ladder of youth participation' at 'level six', I proposed a research design that focused on students acting as co-researchers in an adult project, where they shared some of the decision making. In this sense the assignment aimed to explore how the extension of more democratic practices, and a subtle change in the teacher-pupil relationship, might be beneficial to student achievement.

This course equipped me with the theoretical knowledge to write a research proposal with a deeper understanding of the literature on research methods. In terms of a proposed research methodology, the assignment enabled me to develop an initial and, on reflection, somewhat superficial understanding of constructivism. I was also able to develop a limited understanding of mixed method research. My tutor's comments, that the chosen research methods were *suitable* and their exploration *competent* - while other comments were more positive - should, on reflection, have alerted me to an area of relative weakness that would be exposed later. A more detailed treatment of this point is given in my reflection on the fourth assignment.

Module 3: Initial specialist course: Leadership and Learning in Educational Organisations

My third assignment was again informed by the notion of extending democratic, or at least collaborative, practices in schools, this time within a leadership context. In this assignment I attempted a discussion which tried to combine personal reflection about my own 'leadership journey' with some conceptual and situational analysis. I was particularly drawn to a notion of leadership that the course brought to my attention as 'servant leadership'. I argued that democratic potentialities were implicit in this approach to leadership and that Student Voice, if seen as a greater willingness to nurture more democratic practices involving students, also lurked in the notion of servant leadership. Using the definition of continuing professional development developed by Bubb and Earley (2007), I also discussed what form CPD should take in a collaborative and distributed

leadership culture. This discussion informed my decision to focus on the impact of masters level CPD for my Institution Focused Study.

Module 4: Methods of Enquiry 2: Research Processes and Skills

The assignment for this module was particularly valuable as the project was part of my on-going professional work, and the research findings had direct relevance to the current professional practice of my colleagues in school. It was an exacting assignment for me in which I learnt about the discipline of research. Attempting to turn the MOE (1) into a real life research project was highly instructive. Key lessons learnt were centred on:

- Organisation of time
- Close attention to detail
- Building and sustaining 'momentum' with the project, rather than sporadic bouts of activity
- Rigour in research design and organisation
- Research methods.

The project improved my data analysis and my ability to integrate different data sets. The experience of using thematic coding analysis was very valuable and is a technique I used successfully in my IFS and Thesis.

Despite my difficulties with this assignment, I feel the project was of real value to the students, the teachers and the school. The two teachers involved in the project took significant professional risks in that they invited students to have a considerable say in the design of the courses and how they should be taught. The learning conversations, designed to measure attitudes to learning, also exposed the state of the teacher/pupil relationship, and therefore reflected on them too. Their willingness to take these risks ensured that the project had some impact. I argued in the assignment that the project gave the students greater agency (Watkins, 2005) – perhaps only for a temporary period. I also argued for some legacy effect on both them and their teachers, and on their teaching and learning.

The Institution Focused Study

The IFS grew out of my awareness of the changing nature of teacher professionalism and the potential such change has, not only to raise the status of the profession, but to improve the learning of all students.

The focus of my IFS was a study of the MA programme provided for staff (teaching and non-teaching) at the school where I was headteacher. As I progressed in my EdD, the development of the most effective model of sustainable master's level postgraduate professional development (PPD) focused on school leadership became a major interest. Clearly such a model should have an embedded evaluative element to monitor impact accurately, and it was in this context that my research was situated.

The IFS also enabled me to further develop my understanding of research theory and skills. The theoretical perspective underpinning the study was located within the qualitative paradigm and was grounded in social constructionism. A preference for this broad paradigm has become evident, but Hood's (2006) comment that 'most researchers will not fit neatly into the categories of any given typology' seems increasingly apt regarding my approach to research. This is reflected in my thesis methodology where a pragmatic stance is adopted. I successfully completed the IFS in the autumn term 2013. This boosted my confidence and I subsequently embarked on developing my thesis proposal through a literature review.

In completing the four assignments and the IFS, I feel I made progress in my academic writing skills and in my appreciation of different theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks. At this stage I still needed to develop the willingness and ability to critique the work of others more, and my research and data handling skills remained relatively unsophisticated. The thesis proposal helped me to develop these further. In terms of my research interests, I decided to focus on school leadership development and the assessment of 'readiness' for the exacting role of headteacher. This area was the subject of my thesis which I started in September 2014.

The Thesis

The thesis, using the assessment frameworks of school leader development programmes (SLDPs) in two education systems, considers whether and how it is possible and appropriate to assess readiness for headship using competency-based models in quasi-market systems. It then aims to add to our knowledge and understanding of how assessment processes can be strengthened and improved as part of a quality management system. The findings were used to critique the current system of aspirant principal assessment in England and Hong Kong; to suggest how leadership assessment in both jurisdictions could be enhanced; and to contribute to the debate on the efficacy or otherwise of SLDP assessment in confirming readiness for headship. The conclusion of the research is that the professional development and assessment of aspirant headteachers based on competencies could play an important role in promoting pupil learning and well-being, but that this potential has not been fully exploited, and is compromised by ideology-driven policy imperatives. In addition, the enquiry process devised for and tested in this research offers a diagnostic tool capable of producing a detailed audit on the overall efficacy of other current SLDP assessment systems, and in guiding the development of new models.

Conclusion

A particularly valuable aspect of the EdD course has been receiving the formative and summative feedback on the assignments, the IFS, and the thesis. This feedback process has allowed me to gain greater knowledge of my strengths and weaknesses and a growing awareness of my emerging professional and research interests.

1999 words

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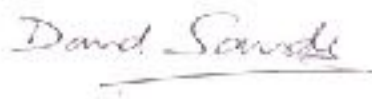
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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Mary O'Hara Waghorn.

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

Signed:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Sands". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

The word count for this thesis is 44765.

"Assessing readiness for headship within accredited school leader development programmes - a cross-country comparative analysis"

Abstract

Using evaluative case study as the form of enquiry, this thesis considers whether and how it is possible and appropriate to assess readiness for headship within SLDPs. A three-stage enquiry process was devised which was then tested on the assessment systems of Hong Kong and England, through a cross-country comparison.

There was a pragmatic approach to the research, the central notion being that the meaning of a concept lies in its practical implications in the world as it is experienced. Within this broad paradigm the research focus called for qualitative data collection methods, although a multi-strategy research design was employed. Multiple data collection and analysis techniques were utilised.

Key findings from the research show a sharp contrast between the two assessment systems. In Hong Kong, the research casts doubt on whether the assessment system, as currently designed, is the best way for candidates to demonstrate their capacity in the key qualities of principalship, and therefore their readiness for the role. In England, the findings indicate that the assessment system incorporates some but not all of the features identified by research as good practice, and that it is, with some qualifications, an effective tool in assessing candidate readiness for headship.

More generally the research demonstrates that assessing readiness for headship is best attempted using a competency-based assessment system, fully aligned to a set of national standards where both are underpinned by established research findings rather than political policy imperatives. It has also shown that a competency structure offers the best opportunities for leadership learning to be conceptualised, comprehended and assessed. Finally, the three-stage enquiry process tested in this research offers a diagnostic tool capable of producing a detailed audit on the overall efficacy of other current and projected SLDP assessment systems.

Impact statement

There has been substantial international research into the leadership practices SLDPs are designed to enable graduates to demonstrate. However the importance of assessment has been overlooked, which reflects the historic neglect of candidate assessment during the development of SLDPs. The specific contribution of this thesis lies in its focus on assessment. Its impact on the debate concerning how best to assess aspirant school leaders will be realised by the knowledge created being disseminated in academic journals.

This study has forged articulated links between the elements of candidate assessment, national standards, effective leadership practices, and best practice in assessment system design. In doing so it has asserted the place of aspirant school leader assessment in the wider endeavour of improving pupil outcomes through improved leadership performance. The cross-country comparative methodology of the study has allowed a close examination of these elements, throwing into sharp relief the differences between the two jurisdictions. By considering these differences in conception, construction and perception secure judgements have been made that point to how future SLDP assessment may be developed in the two jurisdictions, and internationally. By presenting a broader and more holistic conceptual framework in which to conceive of SLDP research it will have an impact on research methodology and methods.

The evidence produced by the three-stage procedure underpinning this research shows that the potential improvements in SLDP assessment to be gained from ensuring a clear and articulated relationship between national standards, research findings and competency-based structures are considerable, but have not been fully recognised. In addition, the trialling of the three-stage procedure encapsulated in this research demonstrates that it could be applied to other SLDPs and assessment systems to provide a useful audit of their efficacy, together with recommendations as to how they might be enhanced. It could also serve as a helpful tool in constructing new SLDPs which are underpinned by quality assessment processes. All of these benefits will be of interest to public policy makers and programme developers in a wide range of jurisdictions.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale, context and organisation

There is considerable evidence confirming the importance of effective leadership to overall school performance (Rutter et al., 1979; Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990; Barber et al., 2010; Day et al., 2009). However, Brundett (Brundrett and Crawford, 2008) argues that until 2000, few countries paid close attention to the systematic development of school leaders, and that, while leadership development has become a key focus of educational systems in many nations, it remains under-examined and under-researched in most. This thesis argues that this deficit particularly applies to how leadership preparedness is assessed and verified, including the relationship between being judged as ready for principalship and subsequent impact. Using evaluative case study as the form of enquiry, it considers whether and how it is possible and appropriate to assess readiness for headship using competency-based models in quasi market systems.

Focusing on two jurisdictions, Hong Kong and England, it does this by firstly determining the level of alignment between the national standards for headteachers and the assessment criteria used by the SLDPs in each jurisdiction. This is because, ideally, in any national framework for school leader development, the assessment system used to determine readiness for headship should grow directly out of the national standards. There should be an intellectually coherent, traceable and articulated relationship between the two, so that how well the aspirations of the standards are reflected in the assessment is clearly visible.

Secondly, the extent to which each assessment system evaluated those practices and activities most critical to successful school leadership, as measured by pupil outcomes, broadly defined, was investigated. The extent to which each assessment system incorporated best practice in assessment system design was also ascertained.

Research literature was used to construct a summary document which encapsulated recent research findings on (a) those instructional and transformational leadership practices most efficacious in improving student outcomes, and (b)

how SLDP assessment systems should be designed, organised and operationalised. Details of how this was constructed are given in the literature review, while how it was deployed is explained in the methodology chapter. The aim was to investigate to what extent the assessment systems assessed the right things in the best ways.

Thirdly, bearing in mind that the documentary texts and meanings of programme developers and policy makers do not always translate directly into institutional practice, and arguably only become 'real' when enacted in the social arena, the perceptions of the social actors involved in enacting the assessment process were sought. These perceptions were felt to be an important measure of assessment system efficacy.

Employing these three areas of enquiry in a cross-country comparative analysis, an evaluation was arrived at regarding the efficacy of each assessment system and how it could be improved. More generally, whether and how competency-based assessment is a feasible and appropriate mechanism for assessing readiness for headship was considered. A discussion of what the findings have contributed to the debate surrounding assessment in SLDPs concludes the thesis.

Since the practice of school leadership is highly dependent on how it is positioned and supported, which in turn is determined by the prevailing political and cultural climate, each assessment system needed to be examined within its socio-political context, which included the national governance structure. Therefore, the research also involved a review of the evolving policy framework in each jurisdiction, together with an analysis of policy development and how this has impacted on leader autonomy, accountability and school leader professional development. This is presented in the next chapter.

The literature review, which follows on from this, discusses the merits of different assessment approaches; reviews the origins and development of competency-based systems; examines critical stances towards competency frameworks, and considers the challenges of using them to assess readiness for headship. The literature deployed in ascertaining those practices most critical to

successful school leadership, and those features which constitute best practice in assessment system design, is also reviewed. Finally, the summaries developed from this literature, and used in the research, are presented.

The standpoint of this research is that professional development for aspirant headteachers based on competencies has a key role to play in raising school performance. However the assessment of competencies cannot be viewed as a solely technical or completely objective process. Assessment must involve professional judgements, and therefore an element of subjectivity on the part of the assessor. Given this situation, it is arguable that a dialogic balance needs to be struck between the assessor, the participant, and their mentor which arguably could move the assessment from 'thin' descriptions of outward appearance to 'thick' perceptions of organisational reality and leader influence. The assessment models in this study decide readiness by considering written and oral evidence of what impact the candidate has had. This evidence is nominally presented and verified by both applicants and sponsors (usually the candidate's principal or line manager). However, in most cases this evidence is under the control of the candidate. In other words, the emphasis is less on internal leader development and more on external manifestations of effectiveness, exemplified by data generated by the candidate. This raises interesting questions about the assessment of headteacher performance, and about whether the conception of the purpose of headship has changed (that is, narrowed) in response to changing societal and political values.

As a graduate of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH); as a headteacher sponsor for colleagues on the course; and in my own professional practice as an NPQH facilitator and assessor, I have had ample opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of the NPQH assessment system, both personally and with colleagues. To candidates, assessors act as gatekeepers to national recognition as 'being ready' for headship. As such, ensuring that the assessment system for aspirant headteachers continually reflects best practice is both a personal and professional concern. However, my experience has confirmed that most professionals involved, including myself, find it much easier to critique the current assessment system than to suggest how it could be improved. Therefore, it was felt that to research this field offered an opportunity to

make a positive contribution to the assessment of future school leaders. It also seemed that a cross-country comparative analysis offered the best prospect of moving away from critique and towards useful suggestions for improvement.

1.2 The selection of a SLDP for comparison

The selection criteria for the second aspirant headteacher assessment model to compare NPQH against focused on indicators of excellence in school performance as measured by pupil outcomes, and in leadership practice and preparation. A further criterion was that only systems with relatively high levels of school autonomy, where the concept of principalship consequently carried greater significance, were considered. Using these criteria three SLDPs were initially selected.

At the state level each of the selected leadership programmes is located in jurisdictions in the top ten performers in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012. Clearly there is not a direct relationship between PISA results and leadership preparation and assessment. In addition, the impact of PISA on national education policies and global education reform has been critiqued by, among others, Sahlberg (2011) and Mortimore (2013). The assumption that PISA alone should be used to judge the quality of education systems has also been challenged, not least in Finland, a high performer within PISA rankings since 2000. However PISA reports do encourage international competition to raise student achievement which, from 2015, was more broadly defined. They are closely tracked by those responsible for educational policy-making looking for strategies to improve the performance of their education systems. Researchers are equally drawn to high performing systems as potential sources of knowledge and insight. Consequently, high level performance in PISA is acknowledged in academic research on school leadership, and is judged to be a legitimate and appropriate criterion for selection.

The jurisdictions from which the selected leadership programmes were drawn are also recognised for excellence in educational leadership (Barber et al., 2010; Walker et al., 2013). As federated countries such as Canada and Australia tend to show diverse performance on PISA, these studies assisted in narrowing the shortlisting of programmes down to the state level. Research-based

indicators of outstanding leadership programmes characterised by high performance outcomes (Darling Hammond et al., 2010) also assisted the selection.

A further criterion for selection was that each programme led to a qualification accredited by a regulatory agency. Interestingly, many of the top ranked PISA performers do not have leadership preparation programmes that are formally assessed. The final criterion applied was that only systems which operated programmes in English were included. This was a practical consideration employed to facilitate data collection and analysis. The jurisdictions finally selected were Hong Kong (China), Ontario (Canada), and Victoria (Australia).

From this shortlist Hong Kong was finally selected as the researcher won a UCL Doctoral School Exchange Bursary which funded a visit to Hong Kong University from 21st April - 19th May 2015. The exchange enabled first-hand knowledge of the Certification for Principalship (CFP) programme for aspirant principals to be gained. The exchange facilitated personal contact with key individuals responsible for the programme, and encouraged professional research-based relationships to develop. Personal contact with providers, assessors and candidates was also made possible by the field visit, as was a study of the relevant documentation. As discussed in the methodology chapter, the principal research method employed in the study was semi-structured interviews, and the exchange facilitated this.

1.3 Principal assessment models in the context of wider debates on leadership

Recent international research has confirmed that, though indirect, the impact of school leadership on a range of school performance indicators is significant (Walker and Dimmock, 2006; Robinson et al., 2009, Barber et al., 2010, Louis et al., 2010; Sammons et al., 2011). As a result, there has been an increasing level of interest shown internationally in developing high quality SLDPs which include work-based approaches to leader development (Darling-Hammond et al. 2010, Pont et al. 2008, Barber et al. 2010). In the highest performing systems there is a growing realisation among system leaders that such programmes have the potential to equip aspirant principals with those aspects of transformational and instructional leadership which will ensure improved school

performance, as measured by pupil outcomes in surveys such as PISA. In addition, research (e.g. Barber et al., 2010; Darling Hammond et al., 2010; Pounder, 2011) has identified a set of features common to high quality SLDPs which indicate that a consensus on such features may be emerging.

However other research indicates that some principal preparation routes and assessments are still not effective. Using ten years of data on test-takers in Tennessee, Grissom, Mitani and Blissett (2017) investigated the most common exam used as a condition of obtaining an administrative license in the USA, the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA). Their analysis indicated that, although applicants with higher scores were more likely to secure a principalship, SLLA scores did not predict potential measures of principal job performance, including supervisor ratings from the statewide evaluation system or leadership ratings from a statewide teacher survey.

Despite considerable evidence confirming the importance of effective leadership to overall school performance, Hallinger (2003) has argued that little interest was shown in school leadership preparation and assessment, except in the USA, before the mid-1990s. That the NPQH in England did not get underway until 1997, and the CFP in Hong Kong until 2002, bears this out. Ng (2003) describes school leadership development and preparation in Hong Kong prior to the 2002 reforms as peripheral, ad hoc, and built predominantly around perceived deficits. This applies particularly to the assessment of aspirant head teachers. Crow (2006) argues that it is only relatively recently that the growing evidence of the importance of school leadership for school improvement has led to a recognition that the preparation and development of school leaders might make a difference to their effectiveness.

While Lumby, Crow and Pashiardis, (2008) note that the attention on leadership preparation and assessment has increased, in their view the quality of this attention varies. They accept that reports and articles have acknowledged the importance of understanding how school leaders prepare for and develop in their roles, but argue that these have predominantly been critiques of university-based preparation programmes, rather than comparative treatments of the range of preparation and development processes and providers. Orr (2006), in

arguing that only from 2006 have there been rigorous efforts to document the effects of leadership development and preparation over time, supports this view. The previous dearth of published research which explicitly focuses on international comparisons has recently begun to be addressed (Lumby, Crow and Pashiardis, 2008). However, as the authors themselves assert, the key purpose of their volume is to encourage researchers to look for and fill gaps in our research knowledge.

Using the international context to consider the key features of different models of aspirant principal assessment therefore seems a relevant area of research that could produce new knowledge about where and how systems might be developed and improved in the future. It is in this international context that the thesis aims to contribute to our understanding of potential leadership assessment. It will add to our knowledge of how assessment systems operate, and how they are perceived by those participating in them.

Leadership development, preparation and assessment is however a contested arena. This reflects larger debates on leadership itself, including models of leadership. These broader debates necessarily affect how leadership preparation and assessment are considered in different countries. Cultural factors also influence decisions about the design of principal preparation and assessment programmes, as do political priorities. For example, preparing school leaders for particular circumstances which may be inherently challenging will influence the form that leadership preparation and assessment takes.

Moreover, there are some contexts where ideological or state political purposes are covertly influential or even overtly emphasised. For example, Ball (1990, 2013), through his forensic examination of English policy development and implementation from the 1980s to the 2000s, constructs a convincing picture of covert influence being exercised, while Gunter and Forrester (2009) argue that the National College for School Leadership's (NCSL) policy agenda was subject to active control by government. This issue has particular resonance when considering how head teacher values are tested, and even altered, by changing policy contexts (Rayner, 2014). However these politico-cultural pressures must

be seen in the context of an emerging international consensus around what forms of practice constitute effective school leadership.

Additionally, there is a considerable body of research (Gronn, 2002, 2003; O'Reilly and Reed, 2010; Simkins, 2012) critiquing what Walker, Bryant and Moosung (2013) term the structural-functionalist approach to studies of leadership development programmes. In particular, Gronn (2002) problematises those SLDPs which are aligned with standards-based approaches as “designer leadership”. Taking Foucault’s (1980) concept of disciplined subjectivity, Gronn (2002, p.552) posits that aspirant school leaders are expected to subject themselves to standards-based SLDPs by “acting in conformity with a leadership design blueprint” which is accredited by the standardisers themselves, invariably a state agency such as, in England, the NCTL and in Hong Kong, the Education Bureau. For Gronn these programmes are seen as social apparatuses to achieve disciplined subjectivity. O'Reilly and Reid (2010) argue that an emerging set of beliefs has delineated and justified particular changes in contemporary organisational and leadership practice, which they term leaderism. They further argue that leaderism acts as an instrument of social and organisational control by state organisations or their agents. Given, therefore, that the goals and outcomes of SLDPs are likely to be contested areas, Simkins (2012) advocates more studies from constructionist perspectives noting that “the formation of leader identity is at least as significant an issue as the development of specific skills and qualities” (p. 634).

As a practitioner-researcher researching the social world of aspirant principal assessment, I felt such a constructionist perspective would result in a deeper and more authentic insight into how effective the two assessment systems were in practice. Thus, the research sought to gather evidence from those doing the assessing and those being assessed. The perspectives of assessment system providers was also useful in understanding these SLDPs.

Sahlberg’s (2011) critique of what he terms the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) serves to connect the structural-functionalist debate about school leadership effectiveness to the wider one about what values should ultimately underpin any education system which aspires to be among the best in

the world. Therefore, an exploration as to the place of educational values within different systems, and how they are conceptualised and prioritised, was considered as part of the study. However, among the top ten PISA jurisdictions, differing cultural contexts exist, mirrored in different educational value systems, so widening the scope of the research was not viewed as feasible. Thus, while this study focuses on a comparative analysis based on empirical research, it is appreciated that other studies, from more critical perspectives, and using different approaches (e.g. critical discourse analysis) are needed to analyse the goals, strategies and outcomes of standards-based leadership programmes. However it was anticipated (rightly) that some critical perspectives would emerge when analysing the documentation and interviewing those involved in the programmes. The policy analysis also served to delineate the policy environment which each programme inhabits.

Nonetheless, while values are an important variable, meta-reviews of the impact of school leadership on pupil outcomes, such as the Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) conducted by Robinson et al. (2009), indicate that there are key areas of effective leadership which seem to be significant irrespective of context. These areas, in summary form, were used to gauge the extent to which each assessment system evaluated those practices and activities most critical to successful school leadership.

To sum up, across many jurisdictions there is a growing awareness that school leadership is crucial to student outcomes, and that increasing school leader capacity needs to be a priority. This growing awareness has resulted in many innovative programmes, and to look at how different programmes assess readiness for principalship is a useful way to develop our expertise in quality assurance. Such a position is strengthened by the evidence that recent comparative research on leadership effectiveness indicates that the most effective behaviours and practices are surprisingly consistent. As Barber et al. (2010, p.3) state: “most of the evidence we have reviewed suggests that good leadership is the same irrespective of context, and that “what works” is surprisingly consistent.”

There are other more general reasons to study SLDP assessment systems in an international context. These involve the rapidly changing human conditions of the world we live in, and the concomitant changes in how we view others engaged in endeavours similar to our own, but in different contexts. These changes make it ever more apparent that comparing how things are done in different places, compared to how they are done in our place, has increasing relevance. In the educational sphere, Wenger's community of practice (1998) takes on a new, expanded dimension. We have not learnt all there is to know about school leadership, particularly in developing techniques that will unlock its full potential to impact on pupil outcomes. Learning from one another how to assess readiness for school leadership, through dialogue, reflection and comparative analysis, holds out the prospect of improving our ability to do so. However since school leadership is highly dependent on how it is positioned and supported, an examination of the context in which relevant SLD policy is generated and implemented in each jurisdiction is necessary, and is presented in the next chapter.

2. The leadership development policy context in Hong Kong and England

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the political context in which SLD policy is generated and implemented in each jurisdiction. How the development of SLDPs and their assessment systems in each jurisdiction have been shaped by policy will be considered. The extent to which this has impacted on the perceived role of headteacher is discussed, as is how policy development has impacted on school leader autonomy, accountability and continuous professional development (CPD).

Given that the term policy is often used differently and loosely, how the term is understood and employed here is explained. The concept of public policy as something government-created, formal and involving legislation - what Evans et al. (2008) refer to as big-P policy - is where the analysis has its focus. However there is an awareness that policy announced through legislation is often “reproduced and reworked over time through reports, speeches, ‘moves’, ‘agendas’, and so on” (Ball, 2013, p.8). Thus policy is understood as a process rather than an outcome, even if the following discussion of necessity focuses on ‘events’ such as the publication of consultation documents, the framing of legislation, or the creation of leadership CPD structures.

However, the starting point for the review of leadership development policy evolution is a consideration of the strategies employed in each jurisdiction towards national school governance as these have a critical and pervasive influence on the evolution of policies aimed at developing school leaders. In both jurisdictions these strategies have their origins in the theories and assumptions of Milton Friedman who argued that free markets unencumbered by state regulation would promote competition, improve efficiency and produce higher quality education. This theory later became identified as neo-liberalism, more specifically a later version of Friedrich Von Hayek’s original neo-liberalism, with a sharper focus on privatisation and deregulation as the main policy drivers.

The contemporary political realisation of these privatisation and deregulation imperatives can be discerned in a set of market-based policies that Sahlberg (2011) has termed the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM). For Sahlberg the key policy elements of GERM include “the teaching of a pre-scribed curriculum; borrowing market-oriented reform ideas; and test-based accountability and control” (2011 p.103). However, while these policy features have certainly impinged on the role of leadership in both jurisdictions, they rest on a conception of how neo-liberalism has shaped education generally, rather than school leadership specifically. A model with a sharper focus on school leadership, and which builds on the notion of national governance being a key consideration in determining school leader development policy, is that offered by Moller and Schratz (2008). This conceptualises the main strategies or approaches to national governance which, they argue, are applicable to certain selected European jurisdictions. Their model has been modified to render it applicable to both England and Hong Kong, and is outlined below.

Table 1. Key approaches to national governance in Hong Kong and England (adapted from Moller and Schratz, 2008)

Education provision as a quasi-market

This approach to school governance is distinguished by competition between schools for students, funding and resources, including teaching and other staff. Parental choice of school is present and schools are publicly ranked according to aggregated scores in examinations controlled by national government.

Managerialism

School governance is heavily influenced by managerialism, an approach which draws on a model of private corporations working in competitive markets. The school is viewed as a vehicle for efficient service production and the overriding culture is performance-oriented with a focus on entrepreneurship, efficiency and results (Olsen, 2003). Key attributes of managerialism include decentralisation, privatisation, contracting out, competition, economic rewards and sanctions (Mulford, 2003).

Professional control

This approach is characterised by the professional control of site-based management by the school leadership. To underpin this management activity, national professional standards are developed, applied and enforced at school level, with school leaders expected to monitor the progress of teachers towards the achievement of these standards. Professional standards applicable to senior leadership are also developed. The essence of this conception of professional control is that school leader power and influence in the managerial realm is increased through deregulation while simultaneously they are held increasingly accountable for the school's impact on pupil outcomes. As a concept this has been termed decentralised centralism (Karlsen, 2000) and, as a process, centralising decentralisation (Moller and Schratz, 2008).

Self-evaluation

The cultivation of self-evaluation is arguably a necessary adjunct to professional control. There is an explicit focus on performance improvement, the key to this being a continuous cycle of target-setting, planning and evaluation. Through improvements in school leader and teacher performance, pupils are seen as the main beneficiaries of self-evaluation. However there are two other principles that can be distinguished. One can be termed the accountability principle, which argues that schools should be financially and morally obliged to monitor and report on their own performance. It is a short step to apply this reasoning to school leaders. The second principle is economic and argues that, since external quality assurance is expensive and does not provide value for money, self-evaluation offers an apparently cost free, or at least cheaper, alternative (MacBeath, 2006).

It is difficult in practice to isolate these four approaches when considering the evolution of SLD policy in the two jurisdictions. In addition policy formulation is not always a structured process, and to envisage a blended approach to national school governance, involving a dynamic which incorporates all four di-

mensions, is arguably nearer the mark. Nevertheless, these national governance strategies do serve to illuminate the key ideological drivers behind the evolution of school leader development policy, and are referred to in the discussion which follows, and in the analysis of data pertaining to the research questions of this thesis.

2.2 School leader development policy in Hong Kong

2.21 Education reform and the imperative for principal professional development

Cheng (2000) argues that education policy in Hong Kong from the early 1980s can be divided into two distinct phases, the first from the signing of the Sino-British agreement in 1984 to the handing back of sovereignty in 1997, and the second starting from this date. Phase one is characterised as ‘top down’ reform by the government, involving significant expenditure to effect a positive remodelling of education. In the second phase up to 2000 Cheng notes a change, with the government adopting a ‘bottom up’ school-based strategy. Walker, Chen and Qian (2008) label the period post 2000 as a “hybrid” of the other two, giving school-based management policy as an example. However, the top down - bottom up terminology, even if it includes hybrids, has limited potential in analysing the government’s policy implementation strategy. A more useful conceptual model is Moller and Schratz’ ‘centralising decentralisation’ (2008), and this is employed to analyse policy enactment from 1991. Both the policies and the implementation strategies used had major implications for how the role of the principal would be re-conceptualised, and how their professional development would subsequently be framed.

The engine of policy generation during the pre-1997 period was the Education Commission (EC) (Lo, 1997), which produced numerous new policy enactments. School leadership was affected by these to a degree, but the new policy that had the most impact on school leadership and its later development needs, was the School Management Initiative (SMI) of 1991. For Dimmock and Walker (1998) this policy represented the Education Department’s first attempt at using the school as the primary unit of change.

The SMI policy anticipated changes to the role of principals, including overall responsibility for educational management and school performance, and greater authority in managing school finances. However it is the accumulative effect of all 18 recommendations, including proposals to change school governance structures, which is the most significant aspect of the policy. In this reform professional control is being developed and the themes of decentralisation and deregulation are clearly evident. The consequence for Hong Kong principals, and those who aspired to that role, was considerably more responsibility and challenge. This in turn fed into the burgeoning debate about leader preparation and development.

These changes also represent a major shift in how the role of principal was viewed by government. Taking this point further, one could elaborate on Dimmock and Walker's (1998) observation that the SMI represented the government's first attempt to use the school as the unit of change, by adding that it also signalled their intention to make the principal their main agent in driving the change process.

However by 1997 only 30 per cent of schools had taken up SMI, an outcome which Dimmock and Walker state as being "regarded as somewhat disappointing" (Dimmock and Walker, 1998 p.481). In response, between 1991 and 1997 the EC commissioned four evaluative studies of the SMI policy. The last, in 1997, had a different emphasis from the others which is reflected in its title: 'The Study of Good Practices and Noticeable Effects of the SMI Implementation in *Some Schools*' (my italics). The findings from the 1997 evaluation demonstrate that principals were playing a greater role in decision making within their schools and had played a large part in the constituting of their school's School Management Committee (SMC). Two other findings also signalled the increase in leadership agency on the part of principals: managing the new block grant and being responsible for the new teacher appraisal system.

Given the changes effected in the SMI schools, it is unsurprising that the government wished to realise its ambition of ensuring all schools implemented the initiative. However, the 1997 evaluation also found that, despite principals feeling more professionally empowered, there was little evidence that the reform

had resulted in changes to classroom practice or pupil learning outcomes. This explains the emphasis on Quality School Cultures (QSC), noted by Dimmock and Walker (1998), in the next policy document, the ECR7.

Within the ECR7 document the new expectations on principals, and how the government saw the role developing, is encapsulated in the statement:

allowing school management greater autonomy in general administration, finance and personnel matters but at the same time requiring a higher degree of accountability for school performance.

(ERC7, Building a Quality Culture, Item C)

From this it can be argued that, through the development of QSC, the government is utilising the concept of decentralised centralism (Karlsen, 2000) to create a role founded on professional control, since all school goals were to be translated into “achievable, observable and measurable quality indicators for self-evaluation and external assessment” (ERC7, Building a Quality Culture, item B). Regarding the recommendation to raise the professional standards of principals, the report contained proposals for a new CPD framework to be created. This is discussed after a review of the struggle to change school governance structures, first mooted in the SMI, which now follows.

2.22 Changing school governance - the implications for principal preparation

To understand the significance of the new school governance policy it is necessary to appreciate the distinctive and dominant role voluntary agencies have historically had in the founding and running of publicly funded schools in Hong Kong. Voluntary non-governmental bodies such as churches are encouraged to establish new schools, providing a proportion of the set up costs. The School Sponsoring Body (SSB) becomes responsible for the daily running of the school with the government meeting the recurrent expenditure and providing the premises. In Hong Kong over 80 per cent of schools fit into this category of ‘aided’ school. Thus there is a substantial devolution of authority and responsibility

to voluntary agencies for the provision of education, and for how schools are governed and run.

By 1997 those schools resistant to change were the priority for the government. This explains why, within the ECR7, a major recommendation was that: “all schools should have put in place school-based management by the year 2000 in the spirit of SMI to better meet the needs of their students.” This was reinforced later in the document when it was reiterated that all principals, teachers and alumni should participate in school management.

In 1998 the government swiftly followed up the ECR7 with the appointment of an Advisory Committee on School-based Management (ACSBM) which in 2000 published a new governance framework for aided schools. This proposed that all SMCs should be registered as incorporated bodies with limited liability under the Education Ordinance. New Incorporated Management Committees (IMCs) were to be mandated, with SSB members limited to 60 per cent of the membership, the remainder made up of the principal, teachers, parents, alumni and independents. This policy proved controversial and provoked strong resistance, particularly among church-based SSBs (Pang, 2008). Nevertheless, the Education (Amendment) Bill (2002), which gave it legislative form, was finally passed in July 2004 and stipulated that all aided schools were to have an IMC on or before July 2009.

Behind these bald facts lies a bitter and protracted struggle between the legislature and those organisations which controlled the majority of SSBs, mainly the Christian churches. This was because the legislation entailed a redistribution of power within school governance which reflects the changing balance of power in the education system as a whole. Pang (2008) for example argues that the government had, in passing the bill in 2004, re-centralised the power to run schools that had historically been delegated to the SSBs. What the policy record shows is that the administration became increasingly determined to overcome resistance and have its policies implemented in publicly funded schools. The shift in the role of principal mirrors this process, with much greater accountability for school performance, as seen in the development of ECR7 and

the post-2000 policy initiatives designed to prepare aspirant principals, discussed below.

2.23 Framing aspirant principal development post 2000

The recognition by government that school leader performance was key to school improvement led to the realisation that their preparation and development was equally important. This in turn resulted in the announcement that all newly appointed principals from the academic year 2000-2001 would need to complete certain requirements prior to appointment.

The announcement acted as a catalyst for a two year consultation period after which a key policy document, *The Continuing Professional Development for School Excellence*, emerged. This guided school leader development from 2002 onwards (Education Department, 2002) and created a comprehensive development framework designed for Aspiring Principals (APs), Newly Appointed Principals (NAPs) and Serving Principals (SPs). For APs a Certification for Principalship (CFP) was introduced to ensure that future aspirants met certain leadership requirements. This explicitly introduced self-evaluation as a key expectation and strengthened the accountability regime under which principals operated.

While it can be argued that, whereas pre-2000 school leader development “followed an incoherent and scattered path” (Walker, Chen and Qian, 2008 p.420), from 2002 the new policy represented a watershed in principal CPD, with a level of structural prescription not seen before. The role of the government in both creating new education policy in this area, and in coordinating the effort needed to ensure its enactment, was considerable. In the next two years subsequent policy enactment took the form of a staged implementation with some limited evaluation. Perhaps surprisingly however, in the decade 2004 to 2014 there was no policy formulation or enactment of note in the field of SLDP development.

The next challenge - to enhance the quality of professional learning within the aspirant principal community - was recognised by programme developers. However shifting the focus on to personal development and growth proved diffi-

cult. Walker, Chen and Qian, writing in 2008, felt that developmental work in making the programme experience of APs more educative was “a work in progress” (ibid, p.422). This perhaps indicates that, once the structural framework had been created, the capacity to develop programmes that facilitated the evolution of a new type of leader was lacking, despite a more innovative and participative type of leadership being called for, judging by the tone and content of the key policy documents.

Thus, it is possible to consider that leadership development in HKSAR is currently at a crossroads. That there was significant progress up to 2002 is clear. However there appears to have been little attempt to analyse what has happened since, with very little empirical research beyond localised programme evaluation. This reflects a lack of substantive development, at both the policy formation and enactment level. However, the creation of the Committee on the Professional Development of Teachers and Principals (COTAP) in 2013 signalled the beginning of a new phase of policy creation and reform, discussed below.

2.24 COTAP and current developments relevant to SLDP assessment

COTAP is the body currently responsible for advising the HKSAR government on the professional development of teachers and school leaders. Its most significant publication is its progress report ‘Odyssey to Excellence’ (COTAP, 2015) where an appreciation of current international good practice in CPD for school leadership is exhibited. Evidence is also presented of widespread consultation with stakeholders to evaluate these international examples of good practice in terms of their relevance and applicability to school leadership in Hong Kong.

From the consultation process three main targets emerge, the one of most significance for SLDPs being the ‘T-standard’, a unified set of standards for reference by members of the teaching profession at various stages of their professional growth (COTAP, 2015).

These proposals articulate an ambition to positively align at system level a coherent strategy for the planning, design, delivery and review of CPD for school leaders, underpinned by a comprehensive and holistic set of professional standards. This research, by dissecting how the current standards interface with

the CFP assessment framework, hopes to provide useful knowledge which informs and guides that ambition.

2.3 School leader development policy in England

2.31 Central government intervention in school leader development

The event that, with hindsight, can be seen as the beginning of a new government stance towards education policy-making and a subsequent re-conceptualising of the headteacher role, was prime minister James Callaghan's speech at Ruskin College in October 1976. Ball argues that the speech played an important part in "breaking the existing paradigm of educational politics and policy" (Ball, 2013 p.83). Similarly, Lowe (2004, p.137) argues that there was a "shift in the balance of power in policy making...and the real losers on this were the local authorities and teachers". These comments are inevitably influenced by hindsight, and very few people, in 1976, would have expected the policies that later emerged to have stemmed from the speech itself. This view is supported by the fact that, following the speech, the Labour government did nothing substantial in terms of policy making during its remaining three years in office, although ministerial dissatisfaction was expressed with the effectiveness of headteachers.

However it was not until the publication of an influential DES-funded report on school leadership (Hughes, 1982), that the issue of headteacher effectiveness properly entered the policy arena. Although by 1980 policy founded on marketisation was already in evidence in the newly elected Conservative government's 1980 Education Act, which gave some degree of notional choice of school to parents, the policy response to the Hughes report was more traditional. A National Development Centre (NDC) was established, whose mission was to promote effective school management training development throughout England and Wales. This was fully funded by the government, created after a process of competitive bidding, and was university based. In the five year period 1983-88, the NDC coordinated over 40 regional centres based in universities and was responsible for over 90 20-day courses. It also put on One Term Training Opportunities (OTTO) courses for over 6000 heads and deputies as well as promoting school leader development with LEAs and schools. In none of the cour-

ses was assessment of learner knowledge, skill or competency a priority. However, seen in the context of a pre-world wide web era, the work of the NDC in developing school leaders is arguably impressive, and it represents the first centrally funded national organisation charged with the task of organising and conducting SLDPs.

The Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988 included a number of policies that made decisive steps towards marketisation and centralisation. As Bush (2008) notes the ERA transformed the working lives of headteachers as they took over many aspects of school management previously the responsibility of LEAs, including school finance and staffing. Certainly, its impact on the challenge of school leadership, and on the training needed to meet that challenge, was significant. Bolam (2004a) argues that school management training became a national funding priority from 1988 onwards.

The key elements of the Act resulted in a considerable devolution of management responsibilities to school leaders, and it was recognised by government that headteachers were the key to the successful implementation of the new policies. Headteachers were subsequently given the role of leading the process of 'reculturing' the school organisation and implementing the reform programme. To support this the government funded a School Management Task Force (SMTF) from 1989-92, which promoted more versatile and practical leadership training that was more easily accessible for school leaders.

The organisational arrangements underpinning the SMTF were very different to the NDC, and show the direction in which school leader development (SLD) policy implementation was going, though not its final form. The SMTF was based at the Department of Education and Science (DES) and was funded and administered as a departmental activity within a civil service framework. Its mission was to promote the management development needed to support the implementation of the 1988 ERA. Placed at the heart of education policy implementation as it was, it is surprising that the SMTF had so little impact on leadership development in England and Wales. Bolam (2004a) argues that, despite its location and clear brief, it "experienced a marked fall off in support from key civil servants and ministers that severely limited its scope for action" (p. 263). He

concludes from this that such support is vital for national initiatives of this kind and, in the cases of the NDC and the SMTF, this was not sustained. Neither organisation developed into the tool required by government to provide effective support to school leaders in implementing the reforms of the late 1980s and 1990s. Thus, it can be said that both organisations, while contributing to national provision for SLD, were unable, for political reasons, to make a major contribution to the development of a coherent and comprehensive national system of SLD provision.

2.32 A national structure for school leader development

The organisation that arguably played the critical role in creating a comprehensive national structure for SLD was the 1994 Teacher Training Agency (TTA). The TTA adopted a competencies approach by establishing a set of 'tasks and abilities' required of headteachers, and created a SLD structure with three components - preparation for headship, induction into the role, and in-service training for those in post. This structure has strong parallels with that developed later in Hong Kong. In October 1995 proposals by the TTA for the development of a new national professional qualification for aspirant headteachers (NPQH) received ministerial approval, and the course commenced in 1997.

Initially the NPQH mirrored previous SLDPs in that regional centres and HEI providers were utilised. This reflects characteristics of the Hong Kong CFP. From the start training and assessment in the NPQH programme were separated by the placing of what the TTA described as a 'Chinese wall' between these functions. This separation of training and assessment was criticised at the time on the grounds that it limited the development of formative assessment (Bush, 1998).

However, the NPQH did signal an important change in official perceptions of what should constitute the headship role. Speaking of the new qualification, Anthea Millett, chief executive of the TTA, stated that "The central issue we need to tackle is leadership, in particular how the qualities of leadership can be identified and fostered...". (Millett, 1996). This, as noted by Bush (2008), represents the first official commitment to leadership rather than management, and

predates the National College for School Leadership. It also had profound consequences for the later design of assessment competencies.

In addition, a 'pass/fail' regime signalled a more stringent approach to summative assessment espoused by Millett, who declared that the NPQH would:

provide a demanding and objective assessment that will sort out those who are ready to be leaders of schools from those who only give the appearance of being ready. (Millett, 1996)

Given that, in the decade after 1997, two-thirds of those who passed the assessment did not take up headship, it would appear, with hindsight, that all the implications of the term 'ready' had not been considered. This can be seen as not a fault of the assessment framework, but of lax entrance criteria, which was addressed later.

A key policy decision had been not to link the NPQH with existing university programmes. However, following the general election of 1997, this policy was changed. Bush (1998), albeit writing only a year after the NPQH had been introduced, argued that this policy reversal prevented a polarity being created between the two different but equally valid approaches to SLD. He also felt that the process of articulating NPQH with Masters degrees should "introduce some welcome diversity into a programme that was threatening to become a monopoly with all its associated dangers" (Bush, 1998, p.331).

However, given that from 2004 till 2012 it was a requirement to either possess the NPQH qualification or be a registered participant on the course, it inevitably took precedence as the essential qualification for aspirant heads. In addition, once the TTA had transferred responsibility for the NPQH to the DfES in July 1999, the prospect of there being any linkage between the NPQH and HEI courses diminished. The Universities Partnership Group (UPG), an informal advisory body established by the NCSL, did finally secure an agreement to link the NPQH with university masters' degrees, which Bush (2004, p.245) notes was "an articulation which eluded the TTA".

The transfer of the NPQH to the DfES was in fact an interim measure, the intention being that it should become the responsibility of a new national college for school leadership (NCSL), officially launched in 2002. The NCSL took full operational responsibility for developing a national structure for CPD for school leaders after it had formulated a Leadership Development Framework (NCSL, 2001) with the guidance of Professor David Hopkins. From 2002 therefore the NPQH was the responsibility of the NCSL and clearly any policy changes affecting the one would necessarily affect the other. Bolam (2004b), summarising what had been achieved, expressed the view that the most comprehensive and sophisticated national school leader development model in the world has been created.

Given that the NPQH became the responsibility of the NCSL, the fact that the college represented such a major policy innovation was significant for the future scope, reach and impact of the qualification. This point is reinforced when we consider that the college's overall conception and scale represent a paradigm shift (Hallinger, 2003) in comparison with predecessor models, both internationally and in England.

2.33 NPQH development

The NPQH, from its implementation in 1997 underwent only minor revisions up to 2008, when a major reconfiguration occurred. The key reforms were to raise the entrance requirements and only accept onto the course candidates who were "highly motivated" to become headteachers within 12-18 months - they should be "ready" for headship upon graduation. To enforce these new expectations a rigorous two day assessment procedure was introduced to act as a 'gateway' on to the programme. The requirement to undertake a placement project in a high performing school was introduced, and there was less face to face interaction. Final assessment now took the form of an interview with a panel of assessors including serving heads. Toby Salt, strategic director for school leader development at the NCSL, commented on the new assessment process: "There was a general concern that the NPQH tested potential but not necessarily *ability in reality*, but this has been addressed..." (TES, 4 April 2008, my italics).

The other major reform to the NPQH occurred on 6th December 2011. This took the form of a ministerial announcement by Nick Gibb, minister of state for schools (Overhaul of headteachers' qualification to help train the next ... - Gov.uk). The key changes were that the NPQH was no longer to be mandatory for headteachers in maintained schools, while also being developed “for all prospective heads in both the maintained and the non-maintained sector...” The bar for entry and final assessment was to be raised with the content made more demanding through the introduction of a core curriculum focusing on the leadership of teaching and learning and with a greater emphasis on student behaviour. The minimum time at the placement school was raised from five to nine days, increasing the commitment to work-based learning.

The other significant change reflects the stance that leadership is a craft best learnt on the job. The delivery model was radically altered from nationally commissioned providers (mostly HEIs, charities and businesses) , to a licensed model with MATs, TSAs and other federated groups competing with each other for participants in each region. The theme of deregulation is clearly evident in the decision to remove the mandatory dimension to the qualification. In addition, the theme of decentralisation can be discerned in Nick Gibb’s comment that:

The highest-performing education systems are those where government knows when to step back and let heads get on with running their schools.

However, the centralising theme can arguably be discerned in other ministerial comments which list, and by implication prescribe, what skills are necessary to be a headteacher. It is only the term ‘skills’ which is employed - there is no mention of qualities, knowledge, competencies, values or any other descriptor.

Finally, in September 2014, the assessment process was changed to a new format that comprised:

- an analysis of the improvement task completed at the THs own school
- a submission on the placement school improvement project
- a summary of the TH’s progress in the “Effective and Efficient” managerial competency

- an interview which includes a presentation and questions of how the TH has developed and demonstrated this competency. Just under 40 per cent of the interview time is devoted to this.

2.4 Chapter Summary

In summary what can be discerned in both English and Hong Kong SLD policy evolution is a process of increasing centralising decentralisation (Moller and Schratz, 2008). In England a parallel can be drawn between the ERA (1988) and subsequent SLD policy. In the ERA powers over the school curriculum and assessment were repositioned at the centre, while major powers over staffing, finance and other resources were devolved from LEAs to schools. The role of headteacher was transmuted, with responsibility for the performance of the devolved school system against centrally ordained criteria the key feature. Subsequent SLD policy represents a continuation of this strategy of 'steering from a distance', with increasing levels of government intervention, and a change of emphasis from management to leadership, after 1997.

In Hong Kong, while the same process is observable, it would seem that the government engaged in greater consultation with stakeholders when developing SLD policy, and was able to effect major structural change to provision. However it encountered greater resistance when seeking to engender more fundamental changes since these challenged deeply held cultural traditions. These may reflect differences in scale between the two jurisdictions, differences in PISA rankings, or ideological-cultural differences. Such differences were evident in the findings and are discussed further in the conclusion. What follows next is a review of the literature concerned with SLDP assessment, particularly competency-based structures that attempt to assess readiness for headship.

3. Literature review

3.1 Introduction

The review initially surveys the research conducted on SLDPs and their assessment systems, discussing the relative dearth of material based on empirical investigation. The key forces that impacted on SLDP design and how these influenced the development of competency-based assessment systems are then examined. Critical stances towards the competency-based approach to assessment are considered, as is whether and how assessment practice might work for the challenge of identifying headship readiness. Finally, the literature consulted in drawing up the summary document of instructional leadership (IL) and transformational leadership (TL) practices, and in constructing the list of best practice in assessment system design, is discussed.

3.2 The literature search

Reviewing the literature was challenging in that a large number of international publications in diverse formats were accessible. However, by adopting a methodical approach, a search was carried out that generated useful information relevant to the study. This was helpful in establishing where it fits in with what is already known. The strategy used to secure relevant sources is explained in Appendix 1.

3.3 Researching SLDP assessment

While there is now a clear recognition that the preparation and development of school leaders is a critical factor in raising their impact on school improvement and pupil outcomes, this has not been underpinned by diligent empirical research on the efficacy or otherwise of leadership development programmes (Murphy and Vriesenga, 2006). As Lumby, Crow and Pashiardis (2008, p.3) suggest “The literature for some time has focused on descriptive accounts of, in some cases, idiosyncratic programs and modes of delivery”. There is also a dearth of research on the assessment of participants of SLDPs. McCarthy (1999, 2006) found a lack of research assessing the skills and knowledge that participants gain on SLDPs, and virtually no literature on research that attempted to measure changes in performance in schools led by programme gradu-

ates, or documenting possible changes that occur in schools led by this specific cadre of principals. In 2007 Orr and Barber found that, of the few articles on assessment in or of SLDPs, most focused on self-reported participant satisfaction rather than on issues concerning graduate performance after completion of the programme. Kochan and Locke (2009) have calculated that only eight per cent of the articles in school leadership-related journals from 1975 to 2002 dealt with issues related to SLDPs. Of these most were descriptions of programmes and only three per cent adopted an empirical approach. More recent research, such as Darling-Hammond et al.'s 2010 study of eight exemplary SLDPs, while seeking to understand the components of programmes that provide effective principal preparation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010, p.5), do not focus on the actual assessment process that verifies graduate preparedness to carry out the role effectively.

However, although the research on assessment in SLDPs is limited, the literature does contain studies concerning higher education and assessment. Since some accredited SLDPs have their genesis in HEIs, this work can at least cast light on how the assessment of some SLDPs was originally conceived, and is therefore deserving of some discussion.

Huba and Freed (2000, p.8), provide a starting point to discuss SLDP assessment:

Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning.

This conception should arguably underpin SLDP assessment processes generally. Both jurisdictions under study would argue that it does in their case, but whether assessment results are used to actually improve subsequent learning is doubtful. The stance that SLDPs should be categorised as educational and, as such, that educational assessment should be viewed as relevant to them, is

adopted by Kochan and Locke (2009). They include students, faculty and stakeholders as part of the academic community that should be engaged in the educational assessment process. Clearly the term educational is broad and the inference is that for these authors educational assessment in practice means that it takes place within an HEI context. This is not the case for the SLDPs under study, so arguably this conception has limited relevance. In addition, given that both programmes are grounded in school-based practice, the focus on how an academic community should conduct assessment may not be fully applicable.

Granted, in Hong Kong the learning element of the programme is provided by HEIs, although outside experts from the world of business are involved in delivery. In England there is a range of providers, including some HEIs, but the majority are independent education consortiums or partnerships of Teaching School Alliances (TSAs) or Multi Academy Trusts (MATs). However, while both programmes are taught by a diverse range of organisations and individuals, the assessment process is not conducted or supervised by those licensed to deliver the programme. In England all final NPQH assessment is carried out by a single provider, the East Midlands Leadership Centre (EMLC), which was awarded the license from the Department of Education after a bidding process. In Hong Kong the assessment process is contained within the Education Bureau (EdB), but assessors are drawn from the ranks of veteran principals. In neither context therefore does Kochan and Locke's view of assessment have much applicability, as in both jurisdictions the assessment process is divorced from the teaching and learning element of the programme.

Similarly, Peterson and Vaughan (2002) feel that student and programme assessments are integrated parts of a whole and that it is difficult to separate them. From this perspective providers should be utilising student assessment results to inform key decisions, not only about assessment strategies, but about curriculum and admissions. Again, applying this conception of assessment to SLDPs does not appear feasible for structural and operational reasons, and on practical grounds - for example cost.

However, although the assessment systems under study do not embrace the holistic vision of assessment expounded above, they do encapsulate the key features of good assessment utilised by higher education generally. For example, both programmes have created explicit learning outcomes and have developed assessment tools related to these, as well as developing learning experiences that aim to produce the learning outcomes. Finally, Murphy's view that the values and standards selected must encompass "visions of society, education, learning, and leadership for schooling in the twenty-first century as well as the values and evidence that define the paths to those visions." (Murphy, 1993, p.2) is reflected to a degree in both programmes, even if the scope and ambition of the visions are arguably limited and open to critique. Above all, identifying headship readiness is a practical as well as an intellectual challenge that has to be met when designing and applying assessment systems.

3.4 Key forces shaping assessment in SLDPs

Two global forces impacting on the development of SLDPs and their assessment systems have been the establishment of a more reflective and scientific approach to leadership development and the simultaneous rise of the accountability movement.

Murphy (1993), discussing the American context, traces the first calls to examine programme effectiveness to the scientific era (1947-85). During this period there were increasing calls for changes in the way school leaders were prepared and their performance evaluated, as well as calls for the adoption of scientific methodologies. For HEI providers the utilisation of theoretical and conceptual material drawn from the various social sciences "held forth the promise of dramatically improving the education available to prospective school leaders" (Murphy, 1993 p.7). The emergence of a competency-based model of assessment, discussed later, can be seen as the logical result of this development.

The accountability movement, which has its roots in what Habermas (1975) terms the legitimisation crisis, stemmed from an increasing lack of trust in state institutions and state professionals. Other contributory factors include the emergence and deepening of governmental and societal concerns relating to the

new economies of the global post-industrial age, and the rapid development of technological society. Concerns about state schools' performance fuelled a sharp rise in governmental scrutiny and involvement in national education policy and practice in most western societies, and other states such as Singapore. Seen as a crisis of modernity by Young, he also termed it a "crisis of education" (Young, 1990 p.5). The logic of this stance is that, once trust in school leaders is questioned, it becomes reasonable to call for monitoring and accountability systems to ensure they do their jobs. It is a short step from here to argue that, in order to ascertain how well those jobs have been carried out, metrics need to be constructed to measure both the performance of schools and school leaders. This increasing pressure on school leaders to demonstrate their value to the communities they serve eventually fed through to the SLDPs preparing these leaders, which in turn increased interest in how this preparation could and should be assessed.

It was the combination of the greater use of social science methodologies and practices, coupled to the increasingly influential accountability movement that arguably led to the calls for a competency-led SLDP curriculum intensifying during the decades from 1960 to 1990.

3.5 The development of competency-based models of assessment in SLDPs

Calls for the employment of competencies in SLDPs first appear in the 1970s. However progress in developing assessment processes based on competencies was slow to gather momentum. For example, Shakeshaft (1999) found that even among SLDPs that had developed comprehensive assessment initiatives in the 1990s, the issue of how to adequately assess participants to determine programme effectiveness had not been solved. The development and testing of competencies in the field of education is therefore problematic (Burgoyne 1989; Earley, 1991; Esp, 1993; Barlosky, 2003).

In England pioneering work in the development of competency-based leadership programmes was carried out in the 1990s and was comprehensively surveyed and analysed by Esp (1993). The movement developed just as concern over management standards in schools, which had been growing throughout

the 1980s, came to a head. In 1990, for example, the Senior Chief Inspector (SCI, 1990) reported that the management of schools in England left much to be desired. In the same year the National Educational Assessment Centre (NEAC) project and the School Management South Project (Earley, 1992) developed competency-based frameworks for use in education management development and assessment. These initiatives were contemporaneous with the development of competency-based vocational qualifications (NVQs) where assessment was founded on 'evidence' demonstrating competency against occupational standards. The impact of these development programmes on school management training was substantial, particularly in creating a shift in perspective towards work-based and experiential learning (Kolb and Fry, 1975) where the primacy of the workplace as the main setting for such experience-based learning was asserted.

There is no tradition of competency-based frameworks in SLDPs in Hong Kong before Walker et al.'s foundational work 'The Key Qualities of the Principals in Hong Kong' (2000). However, both the NPQH and CFP assessment frameworks can be located within the larger competency-based movement to improve school management in the 1990s, so allowing them to be viewed in their wider developmental context. Regarding the term competency, in the NPQH assessment scheme 'competencies' are explicitly defined, while in the CFP programme the term is not employed, despite it being conceived as a competency-based model. For example, while the NPQH defines its 'competencies' as the 'characteristics' of knowledge, skills, motives and abilities, the CFP has the 'key qualities' of knowledge, skills, values and attributes. Moreover, the descriptors of these characteristics/key qualities are in very close alignment. In addition, the descriptors of the nine competencies assessed in the NPQH framework closely align with the descriptors used to elucidate the six core areas of headship used in the CFP framework. In this context, how the competencies are defined provides an insight into their nature, as conceived by the programme developers. In terms of what the programmes and their associated qualifications represent, it is possible to argue that in both assessment systems a narrow skills-based conception of the qualities needed for headship is eschewed in favour of a much wider interpretation, which includes vision and values.

3.6 Critical stances towards competency frameworks and the challenge of assessing readiness

There are a number of challenges involved in the assessment of competencies, as identified by Burgoyne (1989), which need addressing before operational competency models of assessment can be developed. These challenges have been modified so as to apply more directly to the SLDPs in this study and are summarised below:

- School leadership is not the sequential execution of pre-determined and self-contained competencies. Arguably, a list of competencies can only ever serve to illustrate or illuminate certain aspects of a complex human activity, which is primarily social in its context. Furthermore, after the assessment of individual competencies is completed, how is the information re-integrated to obtain a picture of an individual's holistic leadership performance and potential?
- There are many definitions of competency, but considering Klemp's (1980) "an underlying characteristic of a person which results in effect", or Boyatzis's (1982) 'an underlying characteristic in that it may be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's own self-image or social role or a body of knowledge used by an individual', it would appear that a technical approach to the measurement of competency is not feasible.
- Therefore, assessment can only be by means of grounded professional judgement, informed by evidence. This places an emphasis on the role of the assessor and how they reach their judgements. The quality and nature of the evidence provided is also a crucial factor in considering the validity and reliability of the judgement. Arguably competencies are in essence hypothetical constructs about human qualities and behaviours, and structures or models composed of such are exercises in reification. It is worth noting here that the NPQH assessment structure is much more process-orientated than the more meta-cognitive CFP, and so this observation applies more directly to it.
- A related problem is deciding which competencies to test, and deciding who does the deciding. There are arguably many possible competencies; some

specific to successful school leadership, others overarching or meta-competencies that underpin effective leadership in any sphere.

- The ethical, moral and political aspects of school leadership have also to be considered. Values and mission are very much a part of school leadership. Competent school leadership has to involve engaging, and mutually adjusting, individual and institutional values. Leadership is a creative activity whose boundaries move in response to circumstances. A competency-based system of leadership assessment needs to be able to accommodate these variables.
- The experience of undertaking a SLDP is intended to be one of personal development, so leadership competencies cannot just be used by candidates as a tool-kit or check-list. Becoming competent at school leadership is not the same as having competencies. Many effective deputy headteachers have impressive lists of competencies, but they do not feel themselves ready to be the leader of a school. Others may share their judgement. Thus, the imperative to develop the whole person should not be driven out of leadership development and its assessment.

While the above challenges are rooted in an analysis of the school leadership role, Barlosky (2003) has questioned the validity of a competency-based model to assess school leader performance at a more theoretical level. He does this by invoking a particular perspective on the nature of educational institutions and the educational process. He raises the concern that, because the raw material of education is human nature - which he views as intractable and ultimately mysterious - developing and assessing leadership competencies may not prove efficacious in improving the performance of schools. While at a philosophical level this view of schooling may reflect a theoretical framework of the social world, it does need to be placed in its historical context, as does its pessimism about our ability to improve educational outcomes. It should be recognised that our knowledge of effective leadership in schools, and the effect this can have on pupil outcomes, has progressed over the last 15 years. International efforts to improve the competency of senior school leaders have had a positive and ar-

guably significant impact on school leadership in the face of the ever quickening pace of change.

Barlosky (2003) raises a further concern regarding competencies which applies to assessing readiness for principalship. In the context of discussing competency he relates Gilbert Ryle's distinction between "knowing that" and "knowing how" to school leadership. He argues that competencies, as descriptors of leadership behaviours, can catalogue the forms that competent leadership may take, and the practices in which competent leaders typically engage, but they cannot capture on their own how leadership realises unique institutional aspirations in specific settings, in other words actual performance. This standpoint, whatever its philosophical cogency, implies that the only possible assessment methodology that could do this is observational. But to employ such a methodology is clearly unfeasible since tracing which actions eventually resulted in which successes over unknown timescales is only possible with hindsight and is still a largely subjective exercise.

To address the challenge of assessing readiness in a real-world situation a well designed system will attempt to mitigate inherent problems such as differing perceptions among the key actors, and strive to establish clarity and a common understanding regarding what is being assessed. In addition, the limitations of particular types of evidence will be appreciated, and design features will address this. Clearly the system must also strive to ensure that the competencies accurately reflect those behaviours which, in any given context at any given time, are most likely to maximise student learning outcomes. In addition, how the process of assessment is conducted is viewed as essential when considering its accuracy and reliability. Therefore, a strategic approach to assessment, which accepts the necessity of working within the limitations outlined above, is how the challenge of demonstrating readiness by means of written, oral and visual evidence can be met.

3.7 The research literature on leadership practices and assessment design

3.71 Introduction

As discussed in chapter one, in order to assess the extent to which each assessment system encapsulated recent findings on successful school leadership practices, and incorporated best practice in assessment system design, a summary document was constructed (Appendix 3). This summarised recent research on those instructional and transformational leadership practices most efficacious in improving pupil outcomes, and on how SLDP assessment systems should be designed, organised and operationalised.

3.72 Research findings on effective leadership practice

There is considerable empirical evidence of the positive impact of instructional and transformational leadership on pupil outcomes (Leithwood et al. 2004; Louis et al. 2010; Marks and Printy, 2003; O'Donnell and White, 2005; Robinson et al. 2009). Drawing on data from 23 countries involved in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), a 2009 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report suggested that these leadership approaches contributed significantly to a wide range of teacher and school outcomes (OECD, 2009). Similarly, a study on school leadership across eight different societies highlighted instructional and transformational leadership practices as key characteristics of high-performing principals in those jurisdictions (Barber et al. 2010).

Other empirical research suggests that the impact of transformational leadership on school performance can be significantly enhanced by combining it with instructional leadership (Marks and Printy, 2003). Robinson et al. (2009) reaffirmed that, in general, these leadership practices have a greater impact on student learning than those associated with other types of leadership. In summary, the international literature provides general agreement of the contribution of instructional and transformational leadership to school improvement. The search strategy used to find literature on instructional leadership (IL) and transformational leadership (TL) reflected research in England and Hong Kong, but also drew on work from Europe, USA and New Zealand. How the summary statements were derived from the literature is explained below:

Statement 1: Pedagogical engagement with teaching staff through supervision, modelling, support and evaluation.

This statement draws on Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins' (2008) research which found that almost all successful leaders draw on a similar repertoire of leadership practices. Among these, managing the teaching and learning programme, including providing teacher support and monitoring, are key, as are providing individualised support and consideration, and modelling appropriate behaviours and values. Later research by Day et al. (2009) reinforces the earlier findings that the instructional practices with the largest effects were those "which engaged teachers (or engaged with teachers) in initiatives directly related to student learning" (Day et al., 2009, p. 11).

These findings, while implying a high degree of leader engagement with teachers, do not point specifically to pedagogical engagement. However Marks and Printy's (2003) research on instructional leadership, and how it combines with transformational leadership, provides evidence that engagement focused on pedagogy (what they term "shared instructional leadership", p. 374), within a collaborative enquiry dynamic, has significant effects on the impact of teaching on learners. In Leithwood and Jantzi's (2006) research on the positive effects of transformational leadership on students, teachers and classroom practices, specific dimensions encompassed in their model included offering individualised support and modelling desirable professional practices. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010), while reinforcing these elements in their summary of the key components of instructional leadership, also adds the practice of "supervision" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010. p.14), which centres on the notion of the pedagogically active principal working in classroom contexts. Finally these findings are reinforced by Robinson et al's 2009 Best Evidence Synthesis (BES).

Statement 2: Promoting and participating in professional learning in school, including providing the necessary resources.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) cite "providing resources and professional development to improve instruction" as a critical practice of school leaders, while Robinson et al. (2009) emphasise that this practice is not about resources per se but about securing and allocating resources that are aligned to pedagogical purposes. They also found that effective leaders are those who play a key role

in working with teachers to identify and deliver appropriate teaching and learning resources, and in ensuring these are readily available. Day et al. (2009) note the positive impact of implementing CPD opportunities for all staff on raising pupil outcomes, particularly in the early phase of leading school improvement, while the later study of Day et al. (2010) refers to “developing people” through “a rich variety of professional learning” (Day et al., 2010, p. 6). Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) add a nuance to this leadership practice by pointing out that the primary aim is to not only to develop knowledge and skills but also dispositions such as capacity and resilience in applying that knowledge and skills.

Marks and Printy (2003), within their concept of shared instructional leadership, conceive of the principal as a “facilitator of teacher growth” (Marks and Printy, 2003, p. 374), while, within Robertson et al.’s synthesis, one of the five key leadership dimensions is “Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development” (Robinson et al. 2009, p. 42). Robinson et al. also found that this dimension included participating in, as well as the promotion of, formal and informal opportunities for CPD: “leaders can participate in teacher professional development as leaders, as learners or as both” (Ibid. p. 42).

Statement 3: Coordinating and evaluating the curriculum, teaching and assessment.

Regarding the curriculum, Lee, Walker and Ling Chui (2012) cite a major 2009 OECD report, which found that effective leaders engaged in ‘instruction management’, which focuses on developing and improving the curriculum, curriculum knowledge, and pedagogy. Marks and Printy (2003) emphasise four sets of leadership activities, one of which is “coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the curriculum, instruction and assessment” (p. 373). Similarly one of the key leadership dimensions derived from direct evidence in Robinson et al.’s 2009 synthesis is planning, coordinating and evaluating the curriculum where: “leaders in high performing schools are distinguished from their counterparts... by their personal involvement in planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and teachers” (p. 41). Darling-Hammond et al.’s (2010) summary includes “coordinating and evaluating curriculum, instruction and assessment” as a critical leadership practice (p. 14). This later reinforcement of Mark and Printy’s finding

regarding the leader's role in assessment is a notable addition to the research findings.

Statement 4: Ensuring that student progress and teaching are regularly monitored.

Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) develop and refine a set of leadership practices which they organise under the broad title: "Managing the teaching programme" (p.30). A specific practice within this grouping is monitoring school activity, which they link to Yukl's taxonomy of managerial behaviours where monitoring is a key activity of successful leaders. Within instructional leadership practice, Darling-Hammond et al. (2010), found that an effective school leader is one who regularly monitors both teaching and student progress. Robinson et al.'s (2009) study does not highlight monitoring as such, but stresses the impact of a principal's personal involvement in evaluating teachers teaching. It is clear that monitoring is akin to evaluating, though the judgemental aspect may be less formal and structured. Finally, Marks and Printy (2003) argue that monitoring student progress is a key practice of instructional leadership.

Statement 5: Establishing and maintaining a set of expectations and norms of behaviour that facilitate and maximise learning in the classroom.

In their summary of effective instructional leadership practices, Darling-Hammond et al. (2010), state that the development and maintenance of shared norms and expectations across the whole school community is a key practice. Mark and Printy (2003) view maintaining high expectations of teachers and students as a significant part of the instructional leader's role, but do not specify any behavioural norms. However, Robinson et al.'s (2009) synthesis found that the creation of an environment conducive to success was a key leadership dimension emerging from direct evidence. They define this as an "orderly environment" (p. 42), established by means of clear and consistently enforced social expectations and discipline codes. This practice has three main leadership features: protect teaching time; ensuring consistent discipline routines; and ensure early conflict resolution.

Statement 6: Setting direction by instilling a shared vision and setting compelling goals founded on values such as a desire for social justice.

Lee, Walker and Ling Chui's (2012) research into the impact of instructional leadership in Hong Kong found that leadership practices around setting goals and building shared vision are significantly associated with school improvement. Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008), in their synthesis of leadership behaviours, found that "building vision and setting directions" (p. 30) is a key leadership dimension which motivates teachers. Furthermore, they stress that establishing a shared purpose is a fundamental stimulant to an individual's personal commitment and effort. The more specific leadership practices within this dimension are building a shared vision and fostering the acceptance of group goals.

For Day et al. (2010), defining the vision, values and direction is also a fundamental practice. While they stress that successful leaders themselves had a very strong and clear vision and set of values for their school, they also found that these needed to be "shared widely, clearly understood and supported by all staff" (p. 5). In terms of values their findings were that effective school leaders had a strong sense of moral responsibility and a belief in equal opportunities – a belief that every pupil deserves the same opportunities to succeed. Supporting these findings, a key leadership dimension from direct evidence highlighted by Robinson et al. (2009) concerns the exercise of leadership through the setting and communicating of goals for teacher and student learning. They observe that leaders established the importance of goals by communicating how they are linked to moral purposes.

Statement 7: Promoting a trusting and caring school culture.

Robinson et al.'s (2009) research also highlighted the need for headteachers to establish a safe and supportive environment as a precondition for other more impactful practices, as well as noting the importance of building relational trust within the school. They found this was achieved by leaders acting in ways that are consistent with their talk, and challenging dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), within their transformational leadership model, highlight developing a collaborative school culture and the creation of structures to foster participation in school decisions. Arguably these practices encourage the development of trust within schools. Day et al.'s (2009) research findings also demonstrate the close association between trust building and

school improvement. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) see transformational leadership as a common descriptor of a critical class of leadership activities found to predict organisational improvement. They highlight the promotion of trust within a caring work and schooling culture as a key practice. Marks and Printy (2003) found that providing individualised consideration and support, strengthening productive school culture, and building collaborative cultures are all key aspects of effective transformational leadership. These practices arguably promote a trusting and caring culture throughout the school.

Corroborating these findings, Day et al.'s (2009) research indicated that, particularly in schools in more challenging circumstances: "establishing cultures of care and achievement" (p. 3) impacted on pupil motivation, engagement and attainment. This study also found that leadership trust and trustworthiness are prerequisites for the progressive and effective distribution of leadership, discussed later.

Statement 8: Maintaining high expectations regarding teacher performance, and developing individuals through direct and indirect support and challenge.

While confirming that 'developing' people is a key leadership practice, Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) interestingly couple this finding to the term 'understanding'. They also argue that, as well as building knowledge and skills, the persistence to apply these resources needs to be developed in teachers too. Day et al. (2010) found that effective leadership practice involved providing a rich variety of development opportunities as part of the drive to raise standards and sustain commitment. Effective leaders placed a high premium on internally led CPD but in service training (Inset), including studying for external qualifications, was also offered. This combination was used to maximise potential and develop staff in diverse areas. Similarly, Robinson et al.'s (2009) research found that establishing clear expectations among teachers was educationally significant in terms of improving pupil outcomes.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2010), within their discussion of the key behaviours of transformational leaders, include holding high performance expectations and developing individuals through direct and indirect support, as critical practices in

raising pupil performance. Finally, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), in their review of transformational leadership research, develop three categories of leadership practice, one of which they term: 'setting directions'. A specific dimension within this category is "holding high performance expectations".

Statement 9: Developing the organisational conditions (structures, processes) to facilitate teaching and learning.

In their threefold categorisation of leadership practices, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) also develop the category 'redesigning the organisation' which includes the dimension 'creating structures to foster participation in school decisions'. Allied to this statement, Robinson et al. (2009) term a key leadership practice as "resourcing strategically". They emphasise that this is concerned with securing and allocating resources "*that are aligned to pedagogical purposes*" (italics in original, p. 41). It is therefore possible to argue that this practice aligns to some extent with the preceding finding. Day et al. (2009), when discussing key leadership practices in the context of turning around low performing schools, found that restructuring to improve the quality of communication, and redesigning roles, responsibilities and accountability, significantly improved pupil outcomes. In a subsequent major study of successful school leadership Day et al. (2010) also noted that purposefully and progressively redesigning the organisational structures was a key practice that provided greater opportunities for student learning. In addition, Darling-Hammond et al.'s 2010 research lists the development of structures and processes as a key practice impacting on student outcomes.

Statement 10: Develop collaborative decision-making structures, including distributed leadership designed to develop leadership capacity.

In their analysis of instructional leadership features Marks and Printy (2003) argue that an inclusive approach to governance works to promote an effective system of instructional organisation, and a school climate supportive of teaching and learning. Efforts that built a sense of teamwork proved particularly important. They also, in developing their concept of shared instructional leadership, cite evidence demonstrating that, by facilitating participation in shared instructional leadership, headteachers enable teachers to assume leadership responsibility. Supporting this argument, a key finding of Leithwood, Harris and Hop-

kin's major (2008) study was that school leadership has a greater influence on pupils when it is widely distributed, and that this was significantly higher than that typically reported in studies of instructional headteacher effects.

Day et al. (2010) also found that effective heads distributed leadership progressively, and that the successful distribution of leadership depends on the establishment of trust. Additionally, their research demonstrated that changing hierarchical structures in schools, and using teaching and learning responsibilities (TLRs) more widely, plus allocating responsibility according to ability, all impacted positively on school performance. This supports a key finding from Day et al.'s 2009 study that there were positive associations between increased distribution of leadership and the continuing improvement of pupil outcomes. A further finding, felt to have implications for the training of aspirant headteachers, is that effective school leaders "improve pupil outcomes indirectly and most powerfully through developing teachers capacities for leadership" (p. 2).

Statement 11: Engaging families and community in school improvement.

Robinsons et al.'s Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) (2009) analysed New Zealand and international literature concerning the effects on pupil outcomes of various types of school-home connection. They found that school leaders can build educationally powerful connections with families and communities through school-home relationships. Among the most significant, in terms of its effect size, were: parent and teaching intervention; teacher designed interactive homework with parents; and parent intervention and involvement. Day et al. (2009) note too that "there is now a large body of research about the influence of parents and community engagement on raising pupil achievement" (p. 5), and conclude that effective leaders continually seek to engage parents and the wider community as "active allies" (p. 5) in improving pupil outcomes. Day et al. feel that the key lessons from this evidence should be made available to all school leaders, and arguably this should be extended to all aspiring leaders too. The later meta-analysis by Day et al. (2010) corroborates Robinson et al.'s findings, as their research indicated that engaging with the wider community was essential in achieving long-term success. Finally, Darling-Hammond et al. (2010), also affirm that engaging families and the local community, specifically

in school improvement initiatives at both the individual and school level, has a significant impact on student outcomes.

3.73 Research findings on how SLDP assessment systems should be designed, organised and operationalised

Bredeson (2003), in identifying key themes for SLDP design, asserts that CPD is fundamentally about individualised learning and should therefore be seen as a continuous process involving reflective work. He further argues that the opportunities for improved practice are therefore potentially limitless. For Bredeson, a key design theme is that student learning, professional development and organisational mission are intimately related. This design theme underpins and informs the design features of exemplary SLDPs and their assessment systems.

Additionally there is evidence that how programmes are designed influences the extent to which they impact on participants. For example Orr, Silverberg and Letrendre, (2006), conducted a review of SDLP graduates to test the assumption that “core programme features have an independent influence on leadership learning” (p. 11). Although the results showed that there were positive beliefs about school leadership across all programmes, clear differences based on programme attributes emerged, leading them to conclude that programme attributes can impact on graduate outcomes. Orr and Barber (2007), through a comparison of three contrasting SLDPs, also found that certain programme components were related to participant outcomes, including leadership knowledge and skills.

For those assessment design features most effective in promoting participant learning and attitudinal shift - and therefore professional practice (Orr, 2003) - the review drew mainly on the work of Kaagan, 1998; Orr, 2003; Orr, 2006; Orr and Barber, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Orr and Orphanos, 2011. There is a high level of agreement regarding how SLDP assessment systems can best be designed, organised and operationalised.

Statement 1: The assessment model is underpinned by a coherent theory of leadership, clearly defined.

Kaagan (1998), analysing leadership development generically, argues that programmes should have a clearly stated and fully integrated theory of leadership. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) supports this notion with the finding that the theory itself should thereby provide coherence and consistency for the programme and assessment framework as a whole. Orr and Orphanos' (2011) research also reinforces these findings, adding that the theory of leadership serves the function of framing the programme features, including assessment.

Statement 2: The assessment model is organised around clear values, beliefs and knowledge about leadership and learning.

This statement draws on Orr and Orphanos' (2011) argument that SLDPs need to be integrated around a relevant body of knowledge and understanding and a clear set of values. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) reinforces this finding by stressing that exemplary SLDPs will be organised around a set of values, while Kaagan (1998), writing from a more generalised perspective, characterises these values as moral commitments. Young, Crow, Murphy and Ogawa (2009) highlight the Swedish national headteacher training programme's emphasis on values, viewing it as the foundation on which the programme rests. Finally, for Kochan and Locke (2009) good assessment design: "begins with educational values" (p. 419).

Statement 3: Assessment is guided by a clear set of official standards.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) found that a standards-based curriculum, a key precept of adult learning, was reflected in the key features of effective SLDPs and their assessment systems. Equally, Orr and Orphanos' (2011) findings indicate that the SLDP curriculum should align with state and professional standards, and that standards-based assessments are a feature of exemplary preparation programmes. Regarding the adoption of standards within SLDPs, Orr (2006) observes that the most significant change in state policy in the USA regarding certification requirements is the introduction of national standards, which outline expectations for effective educational leadership. Orr and Barber (2007) note the increasing adoption of these standards for certification and licensure. With regard to assessment, Kochan and Locke (2009) argue that good assessment design is built around agreed upon standards, and consider the

lack of consistently applied standards in the USA as a major brake on the development of quality assessment systems.

Statement 4: Performance-based assessments are developed to evaluate candidate's acquisition of the skills outlined in the standards.

Huba and Freed (2000) argue that a key element of good assessment design is the formulation of statements of intended learning outcomes, linked to national standards. However where SLDPs use more traditional instructional teaching methods such as group discussion, presentations and lectures, assessing candidate competency and actual potential can be problematic. Taylor, Cordeiro and Chrispeels (2009) note that performance-based assessment can offer the opportunity of: "creating job like assessments without being on the job" (p. 343), and they highlight how simulations have been used to advance social justice. Orr and Barber (2007) note the growth of such performance-based assessments in the most commonly used USA national leadership preparation assessment, the School Leader Licensure Assessment (SLLA). However the effectiveness of such tests, particularly those commercially produced, has been questioned in terms of identifying later principal effectiveness in improving pupil outcomes.

Statement 5: The assessment process is underpinned by strong and effective partnerships between assessment licensees, schools and local and national authorities.

Orr and Barber (2007) found that partnership-based SLDPs had more high quality features than standard or traditional programmes, and produced higher levels of graduate-reported learning, a greater readiness to adopt leadership positions and, subsequently, greater career advancement. Kochan and Locke's (2009) findings regarding the elements of good assessment design include "analysing and discussing the results with students, advisory groups and other stakeholders" (p. 419), which supports the notion of partnership working. Corroborating these findings, an earlier study by Davis et al. (2005) also found that a key feature of effective leadership programmes was strong partnerships between university-based providers, schools, and local authorities, particularly in enhancing the quality of field-based learning. Grogan and Robertson, (2002)

note that partnerships provide multiple perspectives and bring together a number of professional strengths which have the potential to enhance the depth and quality of leadership preparation and assessment. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010), in their review of key design features, also cite strong partnerships between licensees, schools and local and state authorities as a key feature of exemplary programmes.

Statement 6: The assessment procedure has opportunities to apply learning theory to actual practice.

Grogan and Robinson, (2002) also found that partnerships between schools and universities have the potential to bridge the gap between theory and practice, a common criticism of educational leadership preparation and assessment. Orr and Orphanos (2011), in their review of quality programme design features, found that a key characteristic was the deployment of active learning strategies that integrate theory and practice and stimulate reflection. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) confirm this finding, citing problem-based learning and assessment exercises as examples of such strategies. Huba and Freed (2000) argue that a key element of good assessment design is the formulation of statements of intended learning outcomes while Kochan and Locke (2009) argue that effective assessment should promote coherence in learning and synthesise experiences that foster the ongoing practice of skills and abilities, a finding which aligns closely with this design feature.

Statement 7: Assessments emphasise (a) leadership of learning, (b) organisational development, (c) change management.

Kochan and Locke (2009), in their review of the key elements of good assessment design, note that effective assessment should be part of a set of conditions that promotes change, which supports the argument that organisational development and change management should be integrated into leadership assessment systems. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) identified, as a specific programme feature, a standards-based curriculum that emphasised managing change, developing the organisation, and leading instruction. Orr and Orphanos (2011) similarly found, in their review of research on quality programme features, that a key element is a coherent curriculum that addresses

effective instructional leadership, organisational development and change management.

Statement 8: Assessment is used prior to programme admission to confirm candidate potential.

Orr and Orphanos (2011) heavily critique conventional programmes for allowing participants to self-enrol without pre-admission consideration of their leadership potential, pointing to the negative effects this has on overall programme quality and impact. Kochan and Locke (2009) similarly argue that, if SLDPs are going to measure their own worth by what programme graduates know and can do, it is essential that what they already know and can do at entry are key considerations in this evaluation. They further argue that a lack of rigorous entry requirements has resulted in low esteem for such programmes and a questionable pool of participants and final graduates. They recommend that assessments for entry onto a SLDP are thorough, make use of direct strategies, and are rigorous and collaborative. Regarding this last point, Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) found that the rigorous recruitment and selection of candidates was a key feature of effective SLDPs. Other researchers have also stressed the importance of rigorous candidate assessment activities in programme design and delivery (M. D. Young and Kochan, 2004., M. D. Young and Peterson, 2002).

Statement 9: The assessment includes a coursework element focused on school improvement.

This statement draws on Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2007) finding that assignments which engage candidates in the work of instructional leadership, such as analysing teaching, were efficacious in promoting participant learning and engagement. Orr and Orphanos (2011) found that a key design feature of exemplary SLDPs was the provision of intensive development opportunities to apply leadership knowledge and skills, while Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) found that learning is promoted in programmes which provide problem-based learning and the opportunity to collaborate within teams in practice-orientated situations. Finally, Kochan and Locke (2009) emphasise changes to the modes

of assessment utilised in SLDP assessment to strategies that focus on performance as a leader.

Statement 10: The assessment model involves an internship or placement overseen by a skilled and certified supervisor who contributes to the final assessment.

Orr and Orphanos' (2011) review of exemplary programmes identified quality internships that provide intensive developmental opportunities under the guidance of an expert practitioner-mentor as a key element. Kaagan (1998), writing from a more generalist perspective, argues that in terms of programme methodology, a principal vehicle for leadership development is going through an experience with peers and supervisors in a work place different from one's own. Evidence to support this statement comes from Darling-Hammond et al's. (2010) finding that a field-based internship under expert supervision was a key feature of effective leadership development programmes. Orr (2006) argues that when adult learning theory is connected to leadership development, field experiences become developmental and infused with reflective practices that augment the learning and strengthen the mentoring roles of field-based supervisors. Orr and Barber (2007), in a study which compared innovative with conventional SLTPs, found that broad and intensive internships, a key component of innovative programmes, were significantly related to gains in graduate leadership, knowledge and skills. Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) found that internship quality was a significant factor in determining how frequently and extensively SLDP graduates practised instructional leadership actions which resulted in improved school effectiveness. Orr, Silverberg and Le Trendre (2006) also found that internship length and quality were positively associated with how much graduates learn about instructional leadership practices and how to foster organisational learning.

Statement 11: There are test situations which pose authentic problems focused on instructional leadership challenges.

Kaagan (1998) argues that a key methodological tool in assessing leadership development is requiring participants to analyse a case study of an organisation's problems. Kochan and Locke (2009) found that direct measures of as-

assessment tend to integrate learning with theory and practice, and that they give a better indication of learning than do indirect measures which include self reports and attitude and opinion surveys that only communicate perceptions. Direct assessment strategies on the other hand are designed to directly measure participant's knowledge and skills, and their ability to apply that knowledge or skill. Direct assessment strategies include performances and exams, and involve interface between the person being assessed and those conducting the assessment. With specific reference to SLDPs, Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) found that active instructional strategies such as problem-based learning, were a key design feature of exemplary SLDP assessment. Orr and Orphanos' 2011 findings indicate that the most effective SLDPs assessed a curriculum that addressed effective instructional leadership. Finally Orr (2006) notes that, in addition to the embedding of national standards, other key requirements of exemplary SLDPs include competency assessments and the testing of graduates prior to certification.

Statement 12: The assessment model includes references to working with parents and students to solve school wide problems.

A growing body of research (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006, Robinson et al., 2009, Day et al., 2009) indicates that effective school leaders are able to both impact on teaching and learning directly through instructional leadership and simultaneously develop the social context that supports this vision, including engaging families and the community in school improvement. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) note that, given this mutually reinforcing relationship, exemplary instructional leaders also engage in transformational leadership activities. They argue that involving families and the local community in addressing the barriers holding back the improvement of teaching and learning is an essential leadership practice since "efforts to improve teaching and learning can only be sustained and successful in a context that supports those efforts, and supportive contexts are of little value without activities and resources aimed at improving the core work of instruction" (p.16). Given the considerable body of evidence that working with parents and students to solve school-wide problems has a direct impact on leader effectiveness, it follows that such a practice should be developed within the curriculum of effective SLDPs and, equally, that reference to it should be integral to the assessment process.

Statement 13: The assessment process cultivates the formation of leadership identity.

Kaagan (1998) argues that the key to the formation of leadership identity is reflection. He asserts that it is primarily from reflection that participants on leadership development journeys begin to reconstruct, reform and revise the ideas they had about the practice of organisational leadership. He also argues that if they can become emotionally engaged the positive impact on them will be significant and lasting. More specifically, Orr and Orphanos (2011) found that a key element common to exemplary SLDPs was active learning strategies that stimulate reflection. Again in the school context, Orr (2006) investigated the roots of leadership development in individuals identified as outstanding leaders and discovered that many had early leadership experiences that were instrumental in developing their leadership identity. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) found that attitudinal shifts by adults are likely to be promoted by SLDPs that use preparation and assessment strategies that maximise leadership identity development. These strategies include the use of cohorts and mentors to cultivate leadership identity formation.

Statement 14: In the assessment, learner-centred assessment methods are utilised.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) also found that programmes which promoted student-centred instructional pedagogy saw greater levels of participant engagement and learning. Similarly, Orr, Silverberg and Le Trendre (2006) also found that exemplary SLTPs used active, student-centred instructional practices. Arguably such student-centred approaches need to apply to the assessment process as well. There is a growing consensus that preparing school leaders who can implement a collaborative leadership approach focused upon student learning requires SLDPs to develop and implement an assessment system that engages participants in learning and enables them to engage others in learning as well (Orr et al., 2006). Kochan and Locke (2009) also argue that assessment models which include activities such as group process training, games and simulations are essential if participants are to fully engage with the assessment process.

3.74 Deployment of research summaries

The evidence base these two research summaries rest on can be regarded as robust, and draws on a large number of reviews and meta-reviews. Clearly though the process of summarising creates inevitable problems of oversimplification, interpretation and meaning. This particularly applies to the research on exemplary design features as this was not always explicitly focused on assessment, and has been adapted or applied to assessment where this was judged appropriate. Thus, although the summary statements were used to evaluate and compare the two assessment systems, they are not presented in the research as definitive documents, but as tools to enable the engagement of participants. While representing a comprehensive and grounded summary, their key role in research terms was to provide a reference point from which critique and evaluation could take place.

4. Research design and methods

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the focus of the research, and the research questions derived from this, are presented. The theoretical and methodological perspectives, and the justification for these, are then set out. Next the methodological challenges posed by the study are discussed and how these were met is explained. The subsequent research design is then laid out.

4.2 Research focus

Using evaluative case study as the form of enquiry, the research considers whether and how it is possible and appropriate to assess readiness for headship using competency-based models in quasi-market systems. It does this by firstly establishing the level of alignment between the national standards for headteachers and the assessment criteria used by the SLDPs in the two jurisdictions under study. This is because, in any national framework for school leader development, national standards should underpin and drive the design of SLDPs and their assessment systems. There should be an articulated relationship between the two, with the aspirations of the standards reflected in the assessment.

Secondly, the extent to which each assessment system evaluated those practices and activities most critical to successful school leadership, as measured by pupil outcomes broadly defined, was investigated. The extent to which each assessment system incorporated best practice in assessment system design was also determined. The aim here was to investigate to what extent competency-based systems assessed the right things in the best ways.

Thirdly, given that the documentary texts and meanings of programme developers and policy makers do not always translate directly into institutional practice when enacted in the social arena (Ball, 1994), the perceptions of the social actors engaged in the assessment process were sought. These perceptions were felt to be an important measure of assessment system efficacy.

The information gained was used to critique the current system of assessment in England and Hong Kong and to suggest how leadership assessment in both jurisdictions could be enhanced. More generally, whether and how competency-based assessment is a feasible and appropriate mechanism for assessing readiness for headship was considered.

4.3 Research aim and questions

This study addressed the following overarching aim:

To conduct an evaluative and comparative analysis of the assessment systems of two school leader development programmes so as to cast light on how the assessment of aspirant principals and trainee heads could be further developed; and to draw from this general conclusions as to the efficacy of competency-based systems in assessing readiness for headship.

This aim was addressed by focusing on the following three research questions for each jurisdiction:

RQ1. To what extent are the national standards related to the assessment system of the leadership development programme?

RQ2. To what extent does the assessment system relate to recent research findings on effective school leadership and best practice in assessment system design?

RQ3. What are the perspectives of those involved in the assessment process regarding its fitness for purpose and the extent to which it reflects those research findings and best practice?

From the above research a fourth question was then addressed:

RQ4. How can these findings inform the future development of SLDP assessment systems in Hong Kong, in England and globally?

4.4 Theoretical and methodological perspectives

For this study a constructionist stance, where the researcher focused on the constructed perspectives and meanings of assessment systems from the viewpoints of all those involved, was adopted. Such a position is underpinned by the ontological standpoint that the social world is constructed by the actors en-

gaged within it and that, in epistemological terms, knowledge of the social world can only be obtained through the perspectives of individuals.

Taken to its logical extreme, this stance may view it as impossible that any evaluation could generate knowledge about an assessment system beyond that which is specific to particular instances, negotiated between a wide group of participants, and completely subjective. However a more moderate social constructionism (Robson, 2011), which accepts that differences of perception and interpretation on the part of those involved may provide important information that can contribute to our understanding of how and why an assessment system is the way it is, and how effectively it is working, is arguably a useful and valid approach. This stance also enabled a range of other real world research to be utilised in constructing evidence-based best practice summary documents to enable practitioners and participants to evaluate their own assessment system, as explained above. While most of the studies used in constructing the summary had a mixed method or multi-strategy design, they were all underpinned by the same emphasis on the world of experience as it is lived by people acting in social situations. As an assessment practitioner acting with others in a leadership assessment system, such an approach was persuasive as the task of research can be defined as developing an understanding of multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge. The participants can be viewed as helping to construct the reality with the researcher, with subjectivity an integral part of the process.

For these reasons there was a pragmatic approach to the research, the central notion being that “the meaning of a concept consists in its practical implications in the world as it is experienced” (Baert, 2005, p.146). Within this broad paradigm the research focus largely called for qualitative data collection methods, although a multi-strategy (Robson, 2011) research design was employed where the research questions themselves helped shape the overall design. Although the first two research questions call for a desk top analysis of documentary evidence, following Ball (2013), the documents themselves are seen as social constructs, reflecting the constructed meanings of the programmes and their assessment, from the viewpoints and cultural contexts of those involved in their creation. Given this standpoint, it is argued that the extent to which an as-

assessment system reflects evidence-based best practice constitutes information worthy of consideration, while the perspectives of those involved in operating an assessment system represent valid knowledge on which to base judgements. Therefore, within the study, meaning will be constructed by the researcher as he interacts and engages in reflection, analysis and interpretation of the data from both the documentary evidence and from the social actors engaged in the programmes. However this approach created certain methodological challenges which are discussed below, after an explanation as to how the robustness of the empirical data was secured.

4.5 Data Quality

Although the research methods used in this study were selected primarily by considering the research aims and questions, the validity of the empirical data obtained was also a critical issue. This was particularly relevant in the context of research on school leadership, given the research consensus that this has a key role in improving organisational and pupil outcomes. The robustness and authenticity of the research findings was underpinned by procedures which addressed the trustworthiness of the data collected, as did the process of triangulation that was adopted.

Regarding the challenge of applying the concept of reliability in a case study research project, Yin's advice that: "the general way of approaching the reliability problem is to conduct the research as if someone were always looking over your shoulder" (1994, p. 146) was followed. This was achieved by documenting and describing in detail the research procedure. However, as semi-structured interviews were a main research instrument in the case study, with participants encouraged to contribute in their own way as unique respondents, ensuring reliability, as normally defined within the positivist tradition (Scott and Morrison, 2006), was not regarded as feasible. Additionally there was the underlying issue that each respondent represented a unique personal and professional context, by definition unrepeatable within a semi-structured interview situation. This raised the further question as to whether striving for reliability was possible.

However, with regard to the desk top analysis of documentary evidence, the key question: "Is this document reliable?" (Fitzgerald, 2007, p. 287) was addressed.

As the research was conducted by a sole researcher the option to have a paired coding of the text was not available.

Validity, like reliability, is a concept associated predominantly with the positivist paradigm, and its application to the case study research design deployed in this study was similarly problematic. Validity, strictly interpreted, is secured through verification by rational proof which rests upon explicit intended meaning. However the constructionist perspective of this research design, which encouraged participant's emotional and intellectual engagement, could not provide this certainty. This particularly applied to the semi-structured interviews where the characteristics of the interviewer and the respondent, together with the content of the interview questions themselves, all acted as sources of bias. Thus it was judged that the concept of validity, as conceived within the positivist tradition, could not easily be applied to the research design created for this study.

Instead, following Bassey (1999), a strategy to ensure the case study's trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) was followed. This involved the research study being subjected to the tests of trustworthiness enumerated by Bassey (2012). Thus during the research various methods of data collection were utilised to enhance the credibility of the study. In addition comprehensive and detailed records of interview schedules and recordings were retained so that the data and subsequent analysis could be tracked. Documentary analysis applying to the interview transcripts and subsequent emerging issues was conducted during data collection, which was an additional feature of the triangulation process.

In addition the interview protocols and summary documents used in the collection of interview data ensured that engagement with interviewees was sustained and substantial, which reinforced the authenticity of the study. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and stored so that any subsequent data analysis and interpretation could be referenced and compared for adequacy against this benchmark.

In terms of triangulating the data, the research utilised a multi-method approach incorporating a desktop content analysis of documents with the interviewing of

key actors engaged in the assessment process, thereby establishing a degree of methodological triangulation. In addition, for each of the assessment systems under study, interviews were held with three types of individual - providers, assessors and graduates - thereby providing a degree of respondent triangulation. These procedures enabled the cross-checking of data to establish its validity.

4.6 Methodological challenges and the strategies deployed to meet them

4.61 Challenges in comparative designs

There are inherent risks and limitations in constructing comparative research methodologies, summed up by Hart's observation that: "Not all things can be compared with all other things." (Hart, 2009, p. 132). For example, considering national standards as a phenomenon in both jurisdictions, clearly these can be compared. However when seeking to compare the different elements within each phenomenon, it was not always possible, as certain elements were present in one but not present in the other and vice versa. This problem was compounded by how each set of national standards was conceived, organised and constructed, and this challenge applied to the other phenomena compared in the research.

A related challenge was that of selectivity, essential to any successful comparative analysis since, when selecting, choices have to be made regarding which elements to compare. Clearly the choices need to be clear, explicit and justified. However to do this exhaustively would not be tenable or appropriate in the context of an EdD thesis. The comparative analysis was therefore tailored by taking account of the professional readership, and of how salient the contrasts were between elements of different phenomena. An example of the former consideration being applied is the analysis of how the two different assessment systems compared with research findings on assessment system design, while an example of the latter is in the contrasting perceptions of graduates regarding the efficacy of each assessment system. In addition, communicating clearly how the comparative analysis was designed, and how it has been selectively applied in practice, was a critical underpinning to support the reader.

For Lumby, Crow and Pashiardis (2008), comparative analysis in educational research in the 19th and 20th centuries had been based on: “a firm sense of one's own location and traditions as the intellectual point of departure” (Lumby, Crow and Pashiardis, 2008, p. 4). They critique such research as being grounded in the notion that it will support the education of the superior by viewing what is worthy elsewhere. This stance has been characterised as “cultural borrowing” (Kay and Watson, 1982, p. 23) or “a process of *bricolage*” (Ball, 1998, p. 126). Despite the declared purpose of increasing global knowledge, understanding and the cross-fertilisation of ideas, the actual result may have been to further perpetuate and reinforce ethnocentricity, disjuncture, and a hierarchy of value.

To avoid these still present dangers other comparative studies have used a variety of strategies. One approach is to use research to investigate educational issues that are current globally, and research how practitioners have responded in their own context. An example of this approach was a 2007 study (Bottery, Ngai, Wong, P. M. and Wong, P. H.) which considered how principals in England and Hong Kong experience increasing workload and inspection regimes. The similarities and differences found illustrate how principals in very different contexts are responding to common issues that affect their professional lives. This approach is of relevance since the key issue being researched here (SLDP assessment systems) is a global phenomena. The research design, rather than simply allowing the reader to learn from what was happening elsewhere, focused on the effects of cultural and political contexts, and so enabled an examination of the ways in which local conditions interact with global issues.

The strategy behind the comparative and evaluative case study research was based on three elements. The first was participation, in that key actors from both jurisdictions would, through using a theory of action, be involved in evaluating the ‘site’ of SLDP assessment in their own context. The second was comparison, to reflect similarities and differences in documentary evidence and respondent perception; and the third was qualitative, to reflect the cultural and contextual realities in both jurisdictions. For this study context was treated as

integral to the holistic character of qualitative research. Therefore, as far as feasibly possible, the evaluation of the two assessments systems was grounded in the realities faced by providers, assessors and graduates. The interview protocols, research summary sheets and theory of action documentation were all constructed and deployed with this in mind so as to enhance and strengthen the comparative design.

Arguably fieldwork issues common to all qualitative research are magnified in a cross-country comparative study. In the area of ideas for example an understanding of such terms as leadership and assessment may well be contested. Another challenge of the research, since it involved school leadership from the Hong Kong research field, was that it accentuated issues of language. There were two specific language issues. The first concerned the varied relationships between the principal indigenous spoken language (Cantonese) together with its written adjunct standard written Chinese, and the second official language (English), plus the main language of the mainland (Mandarin). The second difficulty was the relationship between the research discourse conducted in English, and what was in effect the day-to-day Cantonese language used by most Hong Kong respondents. The researcher found these issues were much ameliorated by the strategy of raising the participation and engagement of respondents, coupled to researcher reflexivity, though a relative weakness of this study was its tendency, particularly in Hong Kong, to focus on those affected by decisions rather than those setting the agenda. (Stephens, 2012). Finally, given the political climate in Hong Kong sensitivity and diplomacy were required when discussing education with those in official positions.

Other issues were thrown up by the decision to seek and integrate knowledge gained from both documentary and real-world sources. These are discussed below, along with an explanation of how they were accommodated.

4.62 Combining an evidence-based best practice summary document with a socially constructed view of how effectively real-world practice reflects such frameworks

It was felt that a desk top analysis of the assessment systems, where the documentation pertaining to each was compared against an evidence-based best

practice summary document, would produce useful information about the extent to which each system reflected current academic ideas about how best to design, construct and operate such systems. Knowing to what extent each system conformed to best practice on paper however was viewed as a first step towards gaining a more authentic insight into how effective the assessment systems were in practice. As the study was conceived primarily as conducting educational research with people, as opposed to on them or on assessment artefacts, it was felt it should be grounded in people's experience of operating the assessment systems. The stance of the researcher is as a practitioner - researcher researching aspirant principal assessment. The evidence-based best practice summary document is derived from previous real-world research into school leadership, the overall nature of which entails above all interactions in the social world. This, I argue, implies that such research is underpinned by a broadly constructionist stance which reflects the position of this study.

4.63 Researcher positioning

In the field of international and comparative education a number of authors have sought to reconsider researcher positioning, arguing against viewing insiderness and outsiderhood as fixed dichotomous entities (Arthur, 2010; Katyal and King, 2011; McNess, Arthur, and Crossley, 2013). A significant aspect of this new thinking about insider-outsider positionings is the further development of the notion that in conducting research we are neither entirely one identity nor another; neither fully inside nor outside. Rather, it is argued, we take on different positionings dependent on the situation that we may be in, the people we are interacting with and the familiarity of the linguistic and socio-cultural norms. Katyal and King (2011) reflect on their positioning in conducting research in Hong Kong and conclude that although they were 'outsiders' by way of cultural and racial difference, they inhabited an insider identity on a professional level in the educational institutions they researched. This literature highlights how there are multiple cultural, socio-economic, linguistic and power dimensions that contribute to shifting positionings while conducting cross-cultural research.

These notions strongly resonated as I was conscious that my identity as a researcher would change significantly in the different contexts in which I was working. For example, in Hong Kong I would be a post-graduate UK student re-

searcher on an official exchange between two universities. To Hong Kong principals this would make me an outsider. Yet my past experience as a principal, and my current role as an assessor, would arguably bestow a degree of insidership. In England, in the assessor context, I would be an NPQH assessor interviewing fellow professionals; very much an insider. For others, such as assessment system providers, I was necessarily an outsider. Given the nature of this study, conducted in two very different cultural contexts by a researcher whose status and identity were both multi-faceted and responsive to differing situations, adopting a flexible and dynamic approach to researcher positioning was judged necessary. The appropriateness of this decision was demonstrated while in the field, particularly in the Hong Kong context where I was in one sense always an outsider looking in.

Oakley (1981) suggests that the culture most likely to generate successful research projects, especially for those using interpretative and critical ontologies, might be described as collaborative or participatory. Milligan (2016) further argues that, while recent work has highlighted theoretical developments in thinking about insider-outsider perspectives, less focus has been given to the methodological processes that contribute to such positioning while conducting cross-cultural research. She stresses the potential of participative methods to enable both new insights and mutual understandings of the educational realities of one particular context. However, she qualifies this by stating that she did not take a wholly participatory approach. Rather, she argues that the methods she used were participative because they involved some shift in power dynamics by allowing participants to guide the data collection, through their choices in the data they collected, and the form of the interview that followed.

Following Milligan's lead, participative techniques were used in this study to gain insider perspectives and develop a more insider role. This is demonstrated in the interview protocols and accompanying documentation, which aimed to raise the involvement of participants and engage their critical faculties. In a study that sought to understand different perspectives of leadership readiness across two cultures, and how it could best be assessed, it was important to find ways to enable the participants to share their thinking. To some extent this approach overcame the culturally induced reticence of Hong Kong participants. By

building relationships based on trust and respect of different views, the data collected suggest more authentic portrayals of the perceptions of those involved in the leadership assessment process in the two systems.

4.64 Research in different cultural contexts

In attempting any international comparative study of school leadership the key issue of cultural context needed to be addressed. One key challenge is the influence one's own culture exerts:

Normally we are unaware of our own culture - it is just the way we do things around here. Consequently, our leadership theories typically make little mention of the cultural context in which leaders work. A cultural context exists, but our "acculturated lens" blinds us to its effects. (Hallinger and Leithwood, 1998, p.129)

This can also blunt our appreciation of the significance of different cultural contexts in determining policy outcomes. As Dimmock and Walker (2000a, p.147), working in an Asian context, point out:

theory and practice in educational management are possibly more strongly contextually bound than many researchers and policy makers in the Anglo-American world are prepared to acknowledge. (Dimmock and Walker, 2000b, p.137)

Their solution to this problem was to develop a conceptual framework for comparing international educational leadership focusing on the school as the baseline unit for analysis. The framework is structured around the interrelationship between two levels of culture, societal and organisational (the school unit), and four elements of schooling: organisational structures; leadership and management processes; curriculum; and teaching and learning. While the framework is well suited to comparative school-based studies, an alternative approach was required that would enable a specific comparison of the two assessment systems while allowing the cultural context to emerge. The approach devised was a Theory of Action (TOA), the rationale for which is explained below.

There are various theoretical constructs that can be built and applied to real world situations which fit the notion of a TOA. A TOA can be viewed as an “if – then” mechanism, a simple statement about the relationship between actions and desired outcomes. This basic theoretical underpinning was developed through a consideration of the functions it would need to fulfil in addressing the challenge of comparing two assessment systems from different cultural contexts. First the TOA must fulfil a causal role and must begin with a statement of a causal relationship. In this research it could be expressed as: “operationalising the nine principles listed (see below) will cause the efficacy of an assessment system to be maximised”. Second the TOA must fulfil a conditional function, that is, it must be empirically falsifiable, given that it is developed from empirical findings which will always be subject to revision in the light of new evidence. Thus, when applying the nine principles to a particular assessment system, as well as exposing possible shortcomings within it, revisions to the theory of action itself should be considered in the light of the cultural context the assessment system exists in. Third the TOA must fulfil an open function in that it must be open-ended and be expected to change as the interviewees consider their own assessment system against the nine principles, modifying and adopting these in the light of their cultural context. The objective is not to end up with a final TOA, but to have a strategy that can adjust to cultural contexts.

The theory of action developed for this research sits within the wider constructivist framework of the research design since the researcher is focused on the constructed meanings and interpretations of assessment systems from the perspectives of all the social actors involved. The stance taken, that differences of interpretation on the part of those involved may provide useful data about the efficacy of an assessment system as it is practised in its social and cultural context, aligns with the strategy behind the deployment of the TOA since it is designed to facilitate and stimulate a critical comparison of the assessment system against an unfamiliar but challenging and thought-provoking set of criteria. In presenting respondents with this set of assumptions, the underlying stance of the researcher is that the reactions generated will be of value, and will facilitate a critical examination of the assessment system’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as allowing participants to assert the relevance of particular and distinctive features relevant to their immersive cultural context.

4.65 The theory of action

The unproblematised TOA was conceived as a set of nine assumptions or assertions grounded in research and evidence-based practice that underpin assessment system design and help align theory with the realities of work within a social situation. The TOA identifies the mutual dependencies that are required to get complex work done - in this case the assessment of aspirant principal readiness:

1. The aim of an assessment model within a pre-principalship development programme is to identify candidates that are ready to begin principalship.
2. The relative quality of any assessment model should ultimately be judged by the capacity of programme graduates to promote school improvement and increase student learning and outcomes.
3. There is considerable agreement about what capabilities school leaders need to possess, and be able to practice, in order to improve school performance and student outcomes.
4. These practices are largely drawn from two leadership styles - instructional and transformational.
5. When combined, these two leadership styles reinforce one another to enhance the overall impact of leadership activity
6. There is also considerable agreement regarding which design elements of adult learning programmes have the strongest effect on participant learning and attitudinal shift, including strengthening those values which have their genesis in the moral purpose of improving the life chances of pupils.
7. These practices, capabilities and programme design elements can be identified, refined and organised into a framework which can be utilised to underpin programme design and assessment models.
8. Accepting the definition of assessment: "A process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand and can do...", then an assessment model must at least try to accurately evaluate a candidate's capacity to enact those leadership practices, as well as simply assessing their knowledge and understanding of them.

9. These research findings have implications for the conceptualisation, design and operationalisation of the assessment models of SLDPs and 'capacity to enact' should be a focus of candidate assessment.

The intention was that this 'argument' would facilitate a critical exploration of the key challenges faced by the two assessment systems, through the prism of their own cultural context. This was achieved by inviting discussion and critical analysis of the theory of action, in terms of how it reflected the essential features and workings of each assessment system. The relationship between the theory of action and the assessment systems was viewed as dialectical: the process of mutual critical comparison and analysis engendering problematisation in both. The aim was to defamiliarise the familiar, or that which might be seen as 'common sense'. However, as an idealised construct, the theory of action also facilitated an exploration of those particular elements of the assessment paradigm which are most problematic and resistant to rational empirical study. These problematic elements informed and guided the analysis, and are set out in Appendix 2.

4.7 Research design

The study lies within one tradition of enquiry, the evaluative case study, where the "singularity" (Basse, 2012, p.157), or unit of analysis, is the assessment of aspirant headteachers. The research starts with a single idea - how the assessment of aspirant headteachers in England and Hong Kong can be developed by means of a cross-country comparison - and visits the two 'sites' to gather the relevant data. Multiple data collection techniques are employed, which are summarised in tabular form.

Yin (2009, p.76), provides a useful general definition of case study which underpins how the research is conceived:

Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves doing an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.

Bassey however, adds an important refinement in that he delineates the *educational* case study as “critical enquiry aimed at informing educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action” (2012, p.156). To be successful in this aim is a defining aspiration of the study.

4.71 Addressing the research questions:

RQ1. To what extent are the national standards related to the assessment system of the leadership development programme?

RQ2. To what extent does the assessment system relate to recent research findings on effective school leadership and best practice in assessment system design?

RQ3. What are the perspectives of those involved in the assessment process regarding its fitness for purpose and the extent to which it reflects those research findings and best practice?

RQ4. How can these findings inform the future development of SLDP assessment systems in Hong Kong, in England and globally?

For England, the documentary analysis for RQ 1 was carried out on the revised (January 2015) national standards of excellence for headteachers and on the NPQH assessment framework current at February 2015. For Hong Kong, the ‘Key Qualities of the Principalship in Hong Kong’ (Walker et al., 2000) constitute the official leadership framework; are the equivalent of the English national standards; and were used in the analysis. The assessment framework for the Hong Kong CFP was taken from the EDB Circular No. 1/2017 applications.edb.gov.hk/circular/upload/EDBC/EDBC17001E.pdf.

For RQ 2 the two assessment systems were compared with a summary document (Appendix 3) which encapsulated recent research findings on:

- those instructional and transformational leadership practices most efficacious in improving pupil outcomes
- how SLDP assessment systems should be designed, organised and operationalised.

The comparative analysis conducted cast light on how well designed each assessment system was and how well it covered those instructional and transfor-

mative leadership practices and activities that impact most on student outcomes.

For RQ 3 the research method employed was semi-structured interview. This enabled an exploration of participant perspectives and attitudes that reflected the ontological position, and recognised the ideas, experiences and knowledge of the participants as an important aspect of the social reality of aspiring principal assessment. Interviewing also allowed for interaction with the participants in a flexible, responsive, and sensitive manner. This enabled spontaneous follow up questions to be asked in response to comments or experiences (Bryman, 2006) and represented a dialogic interaction in the conversation style described by Kvale (1998, p.16). Structured interviews were not used as they may introduce a level of formality that does not facilitate conversation, nor allow access to contextual and situational knowledge in a way that enables association with other aspects of interviewee experience. This last consideration was particularly significant in the Hong Kong context. Providers, assessors and graduates were interviewed. Details are provided in the sampling section below.

Fully informed consent was obtained (Appendices 4-11). All interviewees were given the opportunity to select the location of the interview and whether it would be face to face or online. The major considerations when agreeing locations were noise, privacy and the certainty of not being interrupted. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and were recorded. Interviewees were asked for permission to record the interviews in advance and this was confirmed at the interview. All respondents were relaxed about this and agreed readily, so recording was not judged to have had a detrimental impact on the interviews, during which notes were made. The recordings were later transcribed, but not strictly verbatim. These transcripts formed the basis for the initial analysis and extracts are attached as Appendices 12-14.

With providers the TOA was deployed to provide the basis for a three stage discussion. In stage one participants were invited to consider 'their' assessment system in the light of the TOA, the aim being to encourage them to critique both. The second stage focused on the circumstances surrounding the creation and development of the assessment system, including any challenges and

constraints such as the policy context and the influence of policy makers. The final stage invited participants to evaluate the assessment system in terms of its utility in measuring candidate readiness for principalship. Although these interviews were structured in the sense that they followed a three stage process, within this framework the discussions themselves were unstructured, with the participants having free rein to develop their own thoughts and ideas. Given the intensive nature of these interviews, the protocol should be viewed more as an interview guide (Lofland and Lofland, 2006).

In the interviews with assessors and graduates, participants were asked to consider the summary document of IL and TL practices and design features to assess the extent to which both groups perceived these measures to be present in their respective assessment systems. The final section of the interview focused on each assessment system's perceived performance in providing accurate and useful assessment information, including its ability to confirm readiness for school leadership. To stimulate discussion interviewees were asked to consider their assessment system in the light of Huba and Freed's (2000) definition of assessment (Appendix 3).

For RQ 4 the findings from each set of data were subjected to a comparative analysis in order to identify the commonalities and differences between the two systems as well as their strengths and weaknesses. The data was used to critique the assessment systems and to consider how they could be developed further. Whether and how competency-based assessment is a feasible and appropriate mechanism for assessing readiness for headship was then considered, as was the future development of SLDP assessment systems generally.

4.72 Sampling

Initially in both England and Hong Kong purposive sampling was used to identify appropriate participants. Bryman's approach was adopted as it was necessary to interview individuals who had a particular expertise or held a particular office:

Such sampling is essentially strategic and entails an attempt to establish a good correspondence between research questions and sampling. In other words, the researcher samples on the basis of wanting to interview people who are relevant to the research questions.

Bryman (2008, p. 458)

However once in the field, peer esteem snowball sampling (Christoponlos, 2009) was used, as participants recommended various individuals who they thought would be of interest to me and be interested in the research. This situation applied particularly in Hong Kong where I arrived having only one initial contact who I had researched before departure as an expert professional in the field of study. While this participant was selected purposely, because of the circumstances, other participants in Hong Kong were obtained through peer esteem snowball sampling as the initial contact acted as a gatekeeper, recommending other elite members of the expert group. An introductory email was sent to recommended participants inviting them to be involved, with an information sheet giving more detail on the study and its ethical considerations. In Hong Kong I also cold-called principals, contacting 40 secondary and 17 primary schools, writing a concise email that established my research purpose and my credentials as a research student (Appendix 15). This tactic secured some valuable CFP graduate participants. Overall the sampling strategy used was a mixture of purposive, peer esteem snowball and cold calling a random sample. I had initially planned to secure six participants in each of the three categories for each country.

Table 2: The final (achieved) sample

	Hong Kong	England
Providers	5	5
Assessors	2	9
Graduates	6	6

Constraints of time and resource, imposed by my position as a solo part-time researcher, had to be recognised when coming to terms with the tension between what was ideal and what was actually possible in sampling terms. This was particularly acute in the Hong Kong context.

Although this method of sampling precluded achieving high confidence in the generalisability of the findings, the study - particularly with regard to providers and assessors - investigated the perspectives of a relatively small population of expert opinion. Clearly this did not apply to the graduate populations but within the field of educational leadership there are many examples of such small sample sizes being used in qualitative research projects, for example Shapira et al. (2011). The lack of balance in the sample with regard to assessors was caused by the difficulty the researcher experienced in securing access to the assessor cadre in Hong Kong. The limited sample was secured after a personal approach to the Principal Assistant Secretary of the Hong Kong Education Bureau (Appendix 16).

4.73 Method of data analysis

Thematic coding analysis was used to analyse the data set. The sequential list of steps furnished by Miles and Huberman (1994) was adopted. Initial codes were generated inductively by interaction with the data. Gibbs' (2007) view on coding as an exercise in identifying and recording passages of text that exemplify the same theoretical or descriptive idea was followed. Extracts were given codes in a systematic fashion across the entire data set with similar extracts given the same code (Appendices 17 and 18). Four broad themes related to the research questions emerged.

Table 3: Themes used for coding

1. Form, structure, scope
2. Beliefs, attitudes, values
3. Knowledge, understanding, capability
4. Impact on and expectations of others

The national standards, the assessment documentation and the interview transcripts for each jurisdiction were codified and organised using these themes (Appendices 19-22). For the interview data the constant comparative method (Thomas, 2013) was employed. Comparative frameworks were then constructed (Appendix 23). Finally thematic tables summarising and analysing the data were drawn up (Appendix 24) which served as the basis for the findings.

4.74 Ethical and power issues

This research was underpinned by the British Educational Research Association revised ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2011). The research was conducted within a code of respect for the person; for knowledge; for democratic and ethical values as they apply in the assessment context; for the quality of educational research and for academic freedom. Before the research was conducted, ethical permission was gained from the Institute of Education through the university's ethical clearance process. Approval was not sought from any other local or institutional ethics committee as the research design does not require any deception in order to ensure the appropriate data were collected. It was important that the participants, in order to give their voluntary informed consent, fully understood the process in which they were engaged, including why their participation was necessary, how the data would be used and how and to whom it would be reported. Information gathered during the research was stored securely and in compliance with the Data Protection Act (2003).

Given the focus of the study, the disparate nature of the individuals interviewed, and the social contexts operating, I was acutely aware that the integrity and professionalism of the research was heavily dependent on the direct and indirect contribution of colleagues, collaborators and others. I was also conscious of my responsibility not to inform the assessment agencies of the views of participants, even if the agencies thought this would benefit the management of the

assessment systems, since this would have breached my agreement with participants to preserve their anonymity and protect them from potential harm. However it will be possible to report back to gatekeepers and sponsors the main findings, suitably generalised and anonymised.

In the assessment role, I have always attempted to cultivate a collegiate culture of partnership throughout the professional environments I have worked in. However, access to different categories of social actor in the assessment context rendered the research problematic; my position as assessor could not be separated from my role as researcher and this position had a particular hierarchical place relative to others such a graduates, assessors or providers. Individual participants were objectively lower or higher in power, status and remuneration. This dynamic was particularly acute in Hong Kong, given my status as a graduate researcher. Thus there was an awareness that the research activity existed in a system of social and other power relationships and that any interaction could be part of a wider struggle for power, voice and agency. I was also aware that participants, though adults, may still have been influenced by a wish to please by their answers, or to present themselves in a way that accorded with their positive self image.

Despite these issues, the situation was arguably productive in research terms. Foucault (1980) asks us to consider power as essentially relational, situated, circulated, endlessly negotiated and constructed. Following this conception it was possible to create the conditions that allowed purposeful relationships based on trust and respect to develop. With the participants feeling some sense of ownership over the research activity, the aim was to explore the “space where those directly involved can act and speak on their own behalf” (Lather, 1991, p. 164). Moreover, my own power was derived from my authority as a retired headteacher and assessor, which arguably gave it a legitimacy denied to coercive or charismatic power. However, despite the steps taken to minimise the distorting effects of the power imbalances that operated, it is recognised that these were not entirely mitigated.

The research design, while complex, is tightly structured in that there is high compatibility between the purpose, research questions, conceptual framework,

methods and sampling strategy. This resulted in a rich yield of relevant data which was analysed to produce the main findings, presented in the next chapter.

5. Presentation and discussion of the main findings

5.1 Introduction

The main findings of this research were derived from an inductive process where the entire dataset, comprising the national standards, the assessment documentation and the interview transcripts for each jurisdiction, was subjected to thematic coding as described in Chapter 4. A general analysis and discussion of what was found is presented below, organised in three sections which correspond to the first three research foci. The fourth research question, focusing on the future development of SLDP assessment, is discussed in the concluding chapter. While not directly related to the research questions, the conceptual model developed from Moller and Schratz (2008) was also applied to the findings. This served to illuminate where national governance policy drivers have impinged on the national standards, the assessment systems and the perceptions of interviewees.

5.2 Composition of Hong Kong National Standards and CFP assessment system

5.21 National Standards

In the analysis the term 'national standards' refers to the Key Qualities of the Principalship in Hong Kong (2000) The 'Key Qualities' are organised as sets of values, knowledge, skills and attributes (which aligns closely with the NPQH description of its competencies). The key qualities are clustered round six core areas of principalship.

5.22 The CFP assessment process

1. A needs analysis, which aims at enabling the aspirants to understand and reflect on their own strengths and areas for further development and improvement. Not assessed and not used as a 'gateway' onto the course.
2. The Preparation for Principalship (PFP) course, which comprises six modules and an action research project (ARP) with built-in assessments, taught and assessed by HEIs.

3. Final assessment is through the submission of a portfolio containing evidence of professional growth (such as reflective journals), a vision statement on the meaning of principalship plus an attachment showing completion of the needs analysis, and statements by referees if available.

5.3 Composition of English National Standards and NPQH assessment system

5.31 National Standards

The National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers are set out in four domains:

- Qualities and knowledge
- Pupils and staff
- Systems and process
- The self-improving school system

Within each domain there are six key characteristics expected of headteachers.

5.32 The NPQH assessment process

1. Access onto the course is by means of a 'gateway' assessment process.
2. Candidates then complete a school-based project, Task 1, where they must demonstrate the impact of their leadership on pupil outcomes. A similar project, undertaken in a placement school, constitutes Task 2. Written evidence of the impact of these projects, from the candidate, their sponsor and placement headteacher, is submitted to assessors prior to the final interview.
3. The final assessment of candidate readiness (Task 3) is through the testing of selected competencies by means of an interview, a presentation and the written evidence as described above.

Nine competencies are tested at final assessment, each competency broken down into sub-competencies (termed positive indicators in the documentation). Competency grade scales, based on the positive indicators, are employed by assessors in making the candidate assessment for each competency.

5.4 The relationship between the national standards and the assessment systems

Theme one: Form, structure, scope

The two Hong Kong documents have contrasting but complementary procedural and conceptual frameworks. The national standards have a highly developed conceptual framework, while the assessment system goes into detail concerning assessment procedures. The assessment system makes regular reference to the key components of the national standards, but stresses that candidates need to read these in their own right to fully understand the CFP final assessment process. The assessment system provides advice and guidance on navigating through the assessment process while the national standards provide a research-based rationale for the qualities deemed essential to successful principalship. There appears to be a close reciprocal relationship between them.

This explicitly acknowledged relationship is not mirrored in the two English documents. There is no reference to the NPQH or its assessment system in the English national standards, which have the status of non-statutory advice issued by the Department for Education (DfE). They replace the national standards for headteachers (2004), and are designed to be relevant to all headteachers in a self-improving system. The rationale for the update is to make the standards “relevant to school system development since 2004”. The advisory, non-statutory status of the standards indicates that the principle of deregulation is being followed. The status of the NPQH, which became non-mandatory in September 2012, echoes this. Similarly, the notion that although optional, the NPQH qualification is for all prospective headteachers is promoted. In other words, both the national standards and the NPQH qualification are designed for, and felt to be highly beneficial to, everyone aspiring to headship, but neither is mandatory, which is decentralisation in action.

Despite the apparent close relationship between the Hong Kong documents outlined above, in the CFP portfolio, which is the mode of assessment, there is only one reference to the key qualities required of school principals. Here candidates are advised that their concluding statement should, among other things,

indicate their perception of their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the key qualities as described in the six core areas of leadership. Granted, in order to follow the guidelines, a candidate would need to consider their progress and future development in the key qualities, but the assessment process is not attempting objectively to assess the extent to which a candidate possesses them. Thus, although the assessment system has access, through the national standards, to a suite of competencies in the form of the 'key qualities' required of principals, these are not operationalised in the assessment process. Instead candidates are asked to produce a reflective statement using the generalised "assessment requirements" listed in an appendix of the Education Bureau circular. The assessment system does however explain in detail how to construct and present a portfolio.

Within the Hong Kong national standards there is a strategic purpose articulated which is to "promote the principalship to its justified level of pre-eminence in achieving quality schools in Hong Kong". Other stated functions are to establish a definition and clarification of the role of principal, and to present a set of expectations regarding the performance of principals. A major finding is that these expectations are not incorporated into the assessment system as learning objectives. That the authors of the national standards envisaged them having an instrumental role in assessment is shown in the phrase: "they provide a baseline reference against which the present knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes of school leaders can be gauged, and future needed development charted". Thus, considering the two Hong Kong documents in terms of purpose, there appears to be a close relationship between them. The national standards could be seen as presenting a set of performance expectations, while the assessment system judges whether the candidate has met these to a sufficient level for successful principalship. However, this relationship is only apparent because the four key qualities are not operationalised in the assessment system.

In England however, there is a stark contrast between the intended purposes of the two documents. While the assessment system's purpose is unambiguous and unproblematic - to assess candidates' readiness for headship - the purpose of the national standards is much more complex and multifarious. The document is also arguably more politically charged. According to its authors the na-

tional standards have many possible functions, but this creates problems of coherence and consistency. The document asserts that the standards can play a role in many activities associated with school improvement, but there is no guidance as to how the standards will do this. For example it is stated that the standards are designed to “secure high academic standards in the nation’s schools”. How they are to do this when it is also stated that they are only intended as “guidance to underpin best practice” is not explained. It is further asserted that the standards are designed to “inspire public confidence in headteachers” and “raise aspirations”. However, alongside these declared functions, there is no mention of how usage of the standards will be monitored or their impact assessed. In contrast the assessment system explains in detail how it is to be used to secure a judgement and therefore complete its function.

It is also asserted that the English standards can play an important part in headteacher appraisal and objective setting. How this will be operationalised is left unsaid and the standards are cast in a supportive not instrumental role. Headteachers themselves can use the standards to assist in CPD, but again the phraseology indicates they should be used in a supporting role. In all, the standards make nine suggestions how a headteacher might use the standards, while offering 12 ways that governors might use them. What is not elucidated is how governors or headteachers are to design the procedures that would enable the standards to be incorporated into appraisal and CPD processes.

It is stated that the English standards can provide a “framework for training middle and senior leaders aspiring to headship”. It is further suggested that aspiring headteachers use them to “evaluate their own progress towards being prepared for headship”, and to “identify and articulate areas they want to gain more experience in e.g. gain experience in a different school.” These suggestions are problematic in that a structure for training aspirant headteachers already exists in the form of the NCTL’s 2012 modular curriculum, assessment and qualifications training framework. Given that the term ‘framework’ is capable of wide interpretation, the suggestion may be that the standards will complement the current structure. However the wording gives the appearance that these standards were written without any knowledge of the existing national professional qualifi-

cation, or chose to ignore it, in stark contrast to the relationship between the two documents in Hong Kong.

Theme two: Beliefs, attitudes, values

In Hong Kong the two documents regard developing a coherent set of educational values as being “pivotal” for principals. A clear link is made between the activity of leading and the set of educational values underpinning this. Both documents also focus on the personal CPD needs of the principal, but in the assessment system these are discussed in the context of the portfolio, where the production of a reflective discourse constitutes final assessment.

Similarly, in England the two documents agree that headteachers should articulate and live by clear moral values and principles, though what these should be is not stated. That headteachers will play a major role in promoting social justice and equity within society is evident in the national standards and reflects successive government policy. This explicit expectation is not evident in the Hong Kong documentation. There is also the clear expectation that headteachers in England will want to promote the value of education and act as a “significant role model in the community”, while taking account of cultural diversity. These expectations are strongly reflected in the assessment system where the extracts have the same or very similar wording. However, it is only in the national standards that student outcomes are specified solely as academic.

The Hong Kong documents are aligned in their expectation that the principal will foster community involvement in the life of the school, but it is only in the national standards that the term “develop local democratic processes” is used. In this context the themes of managerialism and professional control are discernible. In the national standards principals are expected to develop a collaborative team management culture and ethos by involving colleagues both in setting the school’s strategic direction and in strategic planning. Within the assessment system there is also a presumption that principals will establish shared decision-making and themselves collaborate as team members. Overall there is close alignment between the two documents regarding the beliefs, attitudes and values expected of principals, though a stronger commitment to a more collaborative leadership style is discernible in the national standards.

Within the English national standards there is a different emphasis, with headteachers expected to work: “within a self-improving system”, reflecting the de-centralising trend of recent policy. However schools are expected to work together, and the overall message is one of collaboration. In the assessment system a performance-orientated managerialism is evident in the phrase “improve outcomes for the education system” while an aspect of professional control is shown by the expectation that schools “deliver what is expected”. However, like the standards, the overall emphasis is on partnership within a school-led system, and both documents anticipate that headteachers will wish to develop a sharing and supportive ethos, and an open culture based on cooperation, which echoes to a limited extent the Hong Kong emphasis on in-school collaboration.

In England there is a stronger emphasis on striving for excellence than in Hong Kong, and the two documents have common expectations dominated by managerialism as they are rooted in a performance-orientated culture with a focus on results. This can be seen in the national standards where the headteacher is expected to secure “high academic standards” and should be focused on “providing a world class education” where “excellence is the standard”. In the assessment system headteachers are expected to be “results orientated”, to “seek to achieve the highest standards”, and to “maximise performance”. A key difference is that the national standards stress the academic while the assessment system does not, which allows for a broader interpretation about which pupil outcomes are valued.

In Hong Kong the two documents are aligned in expecting principals to consider themselves accountable to stakeholders. However the wording implies that the principal renders accountability by providing information on school performance, rather than making it explicit that accountability will be rendered based on what the information says about school performance. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the accountability principle located within Moller and Schratz’s conception of self-evaluation is being established to a limited degree.

In England, while both documents are also broadly aligned in terms of the attitudes they expect of headteachers regarding accountability, this is of a much

more interventionist and rigorous complexion. The assessment system focuses on headteachers being accountable for performance, the term being used six times. That the headteacher should accept that they have a moral obligation to monitor and report on their own and the school's performance is seen within the national standards, where it is expected that headteachers will "welcome strong governance" and are "confident of the vital contribution of internal and external accountability". The reference to external accountability could arguably exemplify the economic principle of self-evaluation, since such an attitude on the part of the school leader may render expensive external quality assurance unnecessary. The embracing of accountability demanded in the national standards can be seen as a further step in the self-evaluation strategy, with the moral obligation to report on performance being asserted more explicitly.

In England the national standards state that the headteacher should model entrepreneurial and innovative approaches to school improvement, as well as challenging "educational orthodoxies". Again linkage to current policy trends can be discerned, and managerialism, with its focus on entrepreneurship, efficiency and results, is present. In the assessment system there is no reference to entrepreneurial attitudes or an innovative outlook, but there is the expectation that headteachers will be "attuned to opportunities that increase the resources available to the school", which arguably implies that such attitudes are required. This statement also reflects the notion of strong professional control of site-based management by the headteacher. These beliefs are not seen in the Hong Kong documentation.

Theme three: Knowledge, understanding, capabilities

In the Hong Kong national standards professional knowledge is one of two "pillars" which guides and informs the professional practice of leadership, the other being educational values. This knowledge is related to the six core areas of school leadership and is listed in detail. The assessment system does not discuss expectations regarding knowledge in any depth but does provide a brief summary of the professional knowledge contained in the six core areas in its Appendix 1. Professional knowledge is not extensively discussed in either of the English documents, although it is viewed as an element of competency within the NPQH assessment system.

Regarding capabilities, there is a close alignment between the two documents in Hong Kong, although the assessment system only briefly summarises the information given in the national standards. There is a focus on the capabilities needed for instructional leadership, and staff and resource management, in both documents. Notably, the national standards provide much greater detail and specificity regarding the capabilities expected, and links these to school improvement or student achievement. On the other hand, since final assessment is by means of a portfolio, the assessment system expects strong powers of self-reflection, analysis and awareness from candidates.

In contrast, the requirements of the English NPQH assessment system regarding headteacher capabilities are far more extensive than in the national standards. However, the national standards arguably encompass most of the capabilities elucidated in detail in the assessment system, while presenting some capabilities not present in the latter document, for example being able to have effective relationships with fellow professionals in other public services.

The English assessment system also cites a number of personal qualities, which could collectively be described as resourceful and resilient. Others, including drive, decisiveness, energetic, focused and tenacious, give an insight into the leadership style envisaged within the assessment system. These performance-orientated qualities link to managerialism. However, the conception of leadership encapsulated by these extracts is balanced by another set of personal qualities which draw on the empathetic and inter-personal dimension of leadership. These include understanding others' perspectives, needs and motivations, and recognising the strengths of others. The assessment system also refers to personal qualities needed to promote the well-being of others, including "recognises and praises success".

Conversely, the national standards do not discuss personal qualities, but do cite political and financial astuteness, resilience and creativity. This contrasts sharply not just with the assessment system, but also with the 2004 'National Standards for Headteachers', the document's predecessor. In this document 'Developing self and working with others' is one of the six 'key areas' the stan-

dards are divided into. The first characteristic listed in this section is: “Treats people fairly, equitably and with dignity and respect to create and maintain a positive school culture”. That the current national standards should pay so little attention to this aspect of headteacher capability is a noteworthy change.

In Hong Kong the pattern of the assessment system mirroring but summarising the detail given in the national standards is repeated when personal qualities are considered. Some qualities, which echo the English documentation, are expressed in identical terms, such as “resilient in times of adversity and opposition”. A table of examples of values, knowledge, skills and attributes is provided in the assessment document. In addition the phrase: “Selective reference can be made to these examples in the preparation of the Professional Development Portfolio.” is provided as guidance. However, there is no mechanism present in the assessment requirements for these to be objectively assessed. The few references to pedagogy in the assessment system appear within Appendix 1 as examples of professional knowledge in the six core areas of leadership. The national standards in contrast provide much detail regarding the areas of pedagogical expertise it expects.

In the English context, the differences between the two documents regarding the pedagogical expertise of headteachers is marked. The national standards state that the headteacher should be able to draw on and harness the findings from relevant research, but this is not contextualised within instructional practice in schools. The assessment system defines the role of research more contextually, stating that the headteacher should have a deep understanding of the characteristics of excellent teaching which is “informed by current research”. There is a clear expectation in the assessment system that the headteacher should be able to lead the improvement of teaching and learning within their school, while the expectations of the national standards are focused on a generalised knowledge and understanding of education and school systems.

In Hong Kong neither document discusses at length how principals should ensure accountability. For the assessment system the simple statements “quality assurance and accountability” and “process and educational evaluation” are considered sufficient to cover this area. The national standards, after stating

that “principals should be able to build quality assurance and accountability systems”, specifies that they need to supervise and monitor teaching and learning at the whole school and classroom level, and must be capable of appraising teachers. The capability to collect and analyse data also features in both documents. As discussed above, the English documentation has more stringent expectations regarding a headteacher’s capability in holding others to account for their performance.

Theme four: impact and expectations

That principals in Hong Kong should promote the engagement of the local community is expected within both documents. However the assessment system has no expectations of principals impacting beyond their own school, while the national standards expect the principal to enable the school community to contribute to the development of wider society. This clearly involves principals having impact beyond their own school to a limited extent, but not specifically to contribute to a self-improving system. In addition there is no reference in either document to principals being expected to overcome disadvantage for pupils. This contrasts with the national standards in England.

Like Hong Kong, there is a difference between the two English documents in the expectation that the headteacher should have an impact beyond their own school. The assessment system sees this impact as being focused on the local and wider school community (mirroring the Hong Kong assessment system) and being felt through cultural change and empowerment. The English national standards however see the headteacher as having a direct impact on academic standards in other schools: “set standards and expectations for high academic standards... beyond own school and promote a self-improving system.” This is a much more precise expectation than the Hong Kong national standard’s rather vague view that principals should enable the school community to contribute to the development of wider society.

In terms of having an impact on pupils and staff, there is a close relationship between the two English documents. For example the national standards expect headteachers to “inspire and influence others”, while the assessment system expects them to “inspire and influence pupils, colleagues, governors and the

community”. Regarding the environmental aspects of wellbeing, the national standards puts a greater explicit responsibility on headteachers, expecting them to provide a “safe, calm, well-organised environment for all pupils and staff,” while the assessment system simply states that headteachers have a responsibility for “ensuring that health and safety are managed and monitored”. The national standards specify two expectations that reflect recent government policy, these being to minimise unnecessary teacher workload and to provide a climate of exemplary behaviour of pupils, neither of which is mentioned in the assessment system.

Generally, it appears that the English national standards focus on the end results of leadership, while the NPQH assessment system is interested in the mastery of those social dynamics which will enable successful leadership. This difference is discernible with regard to developing staff. In the national standards phrases detailing outcomes, such as “provide high quality CPD” and “support staff to improve” are listed. The assessment system on the other hand specifies leadership behaviours underpinned by effective inter-personal skills, and a conception of the leadership role founded on working with others. This approach is exemplified by extracts such as: “initiates and supports the sharing of expertise, good practice and research and evaluation about effective teaching and learning”. These expectations, while obviously assuming strong leadership behaviours, do arguably also assume a collaborative dimension to leadership within the school.

The Hong Kong national standards, echoing those of England, state that principals should promote and enable teacher CPD and career development. However this should be done in collaboration with teachers, indicating that a team approach is expected. Giving constructive feedback to support professional growth and development is also seen as a key activity to improve performance. In contrast with England, staff performance and CPD does not appear to concern the Hong Kong assessment system, the only reference appearing in Appendix 1 where “giving constructive and quality feedback” is listed under skills.

The differences in the documentation of the two jurisdictions is very marked in terms of the expectations on school leaders to actively intervene in performance

issues. In Hong Kong there is no mention in the national standards of punitive or interventionist approaches being expected of the principal. Rather, principals are expected to use evaluation data to give constructive feedback to colleagues on their individual performance and their students' performance, "*thereby rendering them accountable*" (my italics). The assessment system also has very little to say on the subject of accountability, merely listing supervision, monitoring and appraising as expected leadership skills in Appendix 1. By contrast, both English documents are aligned in terms of their attitudes to intervention, where the national standards expect headteachers to "address underperformance" and the assessment system expects them to "intervene swiftly to enforce consequences when performance levels drop". This is clearly linked to the managerial conception of headship, where the school is seen as the vehicle for efficient service production in a performance-orientated culture.

With regard to distributed leadership and teamwork the contrast between each jurisdiction's documentation is also noteworthy. There is one brief isolated reference to distributed leadership in the English national standards. The NPQH assessment system similarly gives little coverage to this aspect of leadership. The words "forge teams" in the national standards is the only reference to teams in either document. Given the research consensus on the impact of distributed leadership and teamwork on pupil performance, the fact that both documents are heavy on accountability and intervention, but light on these leadership strategies is striking. On the other hand, in the Hong Kong national standards, principals are expected to build teams of teachers, the rationale being that to do so is a means of "utilising staff and other resources effectively and efficiently." Delegation is expected in both Hong Kong documents, but whereas the assessment system simply expects a "delegation of responsibilities", the national standards add that staff will be empowered to "manage and organise the school on a day-to-day basis" - a strong expectation that the principal will cultivate distributed leadership.

5.5 Assessment, research on school leadership, and best practice in assessment system design

Note: With the NPQH assessment system the full details, including the competency descriptors and sub-competencies (the ‘positive indicators’’) are used in the comparison with the research findings. Similarly, with the CFP assessment system, the detailed description of the assessment, including the examples of the key qualities and the six core areas of principalship are used.

Theme one: Form, structure, scope

With regard to Hong Kong, of the 14 design features drawn from research into best practice in assessment system design, seven are not present in the CFP final assessment framework, whereas in England three are not present. A detailed analysis of how each assessment system relates to these research findings is presented below.

Table 4: Hong Kong - analysis of design features		
Design feature	Present	Comments
The assessment model is underpinned by a coherent theory of leadership, clearly defined.	Yes	Incorporates the conceptual framework ‘The key qualities of the principalship in Hong Kong’.
The assessment model is organised around clear values about leadership and learning	Yes	Framework organised around clustered sets of values, knowledge, skills and attributes
Assessment is guided by a clear set of official standards	Yes	Assessment system makes repeated reference to the national standards and cites examples of the key components
Performance-based assessments are developed to evaluate candidates’ acquisition of the skills outlined in the standards	No	Not realised - the assessment system does not attempt to evaluate the extent to which candidates possess these skills
The assessment process is underpinned by strong and effective partnerships between assessment licensees, schools and local and national authorities	No	Cooperation between different agencies evident, but hierarchical in form and subsequent power imbalances
The assessment procedure has opportunities to apply learnt theory to actual practice	Yes	Candidates required to show knowledge and understanding of the six core areas in everyday work and on PFP course

Table 4: Hong Kong - analysis of design features		
Design feature	Present	Comments
Assessments emphasise (a) leadership of learning, (b) organisational development, (c) change management	No	No attempt to measure objectively performance levels in these leadership practices
Assessment is used prior to programme admission to confirm candidate potential	No	Access to needs analysis and PFP course requires no assessment
The assessment includes a coursework element focused on school improvement	Yes	The PFP course has requirement to complete action research project
The assessment model involves an internship or placement overseen by a skilled and certified supervisor who contributes to the final assessment	No	No facility to spend time at another school as part of the programme
There are test situations which pose authentic problems focused on instructional leadership challenges	No	Not incorporated into the assessment system
The assessment model includes references to working with parents and students to solve school wide problems	Yes	Parental and community involvement identified as a key area of knowledge in portfolio
The assessment process cultivates the formation of leadership identity	Yes	Strong feature of the assessment system, particularly regarding the preparation of final portfolio.
During assessment learner-centred assessment methods should be utilised	No	Some methods evident in PFP but none in portfolio

Table 5: England - analysis of design features		
Design feature	Present	Comments
The assessment model is underpinned by a coherent theory of leadership, clearly defined.	Yes	Leadership theory prominent feature of course and knowledge tested at interview

Table 5: England - analysis of design features		
Design feature	Present	Comments
The assessment model is organised around clear values about leadership and learning	Yes	Specific moral values ill-defined. Focus on performance and outcomes
Assessment is guided by a clear set of official standards	No	Alignment discernible but no official or overt relationship
Performance-based assessments are developed to evaluate candidates' acquisition of the skills outlined in the standard	Yes	Performance-based assessments judge a candidate's mastery of the skills and attributes recommended in the standards, mediated by the assessment system.
The assessment process is underpinned by strong and effective partnerships between assessment licensees, schools and local and national authorities	No	Role of local authorities minimal, no dialogue between actors who operate in quasi-market. EMLC has monopoly
The assessment procedure has opportunities to apply learnt theory to actual practice	Yes	Assessment system actively requires candidates to apply both learning and leadership theory to their leadership practice
Assessments emphasise (a) leadership of learning, (b) organisational development, (c) change management	Yes	Assessment system mirrors this design feature. Phrase 'change management' absent but skill clearly emphasised.
Assessment is used prior to programme admission to confirm candidate potential	Yes	Access onto course by means of 'gateway' assessment process
The assessment includes a coursework element focused on school improvement	Yes	School based task and school placement task
The assessment model involves an internship or placement overseen by a skilled and certified supervisor who contributes to the final assessment	Yes	Limited in scope and duration. Variability in sponsor quality - no training or accreditation
There are test situations which pose authentic problems focused on instructional leadership challenges	No	Removed in 2012.

Table 5: England - analysis of design features		
Design feature	Present	Comments
The assessment model includes references to working with parents and students to solve school wide problems	Yes	Competences and sub-competences which cover this design feature are tested in the assessment tasks
The assessment process cultivates the formation of leadership identity	Yes	Some competencies and sub-competencies tested explicitly foster leadership identity
During assessment learner-centred assessment methods should be utilised	Yes	Assessment components promote strong sense of ownership of the learning. Dialogue however not a strong feature

For Hong Kong the key finding is that the assessment system does not attempt to evaluate the extent to which candidates possess the skills and attributes outlined in the national standards, even though these reflect key research findings. Rather, candidates are asked to produce a reflective document on their own learning during the course. Even if a candidate does discuss the development of their skills and attributes, this is not what is assessed, it is how well certain self-reflective tasks have been attempted and presented. Change management, organisational development and the leadership of learning are also present within the assessment framework, but do not feature in the final assessment as things to be assessed. The final assessment takes the form of a portfolio, and the assessment requirements make it clear that it is the candidate’s ability to analyse and reflect on their leadership journey, using the six core areas of leadership as their points of reference, that is judged. This design decision has had major implications for the CFP assessment system, in terms of its alignment with best practice.

The research findings indicate that a key design feature of an effective assessment process is that it is “underpinned by strong and effective partnerships between assessment licensees, schools, and local and national authorities”. With regard to English local authorities, their role in the qualification landscape is

minimal, given that both NCSL and EMLC interact at the national level with potential candidates and their schools. Although English schools have a distinct role in the assessment process, to describe the relationship with the licensee as a strong and effective partnership is inaccurate. Sponsors and school placement headteachers are required to verify candidate written evidence and to grade candidate impact. However there is no dialogue between sponsors and assessors. The national assessment structure is modelled on neoliberal principles, with the key actors operating within a quasi-market. In terms of final assessment, a single agency (EMLC) currently has a monopoly. Generally the NPQH assessment system does not appear to be underpinned by strong and effective partnerships.

The research finding that well designed assessment systems include test situations which pose authentic problems focused on instructional leadership challenges is also missing from the English assessment system. This aspect of the assessment process was removed in 2012. Finally, a key research finding regarding assessment design is that assessment is guided by a clear set of official standards, and performance-based assessments are developed to evaluate candidates' acquisition of the skills and attributes outlined in the standards. The relationship between the NPQH assessment system and the English national standards was analysed in the previous section. It is clear that, while there is a high degree of unacknowledged conceptual alignment between the two documents, it cannot be said that the assessment system, in any overt or official sense, is guided or endorsed by the official standards, as is the case in Hong Kong. This situation is partly a result of uncoordinated parallel developments over time and policy decisions derived from political ideology.

However the earlier analysis shows that in England a strong alignment exists between the skills and attributes outlined in the standards and the competencies tested in the assessment system. It would seem that, despite the lack of explicit connectivity, there is a close relationship between the assessment system and the standards. This includes the presence of performance-based assessments that judge a candidate's mastery of the skills and attributes recommended in the standards, but mediated by the assessment system.

Theme two: Beliefs, attitudes, values

Research findings indicate that a desire for social justice, if used to underpin compelling goals, can improve pupil outcomes. A concern for such values is evident in the Hong Kong assessment system, where there is a strong expectation that principals will promote social justice, education and equity. Leadership practices identified by research which entail living and articulating moral purpose include instilling a shared vision and setting compelling goals founded on moral values. In the CFP assessment system there are two beliefs underpinned by moral purpose expected of principals. Firstly “learning centredness”, the belief that learning should be the focus of all that happens in school, and secondly “demonstrating a commitment to promoting whole person development”. However, the notion of these beliefs being articulated and lived is not explicitly stated - articulating a vision underpinned by moral values is only expected in the context of writing the portfolio.

With regard to England, while there is a degree of alignment between the assessment system and the research, the assessment system expects headteachers to play a much larger societal role in promoting social justice and equity. For example, headteachers are expected to show a deep understanding of the issues vulnerable pupils and parents face, both inside and outside school, and to take action to ameliorate these. The research findings however are concerned with how school leaders can best improve pupil outcomes, rather than reverse inequality and social mobility trends per se.

Reference to moral purpose in the research findings is shown in the statement that the headteacher should instil a shared vision and set compelling goals founded on values such as a desire for social justice. The NPQH assessment system also has strong expectations of headteachers in this area which closely match the research, except for the proviso that the vision should be a shared one. The assessment system, given its function, introduces a personal element to this moral purpose which is understandably not present in the research findings. The lack of reference to a vision that is shared with staff is noteworthy.

In Hong Kong the expectation that principals should play a role beyond their local context does not feature in the assessment system, which is mirrored in the

research findings. Therefore there is a degree of alignment between them in that both expect principals to be positive about making a contribution, but only in a localised context. Similarly in England, although the assessment system expects headteachers to make a contribution “across the education system”, this is focused on the local context where the headteacher “engages pupils, parents and others in the community in supporting pupil learning”. The research findings also align with this, demonstrated by the expectation that the headteacher will engage “families and the community in school improvement”. This implies that the headteacher can best improve pupil outcomes by keeping a local perspective that nurtures relationships and attempts to directly influence attitudes and behaviours.

The research findings call for principals to have high expectations regarding teacher performance, student progress and behaviour, and also expect principals to develop individuals through support and challenge. The CFP assessment system however is focused exclusively on how the principal strives for excellence in their own professional development. This includes employing reflection, which concerns the self-reflection of the principal as presented in the portfolio, not its cultivation among staff.

In England the NPQH assessment system expects headteachers to want to lead teaching and learning, and they are expected to focus on those aspects of teaching which maximise pupil learning and progress. The research findings align with these expectations, although they define more closely the values that underpin instructional leadership practices. In terms of a vision for improving teaching and learning through instructional leadership, the assessment system states that the headteacher should have a “clear vision of the central importance of leading teaching and learning”. The research findings present a more developed conception of the headteacher’s role, including expecting the headteacher to “set the direction of the school by instilling a shared vision”. Thus there are some similarities in expectations, but the NPQH assessment system provides limited detail regarding instructional leadership practice or the scope of vision required.

The research summary of findings did not identify principal attitudes to accountability as a factor in their ability to maximise pupil outcomes. This contrasts sharply with the assessment system in England, where accepting accountability to a range of stakeholders features strongly as an important headteacher attitude. In Hong Kong the assessment system also has little to say regarding principal attitudes towards accountability - principals are expected to have a positive attitude towards quality assurance and accountability, however this is not developed or elaborated on.

Having an entrepreneurial or innovative perspective does not appear in the research findings either. While there is only an oblique reference to this standpoint in the NPQH assessment system, there is a clear call for innovativeness among principals in the CFP assessment system, where it is expected they will believe in new ideas and change as a means to school improvement.

The research finding that pupil outcomes are maximised when the school leader promotes a trusting and caring school culture has some resonance in the NPQH assessment system where the expectation is that headteachers will be “honest and transparent in their interactions and communications so as to reflect a high trust culture”. Thus, while the assessment system stops short of expecting English headteachers to actively promote a school culture built on trust, the expectation is that they should at least reinforce this by their behaviour. However the research finding that headteachers should specifically promote a caring culture is not reflected in the NPQH assessment system.

Theme three: Knowledge, understanding, capabilities

In Hong Kong some key capabilities listed in the CFP assessment system, for example developing structures and processes to facilitate teaching and learning and instructional leadership, are mirrored in the research findings. However other key leadership practices identified by research are not present in the assessment system, for example, behaviour for learning. Equally, capabilities listed in the assessment system such as budgeting and financial management, education law, and understanding local and global developments are not mirrored in the research findings. The CFP assessment system also expects principals to be capable of a high level of self-reflection about their own develop-

ment. Thus, while it is possible to argue that the assessment system in Hong Kong relates to recent research findings in broad areas of instructional leadership, there are important aspects of leadership which are not evident.

In England the assessment system expects headteachers to take on a much wider monitorial role than that envisioned by the research findings. For example, in addition to monitoring teaching and student progress, which also appear in the research findings, the NPQH assessment system expects the headteacher to be capable of monitoring the implementation of plans and the effectiveness of organisational structures; and to rigorously monitor the needs, expectations and performance of pupils.

The NPQH assessment system expects headteachers to ensure “high standards of behaviour”, without specifying behavioural norms. The research findings however indicate that the headteacher needs to be capable of establishing behaviour for learning across the school. Thus, while there is some alignment here, the assessment system in England falls short of linking behaviour to learning. Arguably the emphasis of “high standards of behaviour” in the assessment system, without defining what this actually looks like or what it’s for, reflects a government policy priority, while the focus on behaviour for learning reflects a pedagogical standpoint.

Developing the structures and processes to facilitate teaching and learning is a key leadership practice specified in the research findings. This is closely matched in the English assessment system as headteachers are expected to establish the best systems and processes to achieve the “school’s goals”. While the research findings explicitly state that developing the organisational conditions is in order to facilitate teaching and learning, the assessment system does not. However, that one of the school’s goals would be to do so is a reasonable assumption.

There is a close alignment between the research findings and the assessment system in Hong Kong with regard to pedagogical and managerial expertise. The research findings also cite maintaining high expectations regarding teacher performance and developing individuals through direct and indirect support and

challenge. Being able to offer coaching and counselling is an expectation in the CFP assessment system, and when carried out in the context of instructional leadership, arguably mirrors this research finding.

This close affiliation regarding pedagogical expertise and assessment is also mirrored in England. The research findings indicate that promoting and participating in professional learning in school, including providing the necessary resources, is a key leadership practice in maximising pupil outcomes. While no single expectation of leadership capabilities in the NPQH assessment system mirrors this practice, several expectations taken together do. A key leadership practice in the research findings is for headteachers to engage pedagogically with teachers through the activities of supervision, monitoring, support and evaluation. This engagement is fully reflected in the assessment system, although not presented as a unified process.

A further area of headteacher pedagogical expertise identified as significant by the research findings is the ability to coordinate and evaluate the curriculum and assessment. The NPQH assessment system displays a limited degree of alignment with this leadership practice in that headteachers are expected to be capable of designing and implementing a broad balanced and relevant curriculum. However the coordination and evaluation of assessment does not feature in the assessment system, and the ability to design and implement a curriculum is not the same as the ability to coordinate and evaluate one, as the latter implies greater ongoing pedagogical involvement. Overall the pedagogical capabilities expected appear to be more coherently and holistically presented in the research findings.

Theme four: Impact and expectations

Having a positive impact on stakeholder engagement and well-being, including “engaging families and community in school improvement” is a key research finding. Both the Hong Kong and English assessment systems expect principals to promote parental and community involvement in the school but lack the sharp focus on school improvement.

The research findings also indicate that developing collaborative decision-making structures, including distributed leadership designed to develop leadership

capacity, has a positive impact on pupil outcomes. The CFP assessment system mirrors these practices in that there is an expectation that principals will develop shared decision-making, delegate responsibilities, and themselves collaborate as team members. This emphasis is not present in NPQH assessment.

In terms of impact, the research findings emphasise promoting professional learning and engaging in instructional leadership practices with teachers. This is not reflected precisely within the English assessment system as the form of engagement is not specified - headteachers are expected to have a “positive impact on...colleagues”, but the role of instructional leadership in this is not explained. However regarding the key leadership practices centred on developing and improving the performance of teaching staff, there is a strong alignment between the NPQH assessment system and research findings. For example, the practice of promoting and participating in professional learning, as stated in the research findings, echoes: “leads and participates in professional development” in the assessment system. A further leadership practice focused on improving staff performance is “maintaining high expectations regarding teacher performance and developing individuals through direct and indirect support and challenge”. This practice strongly resonates with the assessment system’s “provide effective feedback to enable learning from mistakes”.

As noted, accountability does not feature explicitly within the leadership practices identified by research as improving pupil outcomes. However, the skills of evaluation and monitoring are identified, as is setting high student behaviour and teacher performance expectations. Arguably, these leadership practices identified by research do collectively cultivate a sense of professional accountability, albeit within a collaborative decision-making structure and a trusting and caring school culture. Within the CFP assessment system, supervision, appraising, quality assurance and accountability are all stated, but there is no detail to assist in an analysis of what the expectations might look like when operationalised in leadership practice. Despite these limitations it is possible to argue that there is some alignment between the Hong Kong assessment system and those leadership practices that can be viewed as cultivating a sense of professional accountability. However in England the assessment system expects headteachers to establish a strongly interventionist culture of accountability,

which includes challenging and confronting under-performance, and intervening swiftly to enforce consequences when performance levels drop.

In England there is some alignment between the NPQH assessment system and the research findings regarding expecting headteachers to distribute leadership, although the research envisages a more collegiate and collaborative model being followed. Thus, while the assessment system expects headteachers to distribute leadership and decision-taking, and to delegate tasks and activities, the research findings emphasise “developing collaborative decision-making structures” to raise pupil outcomes. The assessment system does state an expectation to “help others to improve themselves and those around them”, which can be viewed as an expectation to develop leadership in others.

5.6 Assessment - perceptions and perspectives of those involved

Theme one: Form, structure, scope

For most Hong Kong providers the place of the CFP qualification within the wider school leader CPD context was seen as significant, particularly its relationship to the newly appointed principal (NAP) programme. Chronologically the latter was developed first as a reaction to the SMI initiative of 1992 when it became apparent to the EDB that existing principals would need extensive training if they were to lead self-managing schools. Only once the NAP provision had been established was, “working backwards”, the CFP qualification developed. The consequences of this, in terms of perceptions of the importance and function of each qualification, are shown in assessor and graduate comments below.

A fundamental criticism voiced by one Hong Kong provider was that, although integrated to an extent into the CFP, the ‘Key Qualities of the Principalship in Hong Kong’, (the conceptual framework underpinning the entire CFP process), “was never officially adopted as a (EDB) departmental document”. This was felt to have had important consequences for how the final assessment was designed, compared to competency-based frameworks in other countries. The role of HEIs as providers was also felt to have been constrained by this decision (or indecision), and by the EDB maintaining a “copyright” over the portfolio as-

assessment framework. Structurally the three elements of the CFP were developed separately, a feature which drew adverse comments from Hong Kong graduates, discussed below.

For all English providers, that the assessment rested on a competency structure, with descriptors and positive indicators (sub-competencies) to flesh out the detail, was seen as good practice, as was headteacher focus groups working with psychologists to formulate them, since this allowed real leadership practice to be reflected in the competencies. However not all NPQH competencies and positive indicators were viewed as fit for purpose. For example, within the competency Delivering Continuous Improvement, the indicator which refers to the innovative use of new technologies was felt to be outdated and others were described as “fairly obscure”. The assessed competency Learning Focus was felt to be superfluous, as were others such as Future Focus and Conceptual Thinking, although these are not tested at final assessment. Conversely Developing Others was felt to be a critical competency that needed to be tested at final assessment. Generally, it was argued by English providers that a limited restructuring and rewriting of the competency framework and indicators would improve their fitness for purpose. The reintroduction of credibility as an assessment competency into Task 3 (the interview) was suggested by two of the providers.

Despite changes to the school leadership landscape in England it was universally agreed by providers that the NPQH should be retained in its current form and with its current scope. Accreditation was judged to be a reasonably reliable indicator of being ready to run a school successfully. Indeed, it was viewed as imperative that the qualification continue and that its mandatory status be restored. As one provider put it “if it didn’t continue it would be an absolute travesty for this country and for education.”

Hong Kong assessors were relatively forthcoming on the structural details of the CFP assessment process. However much of this information is in the public domain and is discussed in Chapter 3. Regarding the portfolio, it was stated that the EDB “oversees and administers” the assessment process and, as part of its administrative responsibility, workshops giving guidance to participants on portfolio building are held three times a year at set times. It is the School Lead-

ership and Professional Development Section that actually “controls and runs the assessment process” and has “the authority to maintain standards independent of the EDB”. It was confirmed that, once a portfolio comes into the EDB, it is sent out to two assessors for ‘unseen’ marking according to the criteria on Circular 2/2017. If the two assessors agree, it is processed, but if they cannot it is given to a third assessor who decides.

CFP assessors appeared hesitant when discussing feedback to candidates, stating that “if a portfolio is not up to the required standard feedback on what to do is given”. Overall information on feedback from the assessors was limited. It was stated that COTAP was planning changes to principal certification for the future. Regarding perceptions of worth, Hong Kong assessors made comparisons between the CFP and the NAP programme structures, the former described as “only the beginning of principal learning” and the latter (also compulsory) as “a two-year training programme to gain experience of principalship”. This involves case studies of other institutions, including visits to other schools.

The large measure of consensus evident in English provider perspectives was repeated, but to a lesser degree, in the NPQH assessor evidence where some sharper differences were discernible. Most assessors were very positive regarding the form and structure of the assessment, while offering a robust critique of certain aspects. The competencies were regarded as rigorous in most areas, with the positive indicators viewed as “tougher and more realistic” than the previous system. One assessor stated that candidates “needed to do a lot of work to be rounded in all of them”. Overall the assessment process was regarded as reliable, leading assessors to a confident judgement, with mis-judgements now being rare. What the assessment set out to test, it did so effectively and the line between ‘ready’ and ‘not ready’ was not seen as a particularly fine one.

The NPQH assessment procedure however was seen as overly complex, inefficient and expensive by a majority of English assessors. As one assessor put it “it has taken us years to understand what it is that we are assessing and quite how to assess it in the most effective way”. A lack of understanding regarding competency assessment theory, which requires that competencies be tested more than once, was evident in that most assessors felt candidates were over-

assessed. One assessor opined that “the best assessment systems are simple assessment systems”.

The changes to the English school leadership landscape that have occurred in the last five years were judged by most assessors to have structural implications for NPQH assessment, as these were putting strain on the system. Greater flexibility in the assessment model to respond to these changes, for example by having categories of “ready” according to type of school, or by specifying certain contexts or circumstances for each graduate, were suggested by one assessor. Other ideas to introduce flexibility into the model included adjusting the balance of competencies, for example giving double weighting to certain competencies particularly relevant to a candidate’s institutional context, or having first and second tier competencies.

The reintroduction of psychometric testing, particularly Situational Judgement Tests (SJTs), into the NPQH assessment process, was recommended by a minority of assessors, but the overall consensus was that, while potentially increasing the challenge of the assessment process for candidates, these tests would not provide sufficient extra evidence to warrant the effort and resources needed to create and maintain them at an acceptable standard. There was however a consensus that some form of school-based assessment should be considered. This would not only mitigate the problems identified with sponsor-based evidence and SJTs, but increase the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the assessment process. Most assessors felt this option, while desirable, would be more expensive, but a minority argued that a streamlined version, administered by trained assessors, would actually be cheaper. The strongest advocate of this proposal had experience as an Ofsted inspector.

Nearly all NPQH assessors argued that assessing candidates’ understanding of vision, values and moral outlook as a school leader had been reduced too much over the years. In addition, candidates’ ability at interview to articulate a moral purpose and vision which encompassed more than a desire to increase examination results was judged to have diminished. A focus on these elements at the beginning of the assessment process within the school-based work, perhaps involving a re-organisation of the competencies, was suggested.

The downgrading, in assessment terms, of Task 2 (the school placement) was regretted by several NPQH assessors, as was the similarity of Tasks 1 and 2 in their narrow focus on academic outcomes. Opportunities to develop and test candidates in important aspects of leadership practice were being lost. The integrity of Task 3, the interview/presentation, was felt to be compromised by the short time available for assessors to arrive at their judgement and complete the bureaucratic requirements necessitated by an adherence to the ORCE procedure. Finally, one assessor argued that the ending of National College grants and the impact of ever increasing budgetary constraints on English schools were threats to the future of the NPQH.

Structurally the CFP assessment framework was judged by most Hong Kong graduates to have weaknesses stemming from the separate development of each component. For example, graduates made comments such as “there is such a disconnect between the different aspects” and “there is no fixed procedure where we have to do the needs assessment first as it only happens at certain times of the year”, and “there is no timeline linking the six modules and the portfolio”.

Hong Kong graduates also felt the form the assessments took was capable of improvement by having greater variety. For example the six assignments of the PFP were almost exclusively essays. The ARP was generally viewed more favourably, although its assessment was judged as reflecting the same weaknesses as the other assignments in terms of inadequate feedback. The majority of CFP graduates did report that some feedback was given but comments on its utility included “they give you a pass” or “resubmit this part you need to do some more”, and “a mark out of something and a scribbled comment” and “I had two assignments returned but I don’t find any feedback written on the work... I don’t get much feedback from my teachers”. Furthermore the scope of the assessment in terms of areas addressed was also judged by the majority of CFP graduates to be capable of improvement, one graduate commenting “there is nothing on change management.” Other areas considered worthy of inclusion were project management and the use of information technology to enhance learning.

Those graduates who had completed the CFP and were undertaking the NAP programme repeatedly reverted to discussing the contents of the latter when asked to discuss the list of leadership practices used in the interview protocol. This echoed the tendency of the Hong Kong assessors to focus on the NAP rather than offer any reflections on the CFP. The definition of assessment offered by the interviewer for discussion was felt to apply to school students but not to participants on the CFP programme. A final comment that sums up well graduates' perspectives on the CFP is "I myself did not feel there is a really strong focus on assessment".

The majority of English graduates mirrored the assessor view in considering the competency assessment framework to be fit for purpose, one graduate observing that "you can hang experiences on it, and people need to have this". Another felt that this structure was useful for assessors as they can "see things they're looking for". The framework encouraged a diagnostic approach where personal gaps within the competencies at the indicator level could be identified and addressed. NPQH Graduates felt this allowed them to address vital questions such as, at the gateway stage, "have I got what it takes to fill those gaps?" and, at final assessment, "have I covered everything as a future headteacher?".

Changing the assessment structure to include some form of on-site assessment by an external assessor was viewed favourably by most English graduates, as the final interview process was felt to be "very summative" with people "presenting differently than they really are". A professional mentor having an input into the assessment process based on periodic school visits was suggested by one graduate, particularly for school projects which produced only soft data as evidence of impact.

Theme two: Beliefs, attitudes, values

Although some Hong Kong providers expressed criticism of the structure of the CFP, the 'Key Qualities of the Principalship in Hong Kong' document was highly valued by all providers, being viewed as "an excellent piece of work" by one, and to have "stood the test of time... although they do need revising" by another. How the PFP course is administered by the EDB was viewed as a strength

by one provider in that, since each HEI provider was free to design its own course, this flexibility allowed providers to respond to emerging trends. The use of highly successful entrepreneurs to deliver up to date HR material was cited as an example. However this flexibility raises quality assurance issues, discussed later.

The CFP needs assessment was regarded by all Hong Kong providers as well-designed and fit for purpose, the fact it played no part in controlling admission onto the programme not being regarded as an issue. It was readily admitted by most providers that assessment in the PFP programme did not reflect best practice. This attitude was justified on the grounds that the financial arrangements imposed by the EDB mean that HEIs cannot devote the necessary resources to this. Indeed, one respondent stated that his institution was “a reluctant provider”, increasingly turning its attention to mainland China where the development needs of school leaders were seen as more acute, thereby offering greater opportunities to improve educational leadership on a bigger scale.

Negative attitudes were expressed towards the portfolio element of the CFP assessment, one provider expressing the view that “it wasn’t anything to do with the programme we developed, it was just the EDB wanting to put their stamp on it”. Other negative attitudes were shown in comments such as “they had given themselves a job, so they had to decide ‘how can we assess on evidence?’”, with the portfolio being characterised as a “bureaucratic necessity that has not changed in many years”. Completing all the portfolio requirements was also felt to be a real “stumbling block” for aspirant principals.

While there was unanimous agreement among English providers that assessment needed to be based on the primacy of teaching and learning, most providers believed leadership was essentially about people. Emotional intelligence therefore was seen as the key attribute in school leadership, enabling an individual to deliver high-quality teaching and learning with and through others. A majority view was expressed that delegation and distributed leadership were absolutely key and that there was not enough emphasis placed on these in the assessment framework. This echoes the findings in subsection 5.5 where re-

search has confirmed the importance of these leadership practices to student outcomes.

The dangers of localisation, viewed as a possible consequence of the English school-led system, were a concern for two providers. This was in the context of MATs and TSAs running their own headship programmes and assessment systems, perhaps in partnership with local HEIs. Should the NPQH structure be dismantled, a national framework to replace it was seen as essential by most providers. This was to prevent parochialism, nepotism and subjectivity, which could lead to local or regional variability in standards. A strength of the current assessment system was in providing a national benchmark of skills, knowledge and values for English aspirant headteachers.

Generally providers in England judged the current NPQH assessment system as vulnerable to political manipulation. This was seen in recent changes to the Task 3 presentation/interview, now dominated by school finance and performance management. The dominance of the 'Efficient and Effective' competency over Task 3 was viewed as an over-emphasis on the skills needed to construct a budget or run a site efficiently. Being efficient and effective in resource management had become, one provider felt, "the big be all and end all of running a school". This provider argued that the key function of headship was to promote learning, and it was suggested that the question for the presentation should be: "How do you ensure pupils learn more at your school?", rather than one which focused explicitly on the efficient deployment of resources.

All English providers judged the NPQH gateway process to be operating well in that "it weeds out the ones you want it to weed out and pretty much allows in the ones you want". These positive attitudes towards the gateway process echoed that of NPQH graduates, as did provider concern over recent cost cutting.

NPQH Provider attitudes towards the performance and capability of those sponsoring the trainee headteachers were mostly critical. Sponsors - usually the participant's headteacher or senior line-manager - are expected to provide evidence of competency for assessors to consider as part of the assessment

process. Most providers felt sponsors' understanding of the competencies was weak and the prospects for future improvements here were deemed poor. The belief that sponsors exercised bias in pursuit of other motives - either to retain or get rid of staff - was voiced by two providers.

Despite these criticisms, overall English providers considered the NPQH assessment framework as fit for purpose, aligning with the view of assessors. Tasks 1 and 2, as reflective pieces on the trainee headteachers' school-based work, were deemed valuable and important. The final presentation/interview was seen as good practice in that it forced the articulation of self-reflection and stood candidates in good stead for later headship interviews. However one provider felt it had been more useful when it was more generic and less prescriptively structured.

Among assessors in Hong Kong a shortage of principals of the right quality and a desire to raise standards were cited as the motivation for taking on the role. This reflects an ethos of public service and a cultural context in which "veterans" are respected. It was also stated that "quality is a concern of the EDB". The CFP was regarded as the "basic requirement" in school leader CPD, also being described as a "first step". When asked to what extent the assessment process accurately identified a participant's overall readiness for principalship, assessors responded by observing that the intrinsic qualities of any new principal were important factors in their success. The view was expressed that candidates needed to believe in themselves if they were to be successful. The value of experience in the role was stressed, being equated with successful practice. The underlying assumption was that an individual will learn and improve with experience. In terms of the CFP assessment process, efficiency was valued as it saved both time and money. The notion that candidates have a number of entitlements from summative assessment, including effective feedback on their strengths and weaknesses in performance-based learning objectives, did not appear to be recognised.

In England most assessors believed the 2012 NPQH assessment scheme had been shaped by financial and political drivers, to its detriment. The previous model, while instrumentally less efficient, was viewed as morally superior in that

school leaders were tested on a “broader, more moral template of factors” and were expected to engage with the local community in a “more holistic sense, one informed by the ECM (Every Child Matters) agenda”. [Note: The Every Child Matters initiative, launched in 2003, identified the five outcomes that are most important to children and young people: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, achieve economic well-being]. One assessor felt that “focusing on just academic progress was not what the country needed if extremism among young people is to be solved”.

Concern over the “balance” within the NPQH competencies was widespread among assessors, with the dominance of the efficient and effective competency viewed as not reflective of best practice. The positive indicators within efficient and effective were all viewed as important, but it was felt they “could be learnt on the job”, whereas “if you can't model excellence and grow other leaders you can't really be a head.” Establishing and nurturing a distributed leadership culture was seen as a characteristic of good and outstanding schools, and there was real concern that the “skewing of assessment towards efficient and effective” was making headship “too much of a business job”. Given that most candidates are in an impressionable state of mind while preparing for assessment, the fear was that they would absorb the message that headship was primarily about being efficient with resources.

That assessors would also be influenced over time by this essentially political message was strongly argued by one assessor. Given the wide implications this has for the assessment of readiness in aspiring headteachers in England, and more profoundly, for the conception of the purpose of headship in response to changing societal and political values, this is a key finding. This issue has particular resonance when considering how headteacher values are tested, and even altered, by changing policy contexts in England (Rayner, 2014).

Like providers and graduates, English assessors generally viewed the gateway process as “excellent”, “rigorous” and “effective”, though frustration was again voiced over what was seen as damaging cost-cutting. For example, the removal of the simulation using an actor, and its replacement with a written scenario was regretted in that “now they only have to say what they would say”. One as-

essor argued strongly that learning opportunities were being lost since there was “no connectivity between the online application and the interview; no opportunity for reflection or dialogue; no feedback loop.” It was regretted that “we don't see them (the applicants) working together anymore.”

Overall though the alignment between successful applicants and the demands of the NPQH programme was felt to be much improved from the 2004 model. Complaints that candidates in England presenting for final assessment were unsuitable were now rare.

As with providers, there was a strong belief among English assessors that the NPQH qualification should be mandatory, that “you shouldn't be able to get a headship without it”; the loss of mandatory status being viewed as “a great shame.”

Reflecting attitudes expressed by CFP assessors, a belief in public service and a sense of duty were articulated by most Hong Kong graduates as values motivating them to complete the CFP. Generally though graduates expressed negative attitudes towards the CFP process and assessment. A lack of communication and articulation between the different elements of the programme, and the institutions responsible for these, was considered to be a problem, particularly the EDB which was viewed as being “disconnected from the course”. Organisationally there was felt to be no linkage between the Needs Analysis, the PFP and the portfolio.

A general criticism of Hong Kong graduates was that the teaching methodology employed in the PFP programme was dominated by lectures. As one graduate put it “we were talked to 90% of the time” with no “participating in professional learning.” This was considered a wasted opportunity to develop learning through engagement. Another CFP graduate asserted that “the six core areas of leadership were not explicitly told to us, and so the course made no sense at all”. This left him feeling he was “left to live in the dark”. Another maintained there was “a culture of attendance, a sort of counting exercise” underpinned by the common mindset that “everyone's got to go through these hoops, including the EDB.” There was clear evidence that all graduates viewed some HEIs as better organised and more committed to the PFP programme than others, with

some changing between providers to secure a better experience. The quality of feedback was also criticised, typical comments being “I don't find any feedback written on the work” and “they do give you some feedback - a few lines - but I don't find it useful feedback”.

Negative attitudes regarding aspects of the portfolio were also widespread among Hong Kong graduates. The initial briefing session by the EDB was described as “not very inspiring”, “raw”, and “guidance, flexibility and dialogue were all absent”. The time available for completion of the portfolio was regarded as “too short”. Those responsible for carrying out portfolio assessments were viewed as “a mysterious group” with their feedback summed up as: “you need to improve this part, do it again!”. The completion of the portfolio was believed to be “not beneficial”, “just hardship” and “rather red tape”. One graduate's comment on the process was: “I felt I was in the dark, really in the dark, about what to do”.

Regarding the design features, most CFP graduates thought that a placement with an assessed element, while valuable in theory, was not applicable for Hong Kong as they did not see it as feasible to leave their schools for any length of time. They also believed they would not be able to make an impression on the placement school. The notion of completing any kind of test assessment was largely viewed with incredulity. A common view was that distributed leadership practices, though not part of the assessment, were valuable operationally. This was judged by one graduate to be especially so in the context of “a younger generation of teachers coming into school in a general atmosphere where democracy is well regarded”. Values around developing a trusting and caring school culture were illuminated by the comment “I remember almost all the lecturers all saying ‘it's better to have a group of people discuss before you make the final decision’ (Laughs)”. However, most CFP graduates did express support for consultation and achieving consensus.

The relative priority given to the NAP programme, evident among assessors, was also shown generally among graduates, with the CFP being regarded as “a first step, after which there is a lot of things you still do not know how to do.”

In line with providers and assessors, English NPQH graduates' perception of the gateway process was very positive, a typical comment being "I was apprehensive but enjoyed it".

Similar positive attitudes were expressed regarding the competency framework which was viewed as "professional" and "very useful, particularly in addressing areas of inexperience". The use of competencies was also seen by English graduates as promoting confidence through a self-diagnostic approach. However, it was stressed that to maximise its benefits participants had to be "open to learning". The competency-based assessment framework was felt to be accurate in identifying overall readiness for headship.

The school placement (Task 2) was also considered good practice, being viewed as "valuable", "useful" and "challenging". Two graduates gave specific examples of how the placement experience had developed their vision and values, and strengthened their identity as a leader. In one case the placement had led to a nine month secondment for one day per week and in the other the graduate had been responsible for fundamental changes to the placements school's leadership structure.

Theme three: Knowledge, understanding, capabilities

Criticism from one Hong Kong provider was that, since the CFP is compulsory, it effectively bars foreign applicants with significant "new" knowledge and capabilities from taking up principal posts. Given Hong Kong's international outlook, and the shortage of principals, this was judged to be unsatisfactory. As the provider put it "gatekeepers need to be very careful who they are keeping out".

Most NPQH providers argued that interpersonal and communication skills were not emphasised enough in the competency framework. Having the capability to hold others to account, a key competency, was recognised by all as a significant practice of effective headteachers. One NPQH provider argued that a better knowledge and understanding of the assessment indicators by everyone involved in the assessment process was essential. He also argued that, in any new post-National College qualification for aspirant headteachers, the positive indicators (sub-competencies) should be transparent to all.

The capacity of psychometric testing - particularly situational judgement tests (SJTs) - to allow candidates to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, and to show technical competency in operational issues, was appreciated by all English providers. However, the general view was that headship is ultimately more to do with strategic capability, and that SJTs were less useful in assessing this. The inherent technical difficulties in designing psychometric tests that were truly reliable and remained fit for purpose was also recognised, as was the expertise required to administer them.

Among Hong Kong assessors the assessment of candidates' knowledge and understanding of IL and TL practices was not seen as a priority, one assessor stating that "principals are very busy with SSB panel meetings and administration". However, it was stated that, in terms of IL "principals were required to be curriculum leaders" and, in terms of TL, there was an emphasis on values and morals.

Hong Kong assessors found it difficult to respond when asked for their estimation of the assessment process's utility in gauging a candidate's knowledge and understanding of leadership practices. The role of assessment in prompting reflection was stressed instead, as was the view that how successful individuals were depended on their attitude and experience. It was pointed out that in the concluding remarks section of the portfolio, candidates are required to reflect on how confident they feel about taking up a principalship. In terms of developing capabilities, the needs analysis was seen as a tool for candidates to assess their own strengths and weaknesses, and through reflection, to plan their future learning around the modules.

There was a strong consensus among English assessors that the NPQH assessment process accurately tested candidates' knowledge and understanding of effective leadership practices, particularly those within the efficient and effective competency concerned with financial and resource management. Assessors felt the assessment system gave candidates a clear indication of their capacity to enact key leadership practices, with the proviso that they had to engage fully with the competencies and indicators, which echoes the view of graduates themselves. It was felt that feedback from the school-based tasks

and the presentation/interview helped clarify this for candidates. However, it was noted by one assessor that self-awareness, a quality viewed as crucial for successful headship, although present in the NPQSL qualification, disappeared at NPQH.

The knowledge, understanding and capabilities of sponsors were strongly critiqued by English assessors who variously described them as “lazy”, “irresponsible” and “producing nonsense”. Evidence provided by sponsors was described as “unreliable”, “all over the place” and “contradicting that of their trainee headteachers”. Problems with sponsor performance was felt to be common, but an understanding of the issues facing sponsors was also articulated. A lack of training and being expected simply to “follow the manual” was viewed as poor practice. The inherent difficulty of a sponsor being able to offer an objective assessment was felt to affect the accuracy of their judgements. The dangers of bias on the part of sponsors, perhaps in order to “keep or lose people” was noted, as was the possibility that a trainee headteacher may have two or even three sponsors over the 18 month period of the programme. Assessors also expressed concern over having to consider sponsor evidence, where the relationship between them and the trainee headteacher was unknown.

Several NPQH assessors argued that an evaluation of a candidate’s credibility, underpinned by the necessary criteria, should be decisive in any pronouncement of readiness. In the absence of this responsibility, assessors had become too ready to refer candidates to national moderation, seen as poor practice. The moderation process itself was criticised as being “too lenient on borderline candidates” and “allowing some very weak candidates to scrape through”. Despite these reservations, all assessors judged the assessment system as accurate in identifying candidates’ overall readiness for headship, estimations of accuracy ranging from “very” to “fairly”.

In terms of increasing knowledge and understanding of effective leadership practices, most Hong Kong graduates did not consider the CFP assessment had had much positive effect, with comments such as “unfortunately very little” being made. Graduates’ perception of how the assessment process had given them a clear view of their capabilities and readiness for principalship were also

negative. Typical comments were “I honestly don't think it did” and “very limited”, and “not sure that it did”. The needs assessment was said to have been effective in identifying individual strengths and development areas, but this information was not felt to have been fully utilised during the programme, or at final assessment, to assist in the development of knowledge and understanding. Perceptions of the extent to which HEI providers had helped them increase their capabilities were also variable, with some graduates asserting they had been given little or no support with this.

Generally, Hong Kong graduates judged that developing knowledge, understanding and capability through the PFP course was hampered by the methodology employed. As currently organised, the PFP course was perceived as focusing not on facilitating the leadership development of candidates but on getting them through the content. The Action Research Project (ARP), while seen as a useful activity, was said to be carried out in isolation from the provider: “you don't talk to anyone about it”.

Among English NPQH graduates it was the majority view that knowledge and understanding of effective leadership practices were successfully developed during the programme, and accurately assessed. However, as with assessors, it was noted that this was dependent on the attitude to learning of the participant. Assessment feedback to trainee headteachers on their strengths and development areas regarding leadership capabilities was also generally viewed as “accurate” and “very useful” among English graduates. One candidate reported that their strengths “came through loud and clear - as did gaps in financial knowledge”. Another graduate noted that the assessment feedback matched his own view of his performance at interview, but did not necessarily reflect what he was actually capable of. He saw this as a limitation of assessment by interview. The placement assessment task was seen as developing knowledge and understanding of leadership practices, particularly pedagogical leadership.

Theme four: Impact and expectations

Note: Neither English nor Hong Kong providers supplied data under this theme.

Regarding the expectations of Hong Kong assessors, CFP candidates were expected to “write down their reflections” during the programme and “quote these in the portfolio”. The expectation behind the portfolio requirements was that candidates reflect on their learning and discuss how this will be useful in their preparation for principalship. Articulating self-knowledge and understanding through a written document therefore underpinned the assessment, rather than demonstrating impact as a vice-principal and potential impact as a principal.

For English NPQH assessors, the assessment process was judged to identify candidates’ strengths and development areas accurately. It was argued that the criteria were laid out clearly (competencies, positive indicators and grade-scales), and that assessors strove to match evidence against these. It was also argued that, since panel members usually agreed closely with each other’s analysis of a candidate’s strengths and weaknesses, and since trainee headteachers seemed to appreciate and value the feedback, assessors judgements could be viewed as usually accurate.

Most assessors in England argued that political ideology had impacted on the assessment expectations of trainee headteachers. The most frequent example cited was with the competency requiring trainee headteachers to hold others to account, where candidates tended to demonstrate their ability to get rid of underperforming colleagues rather than their ability to develop them. One NPQH assessor felt this ability was presented with suspicious regularity by every deputy headteacher candidate. Regarding the home school based task (Task 1), it was noted that the stipulation that it must be a priority within the school improvement plan tended to generate projects focused on raising academic achievement, to the exclusion of other student outcomes. This was seen as an example of the government’s priorities impacting on candidates, rather than those of educationalists and researchers. Generally, to have the necessary impact as a headteacher, the ability to identify and grow leaders, and to succession plan (“to develop your people”) was seen as a vital yet neglected competency. Consequently, its greater emphasis in the NPQH assessment process was called for by the majority of assessors.

A minority of Hong Kong graduates judged that the PFP programme did give some insight into what was expected of a principal. It was observed that, after completing the PFP, some individuals decide they do not want principalship and stopped at that point. It was stated by one Hong Kong graduate that “only three (from 20) in my group completed the CFP and they were all principals”, although this cannot be verified. It was also noted that “the coursework gives you some idea of what to expect with the portfolio”. One graduate commented that it was difficult for principals to have an impact through IL and TL practices since “SSBs control the school culture”.

One Hong Kong graduate maintained that they were expected to develop an understanding of portfolio requirements when there is “nothing formal at all, nothing on the website that I could find or was aware of”. Seeking out private consultations with veteran principals and retired EDB officials was seen by most CFP graduates as a way of gaining “inside knowledge”, as was studying portfolios obtained from previous candidates. The evidence indicates that these methods were used by graduates to gain the understanding they viewed as necessary to meet portfolio expectations. Regarding specific modules, those that focused on external relations and resources (human, environmental, financial) were felt to have had a positive impact on graduates’ knowledge, understanding and leadership capabilities.

English NPQH graduates singled out the placement school assessment (Task 2) as having significant impact on their understanding of leadership styles. One graduate had the opportunity to work-shadow the placement headteacher who modelled leadership of an outstanding school. The graduate felt this experience had had a significant impact on his development. Another graduate described the placement task as “being like a new headteacher in a new school”, in that it gave him the opportunity to “lead from the top” in a less collegiate team culture than he was used to. He felt that this took him out of his “comfort zone”, something he valued.

The challenging aspect of the placement task, and its impact on self-confidence and leadership identity, was commented on favourably by most NPQH graduates. For example, one graduate commented on how the assessment feedback

had raised their expectations of what they should and could be involved in at their own school, and their ability to negotiate greater responsibilities with their headteacher.

5.7 Chapter summary

The findings indicate that the optimal relationship between the national standards and the assessment system has not been achieved in either jurisdiction. In Hong Kong, although the assessment system makes frequent reference to the national standards, it fails to employ their key qualities as the basis for evaluating participant learning. Given that the standards were constructed with assessment in mind (Walker et al., 2000), this constitutes a noteworthy and significant omission, arguably impoverishing the assessment process and rendering it opaque. This situation does not appear to be commented on in the literature, as it has been in other research. For example in an American study by Johnston and Thomas (2005) of the Portfolio Assessment for School Leaders, it was stressed that the portfolio components were aligned with the relevant Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards.

In England, with some minor changes to the assessment system, the documents could be very closely aligned, both conceptually and structurally. However these findings demonstrate that when the new national standards were written (2015) this was not attempted, which contrasts with the previous standards of 2004. Unlike Hong Kong, neither English document makes reference to the other. The implications of these findings are examined in the conclusion.

Compared to Hong Kong the English assessment system provides a much more coherent account of the leadership skills and qualities it sees as important for headship. Overall these closely mirror the research findings on effective leadership practices. Somewhat paradoxically it is the Hong Kong national standards that provide a detailed and coherent picture of the leadership practices which are valued, with the assessment system only providing decontextualised extracts drawn from the national standards as examples.

This issue arises because final assessment is in the form of a portfolio, and the assessment requirements indicate that it is the candidate's ability to analyse

and reflect on their leadership learning journey that is evaluated. Burgoyne (1989) notes that portfolios are used in the creative professions as a basis for judging competence and ability. He regards their use in assessing managerial competence as feasible and worthy of consideration, as a portfolio could emphasise the qualitative nature of managerial abilities. However the findings presented here indicate that, without strong and ongoing collaboration between participants and tutors over the development of the portfolio, participants will not find it meaningful to their development as leaders, and view it as an arbitrarily imposed extra burden. The essential finding is that the assessment process, through the portfolio, does not attempt to measure objectively performance levels in the specific leadership practices set out in the national standards. That this is both feasible and expected in other jurisdictions is confirmed by Johnston and Thomas' (2005) research. The wider question about 'process' versus 'product' as the best way to assess readiness for headship is discussed in the next chapter.

Several negative perceptions of the Hong Kong CFP assessment process were shared by nearly all providers and graduates. These included the quality and standards of formative and summative assessment feedback and the unsuitability of the portfolio as a mode of assessment. In essence graduates' dissatisfaction stemmed from an incomprehension of how the assessment process arrived at its judgements. Assessors did not echo these views, instead stressing the importance of reflection and individual potential in achieving success as a principal. Providers, assessors and graduates all shared the perspective that the CFP was a preliminary step in leadership development, with the NAP programme seen as much more significant in developing successful principal performance.

The finding that English graduates overall had a supportive view of the 2012 NPQH programme reinforces Crawford and Earley's (2011) evaluation of the 2011 NPQH pilot.

However they note the enthusiasm and commitment of the pilot participants and observe that: "As successful graduates of the programme it is perhaps unsurprising that their comments were generally positive" (p. 109). They also observe that since many other evaluative studies: "have focused on the views of recent

successful graduates it is hardly surprising that their experience is invariably reported in positive terms” (p. 112). Crawford and Earley draw attention to the dangers of an over-reliance on the perceptions of a single population when researching the efficacy of SLDPs, particularly of a population who have had a successful experience and have benefited from participation.

The research for this thesis obtained the views of not just programme graduates, but of providers and assessors, two other groups that arguably have a more detached and professional perspective. It was a common perception of all three sets of English respondents that, although not flawless, the competency-based assessment framework was an appropriate construct to assess readiness for headship, and that it did this accurately and reliably. The gateway assessment, which determines who has access to the programme, was also felt to be fit for purpose by all three sets of respondents. By focusing explicitly, if not exclusively, on the assessment process, this study also extends the scope of recent SLDP research, which has concentrated on programme features (Darling-Hammond, et al. 2007; Darling-Hammond, et al. 2010).

While providers and assessors felt the NPQH should continue, with its mandatory status restored, they also felt that it was subjected to too much political interference. This had manifested itself in the assessment system through the dominance of competencies focused on resource and financial management at the expense of other important qualities.

Overall the findings expose a sharp contrast in the perceptions of the respondents from the two jurisdictions regarding the fitness for purpose, comprehensibility and educative potential of each assessment system. The implications of this are discussed in the next chapter.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary overview of the answers to the first three research questions and the extent to which they have been answered.

6.11 To what extent are the national standards related to the assessment system of the leadership development programme?

The Hong Kong national standards are referred to frequently in the CFP assessment system and are presented as integral to the portfolio building process. An explicit relationship exists between the two documents which is acknowledged by the assessment awarding body. While the national standards have an academic research-based provenance, the assessment system originates from a government department. Generally a strong and consistent relationship appears to exist between the two.

However there is a lack of genuine integration between the two documents which applies particularly to the area of assessment. The 'six core areas of leadership' within the national standards documentation form the backbone of the content of the assessment portfolio since candidates are required to integrate the six core areas into their analysis and reflection. Crucially however the 'values, knowledge, skills and attributes' required of school principals, (the 'key qualities', which are in effect the competencies), are not incorporated into the assessment system. Without the specific and explicit operationalising of the four key qualities, where a stated function of the assessment system is to assess them, a properly integrated relationship cannot be said to exist.

With the English national standards and NPQH assessment system the opposite relationship could be said to prevail. Although the two English documents appear to be constructed on different conceptual foundations, in essence they are closely aligned and a more direct relationship exists between them than is at first apparent. For example, there is a high degree of conceptual correlation between the three dimensions of leadership in the assessment system and the first three domains of the national standards. Granted there is a structural dissimilarity in that the national standards have a fourth domain - the self-improving system. However in the educational excellence dimension of the assess-

ment system it states that the highly effective headteacher “can lead effectively in a self-improving system”. With the inclusion of some additional guidance on how this could be achieved, and some minor restructuring, the assessment could easily mirror the national standards structurally as well as conceptually. Arguably, the two documents are potentially more conceptually and procedurally integrated in England than in Hong Kong. However this is nowhere acknowledged and there is no mention of the NPQH or its assessment system in the English national standards, in stark contrast to the Hong Kong documents.

6.12. To what extent does the assessment system relate to recent research findings on effective school leadership and best practice in assessment system design?

With regard to Hong Kong, of the 14 design features drawn from research into best practice in assessment system design, seven are not present in the CFP final assessment framework, whereas in England only three are omitted. Of these, two can be regarded as not critical to the assessment process and there is a degree of unacknowledged alignment with the third. The accumulative effect of the Hong Kong assessment system having fully half of the design features missing is that it cannot be said to relate well to best practice in assessment system design.

Compared to Hong Kong the English assessment system provides a much more coherent and detailed account of the leadership skills and qualities it sees as important for headship and these are integrated into the assessment process as competencies. Overall, with some exceptions, these closely mirror the research findings on effective leadership practices. Expecting headteachers to develop and operate a more interventionist culture regarding accountability is one key area of difference between the NPQH assessment system and the research findings. The other concerns the extent to which the headteacher should develop collaborative decision-making structures to increase leadership capacity, where the research findings advocate this much more strongly. Other differences include the NPQH assessment system expecting the headteacher to play a much wider monitorial role than research would indicate is critical to pupil outcomes, and research findings indicating that leadership impact is increased when the headteacher is more involved with curriculum coordination and evalu-

ation. Despite these differences, it is clear that the NPQH assessment system relates very closely to those key leadership practices which research indicates have the biggest impact on pupil outcomes.

Somewhat paradoxically it is the Hong Kong national standards that provide a detailed and coherent picture of key leadership practices (the 'key qualities'), and these relate closely to the research findings. The assessment system lists and refers to these, but largely presents them as decontextualised extracts drawn from the national standards as examples. Therefore as they are not synthesised into the process of assessment, a close and robust relationship cannot be said to exist between research findings on effective school leadership and the CFP assessment system.

6.13. What are the perspectives of those involved in the assessment process regarding its fitness for purpose and the extent to which it reflects those research findings and best practice?

English respondents viewed the NPQH competency-based assessment system as fit for purpose and felt it gave a reliable judgement of headteacher readiness. The structural elements of the system, for example the initial 'gateway' selection process, the school-based tasks and the panel interview, were felt to reflect best practice. NPQH providers, assessors and graduates also felt that the competencies, which underpin the whole assessment process, largely reflect research findings into key leadership practices. Criticism of the assessment system from providers and assessors, in terms of the deployment and balancing of competencies, stemmed from reservations about the impact of government policy on the programme.

In Hong Kong the perspectives of those involved in the CFP assessment process, particularly providers and graduates, contrasted strongly with those in England. Overall, judging from their detailed criticism of numerous aspects of the CFP assessment process, providers and graduates did not feel it was fit for purpose. The evidence presented also makes it clear that neither cohort viewed the assessment system as reflecting key leadership practices or best practice in assessment system design. Particular shortcomings were felt to be the lack of meaningful feedback, the inability of the portfolio to act as a viable medium for

assessment, and the lack of communication and articulation between the different elements of the programme and the institutions responsible for them.

Providers did express positive perceptions of the national standards as an authoritative document, but regretted its minor role in the CFP assessment process. Structurally the failure of the EDB to officially adopt the national standards document, and commission agents capable of integrating it fully into the assessment process, was felt to have had far reaching consequences, as many of the assessment system's perceived weaknesses can be traced back to this. Providers, assessors and graduates all felt that the needs assessment conducted prior to entry onto the programme was a useful element of the CFP programme.

While there was a good degree of agreement between Hong Kong providers and graduates regarding their perceptions, this cannot be said of assessors. However assessors did not contradict any of the criticism of the providers and graduates. Arguably, by default, they too did not endorse the CFP assessment system's fitness for purpose since, when asked whether it was able to identify readiness for principalship, responded by stressing the importance of intrinsic personal qualities to a newly appointed principal's future success.

6.2 Addressing the final research question

This is in three parts. Part one considers how the findings can inform the future development of SLDP assessment in Hong Kong. Part two does the same for England, while part three considers what can be learnt from the findings regarding the future development of SLDP assessment globally.

6.21 Enhancing CFP assessment in Hong Kong

Common features across the dataset

Expecting principals to have a commitment to promoting social justice, fairness and equity, underpinned by moral purpose, is a prominent feature of the dataset for Hong Kong, as is the requirement to focus on whole person development by providing a meaningful education that ensures all diverse needs are met. The expectation that principals will cultivate democratic processes by involving and

engaging the local community in improving student outcomes is also a prevailing feature of the dataset, given further significance by the strong public service ethos present in Hong Kong culture.

A consistent approach to accountability, notably reflecting the research findings, is discernible. This approach, while requiring the principal to carry out the key components of accountability, does not expect the principal to create an accountability culture infused by a performativity that works on the subjectivities of individuals (Ball, 2008). This approach would appear to be suited to the cultural climate and performance levels of the education service (as measured by PISA).

The chief features of instructional leadership and pedagogical expertise expected of principals are also present across the dataset, although only summarised in the assessment system. However, it is clear that these qualities are not developed and evaluated in the assessment process. Given their importance for improving pupil outcomes, this is an area that should be considered for development, but it is recognised that to do so has far-reaching implications, discussed below.

The role of the national standards in the assessment system

The analysis presented in the previous chapter indicates that there is only a very limited transference of the 'Key Qualities of the Principalship in Hong Kong' (Walker et al., 2000) into the assessment requirements. Addressing this weakness would arguably improve the quality of AP assessment and its applicability to school leadership practice.

The precedence historically given to the development of a SLDP for NAPs has arguably had a negative effect on the CFP programme for APs in that it has inadvertently been cast as the poor relation, and has consequently suffered a relative neglect since 2000. Therefore, any new SLDP and assessment system for APs should not use the NAP programme as its reference point, but should be founded on a revised set of national standards derived from the Key Qualities of the Principalship in Hong Kong. The basis for this conclusion is that, despite needing updating, the current national standards are aligned with research find-

ings on effective leadership practices, and are regarded as fit for purpose. To create this new SLDP and assessment system, derived from revised national standards, and which included fully articulated performance indicators and assessment criteria, would demand considerable levels of expertise, both academic and professional. This exists within HEIs and school leaders in Hong Kong, but such an initiative may entail the EDB reconsidering whether its current governance and administration arrangements for the CFP are suitable for this purpose.

Given the trend towards stronger operational governance of schools by the EDB, as shown in the earlier analysis of policy development, the creation of a new form of professional control (Moller and Schratz, 2008) over the design and development of SLDPs could be considered. Power and influence in the managerial realm could be increased through decentralisation, while accountability to the central authority strengthened. This conception of professional control could allow selected agencies, including HEIs and other specialist institutions, a more autonomous and responsible role in the final assessment process while simultaneously holding them more accountable for the quality of both the learning and assessment experience.

It is recognised that such a proposal raises significant issues concerning power redistribution and quality assurance that would need to be worked through. Such an empowerment however may make some of the HEIs enthusiastic rather than reluctant providers. Clearly any new arrangements regarding responsibility for provision also have financial implications, but the funding arrangements currently operating arguably need rebalancing, both in terms of the contribution made by government as opposed to individuals, and in terms of the relative neglect the CFP has experienced compared to other programmes. The national standards state that principals should expect “the highest quality preparation and support” in order to meet the challenges they face. From the findings it can reasonably be concluded that currently this is not being provided within both the development and assessment processes. Greater public expenditure, carefully targeted and impact-assessed, should therefore be considered.

At the practical level the EDB would need to officially adopt the proposed new standards as a departmental document. In addition, a task force would need to be appointed to develop a new set of assessment criteria to evaluate actual proficiency in the values, knowledge, skills and attributes contained in the new standards. A new performance-based assessment system, which evaluated candidates' acquisition of the key qualities based on these criteria could then be created. This process represents a technical challenge, not least in developing some very different assessment approaches. Crucially however, in terms of leadership practices, the process should not be impeded by conflicting stances based on ideology since there is a strong alignment across the research findings, the current national standards and the current assessment system on a wide range of key areas including a commitment to social justice and equity, stakeholder and community involvement, professional accountability, distributed leadership and developing staff.

The structural elements of the CFP assessment system

The needs analysis element of the CFP programme aligns with the research finding that there should be an assessment prior to entry onto a SLDP, and was felt to be fit for purpose by interviewees. However, it should be considered whether a more formal and rigorous pre-assessment of potential candidates is needed. While this research was unable to arrive at any reliable figures, it seems that considerable numbers of participants do not proceed to final assessment. This situation could be improved by an initial assessment that adopted a gateway function as well as a needs assessment one. The other consideration is that the findings from the needs assessment should be utilised more in the PFP course learning and assessment processes.

Regarding the PFP, greater quality assurance by the EDB to improve its monitoring of HEI provision may assist in creating greater consistency of course experience for participants. Conducting evaluative surveys of participant experience in the different HEI contexts would enable a comparative analysis of provision to be conducted. Running in parallel with this, the creation of documentation setting out participants' entitlements both in terms of teaching and assessment may incentivise HEIs to set quality assurance benchmarks. Improving the induction process for candidates, so they have a better informed understanding

of the PFP course and its assessment, could be one possible result of this. In addition, given that graduates were favourable to the notion of a placement but felt it would not be feasible to be away from their own school for any length of time, HEIs, as part of their provider role, could consider developing reciprocal arrangements between course participants.

As regards the two constituent parts of the PFP, the evidence indicates that greater variety in the methodology of the assessment within the six modules could improve the quality of the assessment process. The ARP is viewed as fit for purpose, although practice here could be improved by HEI providers being more involved and giving greater support. However, by far the greatest issue with PFP assessment is the quality of feedback to participants. The underlying problem, that of a lack of appropriate and applicable assessment criteria derived from national standards, should be addressed as part of the review suggested above. The PFP coursework elements could be retained but clear assessment criteria, derived from the same assessment framework as the final assessment, should be designed and published, and candidates should be given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with these during induction.

The portfolio, despite its potential as a medium for final assessment (Huba and Pashiardis, 2008), poses many challenges not least the lack of learning-focused feedback to candidates, a limitation derived from the assessment criteria underpinning it. Its focus on reflection is a strong point, but reflection needs to be seen as the precursor to improved performance, not the criterion by which readiness for principalship can be assessed. The key question this research has raised is: is the completion of the portfolio, as currently designed and with its present criteria, the best way for a candidate to demonstrate their capacity in the key qualities of principalship and therefore their readiness for the role? If the expectation is that a candidate will be able to demonstrate impact as a leader from the start of principalship, perhaps alternative mediums that evaluate performance-based criteria derived from appropriate leadership practices should be considered for final assessment.

A key consideration during the research was whether the assessment structures gave sufficient weight to the perspectives and experiences of those involved.

While participants in the English system were at times vociferous and blunt in their criticism, they were equally so when reporting on what they saw as its strengths. It is clear from the Hong Kong findings that candidates and providers, despite a reticence induced by specific cultural norms, were also able to articulate what they perceived as the shortcomings of the CFP assessment system. However it is noteworthy that there was a relative dearth of positivity concerning participant comments of the CFP system. It would therefore seem advisable for any future Hong Kong SLDP assessment system to put in place a mechanism where both provider and candidate perceptions are given due consideration. This suggestion is based on the assumption that the education authorities would prefer those involved in the system to view it in high esteem, and with a greater sense of ownership.

Moving beyond structure

In the context of AP leadership development and its assessment, the task of moving the emphasis away from structural matters to one focusing on learning has proved problematic. As has been noted, Walker, Chen and Qian, (2008, p. 422) felt that making the programme experience of APs more educative was “a work in progress”. The findings of this research indicate that this is still largely the case, and that progress has been slow.

The findings indicate that to embed key leadership traits into SLDPs in Hong Kong still remains a significant problem, as to do so “challenges not only surface-level structures, but also more deeply held cultural traditions and norms” (Walker, Chen and Qian, 2008, p. 424). These norms influence not only policy formation, but programme design and enactment. For example, Walker, Chen and Qian (2008) argue that the norms of social behaviour produced by these ordered relationships exercise a pervasive influence on leader development, from who becomes a principal - and who is therefore engaged in SLDPs in the first place - through to how different leaders are grouped for training and, crucially, whether social connections are maintained after formal activities end.

They also argue that these ordered personal and social relationships, (or *guanxi*, which can be defined as the basic dynamic in personalised networks of influence), shape such matters as teaching methodology. Interestingly, the

teaching methodology employed in the CFP emerged as a salient feature of the research, and demonstrated for this researcher how cultural traditions and norms can act as a barrier to developing more participative educational practices. These cultural influences were also discerned in the modus operandi of the CFP assessment process itself, as evidenced by the procedure for portfolio submission and assessment, and participant perceptions of being externalised from the assessment process. This issue raises potentially fundamental questions about the difficulty of establishing and operating objectively competency-based assessment in a culture where *guanxi* is the pre-eminent route to preferment. However, it is contended that the changes suggested above, while improving the assessment process, should not represent an unacceptable level of challenge to the cultural norms currently operating in Hong Kong.

6.22 Enhancing NPQH assessment

Values informing leadership assessment

A generalised moral lexicon permeates the documentation pertaining to the training and assessment of school leaders in England. However, the findings arguably demonstrate that, despite the emphasis on 'vision and values', neither the national standards nor the assessment system give any clear indication which moral values headteachers should hold and live by. The Hong Kong assessment system, in contrast, does (examples include a commitment to equity and fairness, modesty and integrity). This raises the question as to why there should be this lack of precision around arguably the core purpose of aspirant HT training and assessment. The view that this question needs addressing is unable to gain any traction among those engaged in policy development. However, this research suggests that greater clarity and precision, and a wider vision, around the moral underpinnings of headship would improve aspiring headteacher training, assessment and performance. The work being done by ASCL, led by Carolyn Roberts, to develop and establish an ethical framework for leadership, signals that this issue has been recognised. It will be interesting to see if and how this initiative percolates down into aspirant headteacher SLDPs and assessment processes.

In practice the expectations put on English headteachers to raise pupil academic outcomes, reinforced by an accountability regime centred on exam or test results, means that the vision and values of most schools are dominated by these imperatives. Chief inspector Amanda Spielman has warned that schools in England are focusing too much on exams and league tables to the detriment of pupil's broader education. She has also stated that Ofsted itself could be partly to blame by causing headteachers to focus on the performance of the school and lose sight of the pupil. (HMCI's commentary: October 2017 - GOV.UK).

It is arguable therefore that the key operational 'moral' imperative driving most headteachers is to continually improve examination results. The evidence shows that this preoccupation also dominates the NPQH assessment process. Reflecting on wider developments in society, such as the radicalisation of young people referred to by assessors, lends weight to the argument that a wider and more explicit moral underpinning to aspiring headteacher assessment should be considered. The findings also exposed differences in the expectations placed on aspiring headteachers by the different sources of evidence examined. This has further implications for the future development of aspiring headteacher assessment, as discussed below.

The differences in these expectations can be characterised as a dissonance between the 2015 national standards and the other three sources – the current NPQH assessment system, the perceptions of those operating this system and recent research findings into effective leadership practice. For example, all sources expect aspiring headteachers to have a vision underpinned by values and a strong moral purpose. Part of that vision is to strive for excellence. However, it is clear from the findings that the national standards frame excellence in terms of high academic achievement while the other sources view improving pupil outcomes as the key objective of leadership.

Indeed, the expectation that an aspirant headteacher's vision should be dominated by academic objectives, as stressed in the national standards, is challenged by the other three sources. Both providers and assessors judge that the expectation that headteachers should promote the wider moral purposes of education has been lost in recent years, and that the 2012 assessment system

was shaped by financial and political forces, producing a programme and assessment scheme ultimately less moral and less holistically engaged in the wider purposes of education. Assessors were also clear that NPQH assessment had been influenced by ever increasing government pressures to emphasise competencies concerned with accountability and financial and resource management, when research findings indicate there is no evidence of these having a discernible positive impact on student outcomes. Being able to distribute leadership and develop people both individually and as teams, which research indicates does have a positive impact on pupil achievement, by contrast barely features in the assessment process.

The findings demonstrate that continual political interference in SLDPs militates against the possibility of a reasonable measure of intellectual coherence developing between the national standards, the assessment system and ongoing research findings. It also acts against the proper role of research, which should be to inform proposed change. Other Western jurisdictions such as those in Scandinavia and Australia appear able to exercise national governance over education without this being operationalised as political interference, and to confidently develop value-based education. The evidence presented arguably reinforces the view that the debate on who should have the dominant influence over public education, initiated by Callaghan's Ruskin speech, has now resulted in the pendulum swinging too far towards government. The uncritical adoption of neo-liberalist ideology, over a sustained period, has provided the momentum for this.

The divergence in position between the national standards and the other three sources is perhaps most evident in respect to the role headteachers are expected to play in society. Within the national standards there is an expectation that headteachers need to accept their responsibility and accountability for making society more equitable. An unspoken assumption is that headteachers possess the managerial power and agency to have the impact on social inequity expected of them. That the expectations are ambitious is exemplified by the statement in the national standards that headteachers are expected to "overcome disadvantage". This is a surprising statement, given that no entity, including government itself, has yet been able to do this. To place this expectation on headteachers, when successive government policies have put the UK near the

top of the international league table for income inequality and near the bottom for social mobility (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010, p.160) is arguably deeply unfair and unjust in itself. However, this is not to imply that schools have no impact on social disadvantage at the individual level through the education they provide, and there is evidence that schools can compensate to a limited degree for social inequity.

The evidence presented in this research therefore points to the advisability of a new approach to aspiring headteacher development and assessment being developed, one directed by a research-informed national consensus.

Structural issues at the national level

There is no reference to the NPQH qualification, or its training or assessment components, in the 2015 National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers. This contrasts with the 2004 National Standards (National Standards for Headteachers) where it is stated that they were to be used “to identify threshold levels of performance for the assessment framework within the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)” (p.5). Since the 2012 NPQH assessment was designed before the standards were revised in 2015, some misalignment could be regarded as inevitable. However the lack of articulation between the national standards and the assessment system arguably needs addressing, and it is to be hoped that the new 2017 NPQH framework fully aligns with the current standards. This is because, in a coherent national framework for school leader development, the assessment system should grow out of the national standards - there should be a direct and traceable relationship between the two. Good practice at a national level would see these two documents growing closer together rather than further apart, with greater clarity regarding the functions of each. Given the underlying, if disguised, conceptual alignment between the two documents it would make sense to facilitate this by adopting a common terminology and structure, as discussed in the findings. A strong and coherent combination of national standards and programme assessment, acting as an overarching national framework, would also mitigate the possibility of localisation and particularism which, in an era of multi-academy trusts, threatens to undermine the consistency of aspiring headteacher accreditation.

The structural elements of the NPQH assessment system

Among both graduates and assessors there was a consistent view that some form of school-based assessment should be considered. As one assessor put it “it's quite incredible really that we are going through the whole of the assessment process, and we never see them in school”. A cost-benefit analysis of returning to this practice could possibly be considered in the future. Arguably on-site assessment would not only mitigate the problems identified with sponsor-based evidence and SJTs, but increase the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the assessment process. This option, while attractive, is often dismissed on grounds of cost, but there is an argument that a revised version, efficiently administered, could actually cost less than the current off-site process which has been characterised as cumbersome and bureaucratic. Moreover, the ability of graduates to control how their ‘readiness’ is perceived at final interview has been raised by graduates themselves. These criticisms add weight to the argument that periodic school visits, as part of the assessment process, should be considered. Such visits may facilitate a more flexible interview process that provides an opportunity for more meaningful dialogue, moving the assessment from ‘thin’ descriptions of outward appearance to ‘thick’ perceptions of organisational reality and leader influence.

The findings indicate that the assessment system incorporates nearly all of the design features identified by research as good practice. In addition, the evidence suggests that the overall design functions well operationally. This should be borne in mind if any proposed changes are considered in the future.

Given the continual drive for efficiencies which the assessment system has been subjected to, it would seem unlikely that any future scheme would incorporate new procedures, even if they demonstrably improved the quality of the assessment or the experience of participants. The evidence provided in this research suggests that continual cost-cutting is now threatening the integrity of the assessment as a whole. The alternatives would appear to be either fund the current model at an adequate level or design a new system from scratch within a known budget. The strengths of the current system and the time and effort in-

vested in developing its current perceived effectiveness, as indicated by the research findings, suggest the former alternative would be advisable.

NPQH Competencies

That the competency structure underpinning the assessment system is highly regarded by providers, assessors and graduates is unsurprising given its developmental provenance and evolution over time. However a level of technical and intellectual complexity is inevitable in any school leader development programme which employs an assessment system based on competencies. Therefore, calls to make the procedure more streamlined may be difficult to put into practice. However, it was a common concern that in any system developed in the future, there should be absolute transparency over such elements as the positive indicators (or sub-competencies). There were also consistent critiques regarding the utility, relevance and weight given to the competency 'efficient and effective' over others such as 'developing people' and 'self-awareness'. Finally, one of the greatest strengths of the NPQH competency-based model of assessment, commented on by all involved, is that it facilitates learner-focused feedback, and this consideration should weigh heavily in any future evolution.

6.23 Developing SDLP assessment in a global context

In this research the contrasting findings from the two jurisdictions demonstrate that an assessment process underpinned by a competency structure offers better opportunities for leadership learning to be conceptualised, comprehended and assessed by those undertaking the learning and assessment journey. If the competency structure clearly defines the knowledge, skills, values and abilities needed to be ready for the role of headteacher, and sets out transparently, for example by means of sub-competencies and grade scales, how the assessment is arrived at, then comprehension, and a sense of inclusion, will be further developed among assessors and assessed.

In addition, the evidence shows that a competency-based structure can incorporate key research both on those effective leadership practices which are most likely to maximise pupil outcomes, and on best practice in assessment system design. However the evidence from England demonstrates the negative impact political ideology can have on the potential of a competency-based system to

reflect current research. Therefore, in any jurisdiction, national policy-making structures which incorporate sufficient balancing factors to enable research to play its proper role are essential, and this should apply to the development of national standards too.

Huba and Pashiardis (2008), while arguing that a competency-based approach has advantages over other assessment systems, note that there is less consensus than might be expected about what the key competencies are. The research approach used in this study, of comparing assessment competencies explicitly against established research findings on those key leadership practices which have the biggest impact on pupil outcomes, arguably shows how a greater consensus could be achieved. Similarly the comparison of design features produces a methodology for constructing SLDP assessment systems based on recognised best practice.

Given these conclusions, it is arguable that competencies offer the best means currently available of bridging the 'gap' between qualities-in-action being acted out in real time and the formal act of assessing those qualities in a socially constructed reality. This stance perhaps does not address Barlosky's (2003) objection, derived from Gilbert Ryle's distinction between "knowing that" and "knowing how", that while competencies can describe the practices which effective leaders typically engage in, they cannot encapsulate how leadership realises particular institutional aspirations, in other words leadership performance.

However, this position does not acknowledge the necessity of making compromises when conducting work-based assessment where a balance needs to be struck between theoretical objections and practical design issues. Arguably the first step is to secure a shared comprehension and agreement among the social agents involved in the process as to what things should be assessed. Competencies, as linguistic descriptors of those things, offer the flexibility needed for descriptor composition in different socio-cultural contexts. They also allow research findings on those behaviours which, in any given context at any given time, are most likely to maximise pupil outcomes to be drawn on.

In terms of system design, competencies can also accommodate and be adapted to the strengths and weaknesses of different types of evidence. Clearly how the assessment is constructed determines its accuracy and reliability. This at bottom is a subjective judgement, but competencies do enable both connectivity and transparency between learning and the evaluation of that learning. A strategic approach to competency-based assessment arguably offers the best prospect that a declaration of readiness reflects a graduate's position with a measure of accuracy.

Another debate around aspirant headteacher assessment is about 'process' versus 'product', that is, 'meta-cognitive self awareness' versus 'demonstrating specific skills', as the best way to assess readiness for headship. The two assessment systems used as sites in this research appear to epitomise this tension.

The CFP assessment requirements make it clear that it is the candidate's ability to analyse and reflect on their leadership journey in the portfolio that is judged. Lashway (2003) sees the portfolio as the conceptual container in which APs deposit their evidence of achievement and leadership potential. However the suitability of the portfolio as the best means of conducting SLDP assessment has been questioned. For example research by Johnston and Thomas (2005) on the usefulness of a portfolio evaluation system, the Portfolio Assessment for School Leaders, revealed that under half of the cohort felt they had benefitted from the portfolio process. Johnston and Thomas also found that those who valued the portfolio process most were part of a supportive social network of professional development. The research concluded that if portfolio evaluation is used as a means of CPD then it has the potential to be a learning tool. This arguably means that it's real potential is as a method of formative rather than summative assessment.

The NPQH on the other hand focuses on verifying discrete leadership and management practices, critiqued by one assessor thus:

I'm not a great believer in the competency model....where we build up tiny tiny pieces of information and put ticks in boxes to

see if the whole thing then gives us a headteacher....I don't actually think headship is about that because, if you're wise enough.... to understand which bits you're missing, then you find other people or you network to get those bits. But if you haven't got the overall picture then you'll struggle to be a head...

Becoming 'wise enough' here arguably depends on developing self-awareness, emotional maturity and self-reflection. These qualities are still present in the NPQH course and assessment system, although it is clear from the evidence that their importance has been eroded since 2012. What is also evident from the research is that a competency-based assessment structure can incorporate this type of personal quality. By including these competencies the aspirant headteacher can be encouraged to develop the wisdom to make the right decisions, as well as the capability to carry them out.

In addition, a competency-based assessment system has the flexibility to accommodate those more holistic assessment methods that would address the assessor's critique expressed above. For example, a school-based assessment, grounded in a competency framework, and which relied on rigorous investigative and evaluative procedures drawn from the inspectorial tradition, could complement judgements made in a formal interview. By employing this mode of assessment, judgements about qualities such as credibility and integrity become feasible, since perceptions of organisational reality and leader influence can be gained in situ.

Within the field of SLDP research much has been learnt about the qualities and characteristics of effective programmes and the design principles which inform exemplary programme construction (Leithwood et al., 2009, Orr and Barber, 2007, Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). There has also been substantial research into the leadership practices such programmes are designed to enable graduates to demonstrate, as well as, in the international field, considerable focus on the influence of social, cultural, and political contexts (Walker, Bridges and Chan, 1996, Bottery et al., 2007, Walker, Chen and Qian, 2008). However the importance of assessment has arguably been overlooked and has not had the

attention it deserves. This reflects the historic neglect of candidate assessment during the development of SLDPs over time. Accurate, thorough and rigorous assessment is seen as essential to the learning process in schools. It is notable that this commitment to high-quality assessment is not afforded to those who aspire to lead schools. The specific contribution of this study lies in its focus on assessment.

That the challenge facing school leaders in many jurisdictions is daunting is universally acknowledged, as is the concomitant need for highly skilled practitioners to lead schools. It is equally accepted that effective headteachers can and do have a real impact on pupil outcomes. Given this situation it is vital that SLDP developers are clear about which skills, attributes and qualities they are going to develop, and to what level. It is equally vital that candidates are assessed to verify they have reached the standard expected in the competencies agreed, and are ready to take on a leadership role.

This study, by forging articulated links between candidate assessment, national standards, effective leadership practices, and best practice in assessment system design has asserted the place of aspirant school leader assessment in the wider endeavour of improving pupil outcomes through improved leadership performance. It presents a broader and more holistic conceptual framework in which to conceive of SLDP research. Moreover the cross-country comparative methodology of the study has allowed a close examination of these elements, throwing into sharp relief the differences between the two jurisdictions. By considering these differences in conception, construction and perception secure judgements have been made that point to how future SLDP assessment may be developed in other jurisdictions in the future.

Viewed holistically, the evidence produced by the three-stage procedure underpinning this research indicates that the potential improvements in SLDP assessment to be gained from ensuring a clear and articulated relationship between nation standards, research findings and competency-based structures are considerable, but have not been fully recognised. In addition, the trialling of the three-stage procedure encapsulated in this research demonstrates that it could be applied to other SLDPs and assessment systems to provide a useful

audit of their efficacy, together with recommendations as to how they might be enhanced. It could also serve as a helpful tool in constructing new SLDPs which are underpinned by quality assessment processes.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The literature search strategy

The preliminary search of the literature was via Google Scholar. Previous and current work on the assessment of aspirant principals from the two countries under study was located using hard copy and electronic databases. The main sources of hard copy were the Newman Library and the Senate Library. International comparative studies such as the International Study of Principal Preparation (ISPP) (Gowie and Crawford, 2007), the International Handbook on the Preparation and Development of School Leaders (Ed. Lumby, Crow and Pashiardis, 2008) and the OECD report by Pont et al (2008) were consulted. Other literature consulted included research findings by Allan Walker and colleagues at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, along with others such as Bryant, DA., Caldwell, B., Darling-Hammond, L., Lumby, J., and Pounder, DG.

Publications from the two national governments or their agents were located and reviewed. Some of the older texts were useful in understanding how aspirant head teacher assessment has developed historically in the two jurisdictions, and how national policy had evolved over time. For the online search Proquest's 'search all databases' option was used as this contained 25 databases including the British Education Index and ERIC (Educational Resources Information Centre). Boolean Logic was employed to construct search strings using combinations of keywords, taking account of differences in spelling (for example competency and competencies/competence and competences), terminology (for example headteacher/principal) and synonyms (for example leadership/management/administration). Examples include assessment, aspirant head teacher/principal, trainee head teacher/principal, professional development, competences, development programme, values, policy. Selection was assisted by focusing on abstracts in the first instance and employing citation analysis.

The criteria used to guide the selection, summarised below, were fairly open and were applied with a degree of flexibility:

- The searches were broadly looking for research on SLDPs and their assessment models published since 2000, although this was not applied to material deemed foundational or particularly relevant. Derek Esp's 1993 survey of competence-based case studies, which gives a valuable insight into the origins, development and trialling of competence-based SLDPs in England is an example of this type of material.
- Other sources exempted from the chronological criterion included a consultation paper (Task Group on Training and Development of School Heads, 1999) which reframed SLDPs in Hong Kong by recommending the formation of a mandatory structure to regulate school leader preparation and development.
- The searches attempted to locate studies on the areas of interest contained in the research questions. Thus how SLDP assessment systems relate to recent research findings on both effective school leadership practices and best practice in programme design was a key concern, as was research on the relationship between National Standards and the assessment models of SLDPs.
- The initial searches produced hundreds of sources on school leadership development generally, but these were rejected. Progressively less material on SLDPs, and less again on assessment within SLDPs was uncovered, but this latter material proved useful. The relative dearth of material specifically on assessment within SLDPs is confirmed by others, as discussed below.
- The majority of the research on SLDPs that was generated from the searches was either descriptive accounts of different programmes or reports of participant experience based on the perceptions of programme participants or graduates.
- The methodology underpinning these studies was strongly constructivist and relied exclusively on qualitative methods. As this study adopts a more hybrid methodology in an attempt to gain knowledge of greater currency and utility (The rationale for this is laid out in chapter 4), the above research was felt to be of limited relevance.

- The priority was therefore on articles that reported research focused on relating successful graduation from a SLDP to later performance as a school leader, or dealt specifically with the ability of an assessment model to accurately determine readiness for headship.
- In this context it was felt appropriate to consider studies from jurisdictions other than England or Hong Kong where the focus was on these issues. One example utilised was an investigation into the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) deployed in Tennessee which tested whether success in the examination was related to later job performance (Grissom, Mitani and Blissett, 2015).
- Employing the criteria above resulted in potentially thousands of sources being reduced to about a hundred of direct relevance.

Appendix 2

Problematising the theory of action

- Every programme graduate is different in their personality, strengths and weaknesses, and leadership potential. In addition every school is different in terms of its particular challenges and context. The severity and characteristics of those challenges will vary enormously too. Therefore the assertion that successful graduation will automatically confer 'readiness for principalship' needs examination. The research enabled debate about what 'readiness for principalship' means in two different cultural contexts.
- Since leadership impact on student learning is mostly indirect (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Day et al, 2009; Bush, 2009; Supovitz et al, 2010), the capacity of any graduate to effect school improvement is unlikely to be apparent for some considerable time, exacerbating the additional problem of assigning responsibility for impact in complex social organisations (Guskey 2000). The research enabled reflection on these issues by those social actors engaging with the assessment systems over time, and sought to throw light on each assessment system's capacity to produce graduates ready to meet a wide range of different circumstances.
- The successful practice of school leadership is highly dependent on how it is positioned and supported in any education system. This also applies to any programme of school leadership development and assessment. Strong policy directives derived from the national political ideology dominant at a particular time shape the leadership landscape. In addition there may be national, cultural and societal imperatives - such as a succession planning crisis or a recognition that greater diversity in school leadership is needed - that underpin why certain attributes are being assessed within leadership development programmes and not others. However, while national policy imperatives impact significantly on concepts of school leadership, what Sahlberg (2006) calls the Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM) has increasingly become adopted as an educational reform orthodoxy within many education systems throughout the world, including in the U.S., England, Australia and Hong Kong. Although these two policy drivers - the national and the global - may pursue the same objectives, for example enhanced school autonomy accompanied by new forms of indirect state control, both dimensions could not be ignored if the two school leader development programmes, and their assessment systems, were to be properly understood in their full context. This involved a review of the current policy framework and its recent evolution in each system, looking in particular at the extent to which schools are autonomous and who is ultimately responsible for growing and hiring school leaders.
- While there is good evidence to support the assertion that transformational leadership is predictive of improved student outcomes, some of its key practices - for example setting direction by instilling a shared vision and compelling goals - are problematic to assess. The research will probe these areas by exploring and analysing the differing perspectives of programme developers, assessors and participants.
- The assertion that instructional leadership and transformational leadership alone constitute the most effective leadership practices is open to challenge, as other leadership styles and practices are omitted that arguably need to be highlighted. In addition, although the theory of action asserts that combining instructional and transformational leadership enhances overall impact, how this should be done is left unsaid - a developed statement outlining what leadership for learning should look like is absent. Lastly there is no mention of the importance of context and therefore of situational or contingent leadership. This issue is addressed through inviting the key actors in each system to reflect on not only instructional and transformational leadership, but on other dimensions of leadership.

- The issue of assessing the capacity to successfully enact the leadership practices that have been studied and learnt on the programmes appears to be the least developed in research terms, and yet is arguably the most important, given that enactment is intimately tied to impact. How both the assessors and those they assess grapple with this issue was a focus of the research.

Appendix 3

Summary of research findings on effective leadership practice and how SLDP assessment systems should be designed, organised and operationalised

Please consider to what extent these practices featured in the leadership development assessment process:

1. Promoting and participating in professional learning in school, including providing the necessary resources
2. Pedagogical engagement with teaching staff through supervision, modelling, support and evaluation
3. Coordinating and evaluating the curriculum, teaching and assessment
4. Ensuring that student progress and teaching are regularly and accurately monitored
5. Establishing and maintaining a set of expectations and norms of behaviour that facilitate and maximise learning in the classroom
6. Setting direction by instilling a shared vision and setting compelling goals founded on values such as a desire for social justice
7. Promoting a trusting and caring school culture
8. Maintaining high expectations regarding teacher performance and developing individuals through direct and indirect support and challenge
9. Developing the organisational conditions (structures, processes) to facilitate teaching and learning
10. Developing collaborative decision-making structures, including distributed leadership designed to develop leadership capacity
11. Engaging families and community in school improvement

Please consider to what extent the assessment model used had these features:

1. The assessment model is underpinned by a coherent theory of leadership, clearly defined
2. The assessment model is organised around clear values about leadership and learning
3. Assessment is guided by a clear set of official standards, and performance-based assessments are developed to evaluate candidates' acquisition of the skills outlined in the standards
4. The assessment process is underpinned by strong and effective partnerships between assessment licensees, schools and local and national authorities
5. The assessment procedure has opportunities to apply learnt theory to actual practice
6. Assessments emphasise (a) leadership of learning, (b) organisational development, (c) change management
7. Assessment is used prior to programme admission to confirm candidate potential
8. The assessment includes a coursework element focused on school improvement
9. The assessment model involves an internship or placement overseen by a skilled and certified supervisor who contributes to the final assessment
10. There are test situations which pose authentic problems focused on instructional leadership challenges
11. The assessment model includes references to working with parents and students to solve school wide problems
12. The assessment process cultivates the formation of leadership identity
13. In the assessment learner-centred assessment methods are utilised.

A definition of assessment (Huba and Freed, 2000)

Please consider the definition below in connection with your programme assessment

“A process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand and can do...”

Appendices 4 - 11

Consent forms and interview protocols

Appendix 4

Letter to Candidates/Graduates of CFP/NPQH Programmes

Dear Candidate/Graduate of the Certification for Principalship (CFP)/National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)

I am currently studying for my EdD at the Institute of Education, University College London and am conducting a comparative analysis of the assessment of aspiring principals who have followed the CFP programme in Hong Kong, and of senior school leaders in England who have followed the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). This study intends to contribute to our understanding of how best to develop and assess senior school leaders who aspire to the role of principal. I am writing to ask for your support with this research.

Should you would be willing to support this work, I would like to interview you on your experience of the CFP/NPQH programme, and the assessment process you undertook. The interviews will last approximately 45 minutes and, with your permission, will be taped and later transcribed. In line with the ethical considerations at the Institute of Education and research guidelines set by BERA, you will have fully anonymity and have the right to opt-out at any time, with any data provided by you returned. All information you provide will be treated sensitively, with respect and will be stored securely, with access only available to me.

If you feel able to contribute to this research I would be very grateful if you could complete the consent slip below. Alternatively, if you want to more information about the study, please contact me at this email address.

Yours sincerely

David Sands
EdD Student

Consent Form

I(participant) give informed consent to participate in named study above conducted by David Sands. I am aware that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any point and that I can ask questions throughout.

I do/do not give permission for my responses to be recorded using a digital audio device.

Participant signature Date
ResearcherDate

Appendix 5

Letter to Assessors of CFP/NPQH Programmes

Dear Assessor of the Certification for Principalship (CFP)/National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)

I am currently studying for my EdD at the Institute of Education, University College London and am conducting a comparative analysis of the assessment of aspiring principals who have followed the CFP programme in Hong Kong, and of senior school leaders in England who have followed the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). This study intends to contribute to our

understanding of how best to develop and assess senior school leaders who aspire to the role of principal. I am writing to ask for your support with this research.

If you would be willing to support this work, I would like to interview you on your experience of assessing the CFP/NPQH programme, and the assessment process you conducted. The interviews will last approximately 45 minutes and, with your permission, will be taped and later transcribed. In line with the ethical considerations at the Institute of Education and research guidelines set by BERA, you will have fully anonymity and have the right to opt-out at any time, with any data provided by you returned. All information you provide will be treated sensitively, with respect and will be stored securely, with access only available to me.

If you feel able to contribute to this research I would be very grateful if you could complete the consent slip below. Alternatively, if you want to more information about the study, please contact me at this email address.

Yours sincerely

David Sands
EdD Student

Consent Form

I(participant) give informed consent to participate in named study above conducted by David Sands. I am aware that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any point and that I can ask questions throughout.

I do/do not give permission for my responses to be recorded using a digital audio device.

Participant signature Date
ResearcherDate

Appendix 6 Letter to Providers of CFP/NPQH Programmes

Dear Provider of the Certification for Principalship (CFP)/National Professional Qualification for-Headship (NPQH)

I am currently studying for my EdD at the Institute of Education, University College London and am conducting a comparative analysis of the assessment of aspiring principals who have followed the CFP programme in Hong Kong, and of senior school leaders in England who have followed the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). This study intends to contribute to our understanding of how best to develop and assess senior school leaders who aspire to the role of principal. I am writing to ask for your support with this research.

Should you would be willing to support this work, I would like to interview you on your experience of providing and delivering the CFP programme, and preparing candidates for assessment, if applicable. The interviews will last approximately 45 minutes and, with your permission, will be taped and later transcribed. In line with the ethical considerations at the Institute of Education and research guidelines set by BERA, you will have fully anonymity and have the right to opt-out at any time, with any data provided by you returned. All information you provide will be treated sensitively, with respect and will be stored securely, with access only available to me.

If you feel able to contribute to this research I would be very grateful if you could complete the consent slip below. Alternatively, if you want to more information about the study, please contact me at this email address.

Yours sincerely

David Sands
EdD Student

Consent Form

I(participant) give informed consent to participate in named study above conducted by David Sands. I am aware that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any point and that I can ask questions throughout.

I do/do not give permission for my responses to be recorded using a digital audio device.

Participant signature Date
ResearcherDate

Appendix 7 **Interview Protocol for Graduates**

GRADUATE Interview Protocol

Graduate perceptions of assessment practice within leadership development programmes

Jurisdiction: Hong Kong/England Title of Programme: CFP/NPQH

Note: The consent slip below to be given to the interviewee who, if happy to proceed, should sign it. The interview will proceed once consent is obtained.

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview regarding the assessment of aspiring principals who have followed the CFP programme in Hong Kong. With your permission, the interview will be taped and later transcribed. You need to be aware that all information you provide will be treated sensitively, with respect and will be given full anonymity. You have the right to withdraw from this interview at any time. Throughout this study I will follow the IOE ethical guidelines, and the guidelines set by the British Educational Research Association (BERA), a national association dedicated to informing guidance on policy and practice within the field. Do you have any questions? Are you happy to continue?”

Procedure

Warm up questions:

Can you talk about your current job role, and why you got involved in the programme?

At what stage are you in the programme?

Can you take me through the assessment process you have experienced?

A summary document, with a series of statements about leadership practices and assessment features, plus a definition of assessment, to be given out to the participant.

First stage of interview: leadership practices

Ensure the participant comprehends the leadership practices the statements describe - comprehension may be assisted by drawing out contextual examples.

Determine if the participant feels that developing these practices was part of their learning while on the programme and, if so, how this was achieved, and how well.

Determine to what extent participant thinks these practices apply to their cultural and societal context, and whether they are a strong or weak area of personal practice (Likert scale to be employed).

Determine to what extent the participant feels the practices were assessed or not; how if so; and how well, in their view. (Purpose: to begin to open up a discussion about the difference between knowledge of effective leadership practices and the capacity to enact them successfully).

Second stage of interview: assessment features

Ensure the participant comprehends the feature - comprehension may be assisted by drawing out contextual examples.

Determine to what extent the participant feels the feature is present in the assessment model

Determine to what extent participant thinks the feature applies to their cultural and societal context, and whether they see it as an important aspect of the assessment model.

Third stage of interview: definition of assessment

What do you see as the main factors influencing the design of the programme and its assessment model? (e.g. policy context, social, political, economic, cultural factors)

To what extent do you feel the programme increased your knowledge and understanding of effective leadership practices?

To what extent do you feel the assessment process gave you a clear view of this knowledge and understanding?

To what extent do you feel the assessment process gave you a clear view of your capacity to enact those leadership practices successfully? Did this help you when you began your first principalship (if applicable)? Please explain.

How accurate was the assessment process in identifying your strengths and development areas?

How accurate was the assessment system in identifying your overall readiness for headship?

Thank you for taking part in this study. Would you consider being part of any follow up research?

Appendix 8 Interview Protocol for Assessors

ASSESSOR Interview Protocol

Assessor perceptions of assessment practice within leadership development programmes

Jurisdiction: Hong Kong/England Title of Programme: CFP/NPQH

Note: The consent slip below to be given to the interviewee who, if happy to proceed, should sign it. The interview will proceed once consent is obtained.

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview regarding the assessment of aspiring principals who have followed the CFP programme in Hong Kong. With your permission, the interview will be taped and later transcribed. You need to be aware that all information you provide will be treated sensitively, with respect and will be given full anonymity. You have the right to withdraw from this interview at any time. Throughout this study I will follow the IOE ethical guidelines and the guidelines set by the British Educational Research Association (BERA), a national association dedicated to informing guidance on policy and practice within the field. Do you have any questions? Are you happy to continue?”

Procedure

Initial (warm up) questions:

Can you talk about your current job role, and when/why you got involved in assessment?

Can you talk about any experience you have of schools and school leadership?

Can you take me through the assessment process you administer?

A summary document, with a series of statements about leadership practices and assessment features, plus a definition of assessment, to be given out to the participant.

First stage of interview: leadership practices

Ensure the participant comprehends the leadership practice the statement describes - comprehension may be assisted by drawing out contextual examples.
Determine to what extent participant thinks this practice applies to their cultural and societal context, and whether they see it as a 'relevant' practice to be developed and assessed in participants.
Determine to what extent the participant feels the practice is assessed or not; how if so; and how well, in their view. (Purpose: to begin to open up a discussion about the difference between assessing knowledge of effective leadership practices and assessing the capacity to enact them successfully).

Second stage of interview: assessment features

Ensure the participant comprehends the feature - comprehension may be assisted by drawing out contextual examples.
Determine to what extent the participant feels the feature is present in the assessment model
Determine to what extent participant thinks the feature applies to their cultural and societal context, and whether they see it as an important aspect of the assessment model they use.

Third stage of interview: definition of assessment

What do you see as the main factors influencing the design of the programme and its assessment model? (e.g. policy context, social, political, economic, cultural factors)
To what extent do you feel the programme increases participant's knowledge and understanding of effective leadership practices?
To what extent do you feel the assessment process gives participant's a clear view of this knowledge and understanding?
To what extent do you feel the assessment process gives participant's a clear view of their capacity to enact those leadership practices successfully?
How accurate do you feel the assessment process is in identifying participant's strengths and development areas?
How accurate do you feel the assessment system is in identifying participant's overall readiness for headship?
Are there any other observations about the assessment process you would like to make?

Thank you for taking part in this study. Would you consider being part of any follow up research?

Appendix 9

Statements for interviews of graduates and assessors

Instructional and Transformational Leadership Practices

Please consider to what extent these practices featured in your leadership development training and assessment:

Promoting and participating in professional learning in school, including providing the necessary resources
Pedagogical engagement with teaching staff through supervision, modelling, support and evaluation
Coordinating and evaluating the curriculum, teaching and assessment
Ensuring that student progress and teaching are regularly and accurately monitored
Establishing and maintaining a set of expectations and norms of behaviour that facilitate and maximise learning in the classroom
Setting direction by instilling a shared vision and setting compelling goals founded on values such as a desire for social justice
Promoting a trusting and caring school culture
Maintaining high expectations regarding teacher performance and developing individuals through direct and indirect support and challenge
Developing the organisational conditions (structures, processes) to facilitate teaching and learning
Developing collaborative decision-making structures, including distributed leadership designed to develop leadership capacity
Engaging families and community in school improvement

Assessment Features

Please consider to what extent the assessment model used in your training had these features:

- 1.The assessment model is underpinned by a coherent theory of leadership, clearly defined
- 2.The assessment model is organised around clear values about leadership and learning
- 3.Assessment is guided by a clear set of official standards, and performance-based assessments are developed to evaluate candidates' acquisition of the skills outlined in the standards
- 4.The assessment process is underpinned by strong and effective partnerships between assessment licensees, schools and local and national authorities
- 5.The assessment procedure has opportunities to apply learnt theory to actual practice
- 6.Assessments emphasise (a) leadership of learning, (b) organisational development, (c) change management
- 7.Assessment is used prior to programme admission to confirm candidate potential
- 8.The assessment includes a coursework element focused on school improvement
- 9.The assessment model involves an internship or placement overseen by a skilled and certified supervisor who contributes to the final assessment
- 10.There are test situations which pose authentic problems focused on instructional leadership challenges
- 11.The assessment model includes references to working with parents and students to solve school wide problems
- 12.The assessment process cultivates the formation of leadership identity

A definition of assessment (Huba and Freed, 2000)

Please consider the definition below in connection with your programme assessment

“A process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand and can do...”

Appendix 10 **Interview protocol for providers**

PROVIDER Interview Protocol

Provider perceptions of assessment practice within leadership development programmes

Jurisdiction: Hong Kong/ England Title of Programme: CFP/NPQH

Note: Note: The consent slip below to be given to the interviewee who, if happy to proceed, should sign it. The interview will proceed once consent is obtained.

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview regarding the assessment of aspiring principals who have followed the CFP programme in Hong Kong. With your permission, the interview will be taped and later transcribed. You need to be aware that all information you provide will be treated sensitively, with respect and will be given full anonymity. You have the right to withdraw from this interview at any time. Throughout this study I will follow the IOE ethical guidelines, and the guidelines set by the British Educational Research Association (BERA), a national association dedicated to informing guidance on policy and practice within the field. Do you have any questions? Are you happy to continue?”

Procedure

Warm up questions

Can you talk about your current job role, and when/why you got involved in school leadership development programmes?

Can you talk about any experience you have of schools and school leadership?

Can you take me through the assessment process of the programme?

An idealised and unproblematised theory of action for an assessment model is presented to the participant, followed by a preliminary discussion to agree intended meanings behind the statements in the document and to clarify its limited scope.

First stage of interview: participants asked to consider their assessment model against the theory of action:

To what extent does the theory of action reflect their own thinking?

Any areas of difference/disagreement?

To what extent do the statements in the theory of action represent underpinning tenets of their assessment model?

Second stage of interview: move on to a discussion about the circumstances/realities in which the assessment model was created:

Tell me about the circumstances in which the assessment model was created/developed.

What do you see as the main factors influencing the design of the programme and its assessment model? (e.g. social, political, economic, cultural factors).

What were the challenges and constraints?

What was the policy context and what influence/input did policy/policymakers have, if any?

Where would you say this was evident in the assessment model?

Third stage of interview: final questions

To what extent do you feel the programme increases a candidate's knowledge and understanding of effective leadership practices (however defined)?

To what extent do you feel the assessment process enables an evaluation of this knowledge and understanding?

To what extent do you feel the assessment process enables an evaluation of a candidate's capacity to enact those leadership practices successfully?

Thank you for taking part in this study. Would you consider being part of any follow up research?

Appendix 11

Theory of action for use in provider interview

Understanding the contextual factors that shaped, and the academic rationale that informed, the development of the HK PFP/CFP programme and assessment model.

A decontextualised, unproblematised and idealised theory of action for an assessment model:

1. The aim of an assessment model within a school leader development programme is to identify candidates that are ready to begin principalship.
2. The relative quality of any assessment model should ultimately be judged by the capacity of programme graduates to promote school improvement and increase student learning and outcomes.
3. There is considerable agreement about what capabilities school leaders need to possess, and be able to successfully practice, in order to improve school performance and student outcomes.
4. These practices are largely drawn from two leadership styles - instructional and transformational.
5. When combined, these two leadership styles reinforce one another to enhance the overall impact of leadership activity
6. There is also considerable agreement regarding which design elements of adult learning programmes have the strongest effect on participant learning and attitudinal shift, including strengthening those values which have their genesis in the moral purpose of improving the life chances of pupils.

7. These practices, capabilities and programme design elements can be identified, refined and organised into a framework which can be utilised to underpin programme design and assessment models.
8. Accepting the definition of assessment: "A process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand and can do..." then an assessment model must at least try to accurately evaluate a candidate's capacity to enact those leadership practices, as well as simply assessing their knowledge and understanding of them.
9. These research findings have critical implications for the conceptualisation, design and operationalisation of the assessment models of school leader development programmes, and capacity to enact should be a focus of candidate assessment.

Discussion

Part 1: Please consider the assessment model under review against the theory of action. (To what extent does the theory of action reflect your own thinking? Any areas of difference/disagreement? To what extent do any of the statements in the theory of action represent underpinning tenets of the assessment model under review?)

Part 2: If known to you, please describe the circumstances/realities in which the assessment model was created. What were the challenges and constraints? What was the policy context and what influence/input did policy/policymakers have, if any? Where would you say this was evident in the assessment model?)

Part 3: (a) To what extent do you feel the programme increases a candidate's knowledge and understanding of effective leadership practices, and to what extent do you feel the assessment process enables an evaluation of this knowledge and understanding?

To what extent do you feel the assessment process enables an evaluation of a candidate's capacity to enact those leadership practices successfully?

Thank you for taking part in this study.

Appendix 12 Extract from Coded Interview Transcript 1 (Eng)

Assessor

Background

Assesses NPQH/SL/ML. Got involved after secondary headship. Work for local authority four days per week, coaching for SELT and facilitation for the IOE on the NPQH. Headteacher for 15 years and consultant headteacher. Started assessment for NPQH in 2004.

DS question one

XY can't give you an answer for what is coming next because I haven't read the new headteacher standards, So commenting on the three programmes, I hear less people complaining, as a chair, that the criteria are causing them to pass people who they shouldn't pass. That was certainly with the 2004 programme the case with heads of department seeing it as a CPD activity. There were lots of complaints from colleagues and heads of schools that it was a waste of time. The Labour Party model was much more socially aware and alert than the current model. They had to deal with community aspects, engaging the community, in a far wider sense [ECM] the holistic focus was different. I think that was a superior model, morally. This is a political statement. Personally I am clear that clever people can be bastards, so focusing on improving progress solely isn't what the country needs. When the young people who come before us are all just focused on that, it's not good enough, it's just not going to solve the problem of extremism that we're facing. The leaders under the last model were being tested on a broader more moral template of factors. The present foci are socially and morally narrower, But in terms of what they set out to test, I think they enable this to be done effectively.

DS asked if any sense that 2012 changes driven more by funding issues than ideology?

XY I know that is the truth. I have been told that by people who have worked at a national level and I don't object to that. We have to live within our means, But I think it is politics more than economics which has led to the changes.

DS what you say strikes a chord-like when you get candidates who talk about their moral standards entirely within the context of getting the A to C grades up for some candidates. That's the entire compass of their moral vision, it's quite impoverished.

DS question 2

XY very much so, although I've only seen four people go through the new model, the efficient and effective model, and I do think it has given them the need to focus on efficient and effective. Before some candidates neglected this-now this won't happen. It's been done in response to requests from time immemorial that they need to know more about the law and about money. There isn't anyone who's coming thinking I need to know more about self-awareness. They may have realised it as a result of doing the 360, (laughs)... everyone thinks they relate well to everyone else and if they don't well the others are idiots(laughs). It will help them hit the ground running. Not that I'm aware of too many heads struggling when it came to handling money though....

DS asked about trends.

XY the programme has got better. As I said there are fewer of my colleagues... in the last year or two only remember one complaint from one assessor who thought she had to pass somebody who she felt shouldn't pass. Whereas that used to be happening... every two panels they be at least one expression of that. Now it's rare in my experience.

DS perspective on primary colleagues who appear for assessment overtime.

XY I see no difference in primary colleagues those, who work in special education very strong.

DS question three

XY those who engage with the detail of the competencies and indicators, yes. Those that don't it's very much hit and miss... I have never felt that there's been a talented person who hasn't been able to perform well, but certainly average people who haven't looked at the indicators and competencies, including sponsors....there are some extremely lazy and irresponsible sponsors. You get nonsense e.g. on HOTA. There have certainly been cases where trainee evidence has nullified the sponsor judgements as it just contradicts it.

DS question three: capacity to enact.

XY I would hope we can read people well enough, and I hope we could read between the lines well enough... if you think of the indicators relating to others "understands more than you said"... You know that's just on ML. I'm sure we can all do that to an extent. We can see into the heart of people, so... we are asked to consider overall credibility.

DS do you feel we are?

XY absolutely. I've been on boards where it's been the overall lack of credibility that's been picked up or apparent and everything else has stemmed from that. I have certainly written statements such as "although all the indicators have not been evidenced, this person clearly meets the criteria", but I've also written "although all indicators are ticked off, there is just not a compelling sense that the overall competency is fulfilled". And I have gone against evidence of indicators in favour of a balanced judgement in terms of the overall competency/ assessment question.

XY we are talking about a very tiny percentage where it doesn't come together and these present indicators are better than the ones in the past in leading assessors to think yes, we can tick them off and this person should go through. Very seldom people find themselves having to pass people they don't think should pass.

Appendix 13

Extract from Coded Interview Transcript 2 (HK)

One CFP Graduate (Z), one current participant of CFP (XY)

Background

XY: Vice Principal, still doing PFP completed 6 module course, working on ARP.

Z: Principal, has completed CFP. Faith based secondary school.

XY explains features of PFP, these include financial, curriculum, human resources - this part is most difficult because they have certain formula to calculate the staff that the principal can allocate - senior staff, junior staff....

DS explains his research: IL/TL, and explains the sheet with statements on it. DS explains his knowledge of the PFP, the six areas (preceded by the needs assessment) and each have a reflective piece submitted

Z plus XY yes, reflection.

DS continues description, mentions portfolio and timings. Gives copies to Z and XY

AB asks for clarification: this is training and courses we have gone through?

DS yes

Z we had a whole module on statement one - environment and staff resources. You have the six modules names?

DS yes

Z explains statement one. After you become a principal, the first two years we have to take two programmes and also visit other schools, change experiences. And after we also have to go to Shanghai. Actually, once you become principal you have a three year course and you have to take two programmes, one in the first year and one in the second. After that, in this three years you go to Shanghai once, provided by the government. So you will see the different training between the Hong Kong schools the schools in China and the leadership skills, and what are the expectations from the business sectors for students from Hong Kong and China. The NAP programme also covers the six modules, but there's more practical work, in the PFP, more theories.

DS the AP course is more theoretical?

Z yes and part of it, we invite retired principals to share with us, but most of us might not be in the position of principal... but once this is finished we are able to work as a principal. You then have to take the other two programmes as a NAP. Because once you come a principal there is a lot of things you still do not know how to do (Laughter).

DS so clearly S1 is very present. He then explains S2 - is this part of the PSP?

Z there is a bit but not enough... Actually I think they expect, once you become a VP or P, we are expected to know everything - how to conduct a lesson observation how to mark teachers... actually we need to find another professional to share the experience with us.

DS describes USA focus on S2, and its impact on challenging schools. Asks about S3

XY I remember some of the modules they really emphasise this - curriculum, assessment. (Z agrees)

DS explains S4

Z Then of course we have the big picture but this is not our priority. The teacher is the professional... we have an idea of what they can do and cannot do, so it becomes the job of the teachers... but of course sometimes we get comments from parents and students so we need to investigate, otherwise...

DS raises the question of departments losing there accuracy in the monitoring of students.

Z because I am not sure, it may be the same system... in different subjects we have subject heads... So we have someone in charge for this type of work. Every time after the midterm tests... we have two terms, okay, in each term in our school we have one uniform test and one exam. So normally after the test and the exam the department will have an evaluation meeting about the term - how much the students are doing well in each class, if the papers were good enough to test the students. So this becomes the work of the subject heads, unless they find something important they share with us. Otherwise they are the ones to monitor...

BS explains S5 and asks if it is part of the programme.

Z so I think normal schools, they have rules so all the teachers they are responsible. But of course we also have a discipline department, and if anything happen the students can go there...

AB but I cannot remember in the PFP course if they are really emphasising this...

Z they emphasise the responsibilities part of the school. For example our supervision system in place at break and lunchtime, You are made responsible for that. So we know the guidelines about what we need to pay attention to... especially work related to the rights and responsibilities of students, parents and school. We know those.

XY I think we can have an expectation of normal behaviour, because in Hong Kong they are taught... each secondary school they have their own unique features, maybe the organisational body or some church background, different ethnic groups. That makes it difficult to have some standardised but there is a general expectation of normal behaviour.

Appendix 14

Extract from Coded Interview Transcript 3 (HK)

AB (Administrative officer responsible for CFP at EdB) and XY (Retired principal and assessor for the CFP)

DS (to XY) why did you get involved in the assessment of aspiring principals?

XY I wanted to raise the quality, raise the standard of principals. There is also a shortage of principals of the right quality in Hong Kong and lots of vacancies. I have been a principal for 33 years.

(DS: very proud of that achievement)

(DS: *There is a strong ethos of public service in Hong Kong - SC not abashed at saying so - "put something back"... a culture of 'elders' being valued. Link to CERA conference: an "experienced" maths teachers - same perspective/outlook.*)

DS (to XY) can you talk me through the assessment process?

XY the tertiary (DS: University) input on the PFP course takes (14?) months. There are six modules. If these are completed successfully the candidate gets a certificate for the PFP, then another for the CFP from the EdB (DS: *he is keen to emphasise the certificates - a double process*).

AB candidates have to do a needs assessment (NA). This is seen as a tool for the candidate to gain insight into their strengths and weaknesses, and then plan their future learning around the six modules.

XY the other requirements to join the course, they must have five years experience in a senior post in school and have a teacher's certificate.

AB the candidate pays for the course and a hardcopy (of the portfolio) is submitted. In Hong Kong the EdB is concerned with the quality of candidates for principalship. The CFP is only the beginning of principal learning. The continuing professional development (CPD) programme entails APs, NAPs and SPs. (DS: *the continuing nature of principal learning is stressed by DW*).

XY the two year training programme - the NAP programme - is designed to gain experience of principalship and do a case study of other institutions.

(DS: *obtaining the CFP is seen very much as a first step - "you have gained entry to the club, now begins your training in earnest! The two year training programme for newly appointed principals is compulsory.*)

AB the Hong Kong principalship development programme is at a turning point. It is part of a reform process for schools. (DS changes are in the offing - see COTAP document).

DS to what extent do you feel that IL and TL practices are assessed in the CFP programme? (IL and TL explained briefly)

(Little response at first - not sure they understood the question...)

XY principals are very busy with sponsor panel meetings and administration, and with the reform of the school (Administration is stressed...)

(DS implication here is that they do not have time to get involved in IL and TL practices...)

AB regarding IL, candidates and principals are required to be curriculum leaders. Regarding TL there is a strong emphasis on values and morals.

DS to what extent do you feel the programme increases candidates knowledge and understanding of effective leadership practices?

XY this is quite important... candidates are expected to write down their reflections during the PFP programme and quote these (develop them?) in the portfolio. Again this is reflection on their learning - what they have learnt and how it is useful in their preparation.

(DS: *SC stresses the importance of reflection for the learning process of candidates (But they have to show this on paper in the portfolio, not demonstrate it in some other way...)*)

XY as a NAP principals have to conduct a case study involving visits to another school...

(DS: *XY keeps going on to the NAP experience and the requirements... is he responding to my references to NPQH task two placement school experience? Yes I think so. Seems that Hong Kong CPD programme for school leaders emphasises that getting the CFP, and a job as a principal, is only the first step... there are strict obligatory CPD experiences for NAPS and SPs - cross-referenced to AEs comments.*)

DS perhaps we could consider the assessment administrative process?

AB in terms of assessment, vetting (?), a portfolio comes in to the department and then goes out to 2 assessors who mark it separately according to the criteria on the circular. If they agree it is passed. If they can't agree it goes to a third assessor to decide. It then goes to initial moderation. If okay it goes to the committee for principal certification. They produce feedback for the candidate (internally) and this is sent to the candidate.

(DS *seems a bureaucratic process? It rests on the candidate's ability to produce a written document - a reflective piece.... the emphasis is not on evidence or proof of impact in their school?*)

XY the standard is determined by the marking scheme on the circular.

DS Described the NPQH T1, T2, T3 system of assessment and asked if they had considered alternative modes of assessment?

Silence... difficulty in answering? Reticence?

XY Time...(Is the issue)?

(DS: Strong impression that the efficiency of the assessment process was important - the assessment needed to be accurate (according to the assessment marking scheme) but also the process needed to be "efficient" (i.e. quick) to save time and money. Indicates a certain cultural attitude towards the candidates - the idea of candidate "assessment rights" not developed or the notion of "candidate entitlement" (for the money they pay for the course and assessment process) not strong. Paternalistic? Bureaucratic? Outmoded?)

DS Can you tell me a little more about the feedback candidates receive?

AB (pause...) the feedback from the committee (or endorsed by the committee) goes back to the assessor whose comments (written) go to the candidate....

(DS again get the impression that they were aware this aspect of the process was weak)

AB if the portfolio does not meet the requirement, feedback on what the candidate needs to do to improve it and resubmit is given. Also the EdB provides a portfolio building workshop three times a year for candidates to attend to get guidance on preparing their portfolios.

(DS: is this a new piece of information? Did some candidates mention it (e.g. AA and AE?) in disparaging terms? They felt it was disconnected/isolated from the rest of the programme/assessment, felt quite angry about it. Both have different expectations of the programme and the assessment process. Develop this)

DS to what extent do you feel the assessment process gives participants and accurate judgement of their preparedness for principalship?

(DS: again XY reverting to the situation post CFP...)

XY once someone is a principal how successful is dependent on their attitude and experience (DS: again the use of this word). These things determine the ease or difficulty of how they succeed as a principal. Obtaining the CFP is a basic requirement, it is the continuing professional development that builds on this.

(DS: XY felt that the intrinsic qualities of a new principal are important factors in success in the role. Attitude and experience need 'unpacking/analysing'. Is experience seen as equal to successful practice? That is, the more experience someone gets, the stronger/better they become? The term "experienced" is given high status, e.g. "experienced" maths teacher, "experienced" retired principal. It appears as a cultural norm that experience is assumed to be still very relevant to improving practice or raising standards.

XY when a candidate is completing the portfolio, in the concluding remarks section they have to make a statement about how they are confident about their readiness for headship.

(DS; he is implying here I think that candidates, most importantly, need to believe in themselves if they are to be successful. Completing the portfolio is a what? A chore? A task to show what? The ability to interpret and follow instructions? To write in a certain way? A hurdle or gate to let through only the really committed, and dissuade the fainthearted or uncommitted? It is arduous but what is it testing/ assessing?)

DS referred to the competency-based model of the NPQH and asked if such an idea had been considered...

AB the six core areas of headship were developed in 2000. COTAP is now considering these to set up T-standards (teacher standards) along with a new PCF (principal competency framework?). They are only at the preliminary stages - this will develop further.

Appendix 15

Letter to HK Principals

Dear Principal

I am a retired principal visiting Hong Kong from the UK as part of a postgraduate student exchange programme between Hong Kong University (HKU) and the Institute of Education, University College London (UCL).

I am currently pursuing a doctorate in education (EdD), and for my thesis I am conducting a comparative analysis of the assessment of aspiring principals who have followed the Certification For Principalship (CFP) programme in Hong Kong, and of senior school leaders in England who have followed the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).

This study hopes to contribute to our understanding of how best to develop and assess senior school leaders who aspire to the role of principal. By considering what can be learnt from the assessment model used in the CFP, it is anticipated that a contribution to evolving best practice in

England can also be made. If you are a graduate of the CFP, I am writing to ask if you would consider supporting this research?

Should you would be willing to support this work, I would like to interview you on your experience of the CFP programme, and the assessment process involved. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes and, with your permission, will be taped and later transcribed.

In line with the ethical considerations at UCL, and research guidelines set by BERA, you will have fully anonymity and have the right to opt-out at any time, with any data provided by you returned. All information you provide will be treated sensitively, with respect and will be stored securely, with access only available to me.

I realise your are very busy at this time but, if you did feel able to contribute to this research, I would be very grateful if you or your PA could contact me at dsands@ioe.ac.uk
I am in Hong Kong until May 18th.

Yours sincerely

David Sands EdD Student Institute of Education UCL London

Appendix 16

Letter to Mr Yung, Principal Assistant Secretary of the Hong Kong Education Bureau.

Dear Mr. Yung

Please forgive this unsolicited approach. I obtained your name from EdB circular No. 2/2017, in connection with the Certification for Principalship.

I am a research associate of the London Centre for the Leadership of Learning (LCLL), in the Institute of Education at University College London. I recently visited Hong Kong from the UK as part of a postgraduate student exchange between Hong Kong University (HKU) and University College London (UCL). For my doctoral thesis I am comparing the assessment of aspiring principals who have followed the Certification For Principalship (CFP) programme in Hong Kong, with senior school leaders in England who have followed the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). This study hopes to contribute to our understanding of how best to develop and assess senior school leaders in both jurisdictions, who aspire to the role of principal.

I am writing to ask whether you think it possible for me to be given access to members of the Committee on Certification for Principalship or to CFP assessors, for the purposes of my research? I would wish to ask if they would be willing to be interviewed about the CFP folio assessment process in particular.

If you feel able to contribute to this research I would be very grateful if you could email me at dsands@ioe.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

David Sands Institute of Education UCL London

Appendix 17

Example of coding: Extract from English national standards for excellence for headteachers

Theme: form, structure, scope

Extracts	Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice • non-statutory • relevant to all HTs in all contexts • for governors, headteachers, aspiring HTs • rests on teacher standards 2011 • teacher standards are foundation on which HT standards are built • replace 2004 national standards for HTs 2004 • update relevant to school system developments since 2004 	<p>staus and provenance</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 domains • 'excellence as standard' domains • qualities and knowledge • pupils and staff • systems and processes • the self improving school system • 6 key characteristics for each domain 	<p>conceptual framework</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define high standards • represent contemporary headship in schools today • not a checklist or baseline • not a basis for questioning competency or initiating capability procedures • not to be used as cut and paste objective setting • inspire public confidence in HTs • raise aspirations • secure high academic standards in the nations schools • intended as guidance to underpin best practice 	<p>functions</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helpful tool for HT • shape HTs own practice and PD • support HTs on their journey to improve • help HT develop and increase capability to support and lead school-led system • challenge HT to develop and improve themselves • identify areas of development in particular contexts • used by HTs to shape their own practice and PD • used by HTs as a framework for self development • use to seek feedback from governors and colleagues using standards • use to have constructive conversations with governors based on standards 	<p>HT usage</p>

Extracts	Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inform appraisal of HT • helpful tool for governors • inform appraisal of HT - serve as background document to assist GBs • inform objective-setting • use the aspirational standards (context must be borne in mind) • actions for the HT agreed with these aspirational standards in mind • use in appraisal to frame broad overview of leadership in specific context of school • serve as starting point for identification of specific objectives for next stage of the school's continuous improvement journey • identify areas of development where HT requires support and improvement • support recruitment and appointment of HTs • underpin and shape role descriptions and person specifications • use as a check that the selection process has been sufficiently comprehensive 	governor usage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a framework for training middle and senior leaders aspiring to headship • help HTs and governors identify potential future leaders • shape developmental experiences offered to middle and senior leaders • framework for training those aspiring to headship • aspiring HTs use them to evaluate own progress towards being prepared for headship • aspiring HTs use them to identify and articulate areas they want to gain more experience in, e.g. gain experience in a different school (self improving school system) 	role in CPD

Appendix 18

Example of coding: Extract from English NPQH assessment system

Theme: Impact on and expectation of others

Extracts	Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishes and develops positive culture beyond the school • engages pupils, parents and others in the community in supporting pupil learning • collaborate with others • empower colleagues and governors to network with others internally and externally 	impact beyond own school to contribute to self improving system

Extracts	Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive impact on pupils, colleagues and the wider community • inspire and influence pupils, colleagues, governors and the community • generates energy and enthusiasm • comes across with confidence and credibility when engaging with others • prepares and calculates impact of actions and words • embed a culture of learning for all members of the school community • responsibility for health and safety managed and monitored • recognises and praises success 	<p>promote pupil and staff well-being</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance others effectiveness • motivate others to achieve results • lead others • adapting their leadership approach to create the desired impact on others • unites other around school priorities • encourages creativity and innovation • articulates understanding of T&L effectively to others • provide appropriate advice and support to secure improvement in the quality of teaching and its impact on learning • initiates and supports sharing of expertise, good practice and research and evaluation about effective T&L • leads and participates in PD • creates purpose, clarity and focus on shared goals and ways of working • gives constructive and specific feedback • set objectives and targets for others • uses performance management system effectively o achieve school priorities • monitors implementation • provides effective feedback to enable learning from mistakes • have desire and passion to want to help others to improve 	<p>develop and improve performance of all staff</p>

Extracts	Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • challenges others to act in accordance with school values • increase understanding of governors, stakeholders and community • holds others to account, clearly communicating expectations • getting others to do what is asked of them, even if it involves tough or unpopular decisions • creates levels of accountability within the school • ensure all understand their roles and responsibilities, standards required and accountabilities • demand high performance • spell out consequences of non-compliance • monitors progress of others against objectives and targets • holds others to account • challenges and confronts under-performance • intervenes swiftly to enforce consequences when performance levels drop 	<p>establish a sense of accountability as a norm throughout school and set professional expectations at 'excellent'</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help others to improve themselves and those around them • distributes leadership and decision taking to most appropriate level • distributes leadership • delegates tasks, activities to who is best placed to deliver them 	<p>cultivate leadership in others</p>

Appendix 19

Example of thematic coding: Extract from Hong Kong national standards

Key Qualities of the Principalship in Hong Kong

C. Core Areas of School Leadership

The Six Core Areas of Leadership are definitions of the substantive areas or parameters of school leadership. Principals' leadership for school and student improvement centres on:

1. Strategic Direction and Policy Environment

Principals, in concert with their school communities, develop a strategic view of vision for their schools as a means of guiding future direction and planning. Their strategic visions and plans incorporate those features of the social, political and educational environments relevant to school improvement and student achievement.

2. Teaching, Learning and Curriculum

Principals co-ordinate to achieve coherence across the curriculum and to ensure alignment between the curriculum, teaching and learning. Together with their school communities, they ensure that all students experience a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum through formal, informal and extra-curricular activities.

3. Leader and Teacher Growth and Development

Principals promote and enable continuing professional and career development for teachers and themselves. They foster the sharing of up-to-date professional knowledge and informed practice aimed at accommodating the diverse needs of students within a general commitment to school improvement and student achievement.

4. Staff and Resource Management

Principals create a collaborative team management ethos focused on using human, physical and fiscal resources effectively and efficiently towards the goals of school improvement and student achievement.

5. Quality Assurance and Accountability

Principals build quality assurance and accountability systems in concert with their school communities that provide feedback to students, teachers, School Management Committees (SMC) and sponsoring bodies with a view to securing school improvement. These systems also meet the information requirements of external agencies, such as the government, regarding school performance.

6. External Communication and Connection

Principals build connections between their schools and the local, national and global communities. By doing so, they enable their school communities to contribute to the wider society and its development.

D. Educational Values

Principals develop a coherent set of educational values on which to base leadership for school improvement. These values serve as fundamental principles on which to develop and design their schools and to provide consistency across all aspects of their leadership. Eight pivotal values are identified, as follows:

1. Learning - centredness

A belief in the primacy of learning as the focus of all that happens in the school.

2. Innovativeness

A belief in experimentation with new ideas and with change as a means of school improvement.

3. Lifelong Learning

A belief that a major goal of the school is to develop among its community members a view of learning as a continuous and ongoing process.

4. Education-for-all

A conviction that all students have a right to a relevant and meaningful education.

5. Service-orientation

1. A belief that the school be flexible and responsive in meeting the diverse needs of its community.

6. Empowerment

A commitment to the meaningful involvement and participation of school community members in the life of the school.

7. Equity and Fairness

A belief that the rights of all in the school community are duly recognised and that individuals be treated with justice and integrity.

8. Whole-person Development

A commitment to producing students with a well-rounded, balanced education.

F. Leadership Skills

Leadership skills are grounded in principals' educational values and professional knowledge. The skills involved in principals' leadership for school and student improvement are expressed using two dimensions: the first dimension consists of the six core areas; the second comprises skills grouped into four major categories, as outlined below.

1. Personal

This set of skills relates to how individual principals manage their own behaviours and thoughts in their professional lives.

2. Communicative

This set of skills relates to how principals interact at an interpersonal level with colleagues and other members of the community.

3. Organisational

This set of skills relates to how principals lead and manage the tasks associated with running the whole school and securing school improvement.

4. Influencing

This set of skills relates to how principals mobilise colleagues and other members of the school community toward sustained commitment to school improvement.

Appendix 20

Example of thematic coding: Extracts from CFP assessment system

EDUCATION BUREAU CIRCULAR No. 2/2017 Certification for Principalship

【Note: This Circular should be read by

(a) Supervisors and Heads of government, aided (including special schools), Caput and DSS schools - for necessary action; and

(b) Supervisors and Heads of private independent schools and Heads of Sections - for information.】

Summary

1. This is to inform schools of the arrangements for the Certification for Principalship (CFP) and the revised application fee. This circular supersedes Education Bureau Circulars No. 32/2003, No. 2/2005, No.10/2010 and No.1/2014 dated 21 November 2003, 8 April 2005, 31 August 2010 and 24 February 2015 respectively.

4. 5.1 *Educational vision*: The portfolio must include a statement describing your vision for the education of Hong Kong students and where you see yourself in bringing this vision to reality. Outcomes from the Needs Analysis can provide a starting point for explaining your goals, strategies and the progress you are making towards this goal. This is where you state your personal beliefs, your aspirations and your hopes. You can take the opportunity to explain how you will use the professional role of a school leader to realise your vision.

4. 5.2 *Work / Course learning experiences*: How far your learning has advanced since commencing the Certification for Principalship process is one of the most important inclusions in the portfolio. It will be important to show how the interaction between the Course, the Course assignments, feedback from the Instructional Associate(s) and the related work experience is merging into an integrated whole - one which is proving useful in preparing you for future appointment as a principal.

This is the part of the portfolio which will benefit from the use of examples from your real work situation as you do your Course assignments. A capacity to objectively analyse your examples will significantly enhance the quality of your portfolio. Remember, in a portfolio, your opinion matters most of all; you are explaining your beliefs and your learning experiences, not someone else's.

4. 5.3 *Reflections on the action research project done in the PFP Course*: The action research project is a focused activity in the PFP Course. It is important to describe the scope of the project in terms of the overall Course - which core area of leadership is pertinent, which part of your education vision applies, the relationship between the project, Course learning and feedback from the Instructional Associate(s).

Reporting on your action research project conducted in the PFP Course is an exercise in professional reflection. Since the action research project may be completed or on-going, you should be able to reflect on both the processes and/ or the outcomes as appropriate - on the design, execution, successful components and/ or parts which might have produced better outcomes if approached differently.

4. 5.4 **Concluding statement:** It is important for a portfolio to contain a concluding, overall statement. This is the opportunity to say how the Course and its components have moved you forward in readiness to work as a school principal. A very important part of this statement relates to the future, especially professional development needs in each of the six core areas of leadership. The portfolio should include a professional development plan for the future and a rationale for the prioritisation of its components.

C Portfolio Assessment

The assessment requirements of the portfolio are set out below:

Basis of Assessment	Assessment Aspect	Requirement
Coherence between vision and strategy	(1) Introduction or overview	The introduction/ overview includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an indication of the purpose and main content of the portfolio; and • a table of contents with indexes for easy cross referencing.
	(2) Statement describing the AP's vision / personal beliefs on principalship	The statement should <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • depict the AP's personal vision/ beliefs/ educational values about the meaning of school leadership/ principalship in the current context of his or her school and the community; • demonstrate the rationale behind the vision/ beliefs; and • articulate an implementation strategy for the AP's own development towards his or her personal vision/ beliefs/ educational values.
Reflection	(3) Reflections on work / learning experiences in the six core areas of leadership	The reflections should <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate both the breadth and depth of knowledge in the core areas of leadership; demonstrate coherence in thinking with regard to the AP's vision; and • cover all the six core areas of leadership.
	(4) Reflections on the action research experience in one core area of leadership	The reflections should be closely related to the core area of leadership specified, with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a description of the learning gained through the action research project; and • an indication of coherence in thinking with regard to the AP's vision.

Basis of Assessment	Assessment Aspect	Requirement
Readiness	(5) Concluding statement on the AP's readiness for Principalship and further planning on all six core areas of leadership	<p>The statement should indicate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extent to which the AP considers himself or herself to be prepared for principalship; the AP's perception of his or her strengths and weaknesses in relation to the knowledge, skills, values and attributes as described in the six core areas of leadership; and the AP's professional development needs in all six core areas of leadership, with planning and prioritisation for further professional development and related implementation strategies.

Appendix 21

Example of thematic coding: Extracts from English National standards

National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers (2015)

Purpose

The National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers (2014) define high standards which are applicable to all headteacher roles within a self-improving school system. These standards are designed to inspire public confidence in headteachers, raise aspirations, secure high academic standards in the nation's schools, and empower the teaching profession.

The context for headteachers changes constantly. In most contexts, a headteacher has led one school; in some settings headteachers are responsible for leading more than one school. Job titles are various - including principal, executive, associate and co-headteacher – as are the governance arrangements to which headteachers are accountable.

These standards are intended as guidance to underpin best practice, whatever the particular job description of the headteacher. They are to be interpreted in the context of each individual headteacher and school, and designed to be relevant to all headteachers, irrespective of length of service in post.

The standards can be used to:

- shape headteachers' own practice and professional development, within and beyond the school
- inform the appraisal of headteachers
- support the recruitment and appointment of headteachers
- provide a framework for training middle and senior leaders, aspiring to headship.

The Teachers' Standards (2011, as amended), including the Personal and Professional Code of Conduct which applies to all teachers, provide a foundation upon which the standards for headteachers are built.

Preamble: the role of the headteacher

Headteachers occupy an influential position in society and shape the teaching profession. They are lead professionals and significant role models within the communities they serve. The values and ambitions of headteachers determine the achievements of schools. They are accountable for the education of current and future generations of children. Their leadership has a decisive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements in the nation's classrooms. Headteachers lead by example the professional conduct and practice of teachers in a way that minimises unnecessary teacher workload and leaves room for high quality continuous professional development for staff. They secure a climate for the exemplary behaviour of pupils. They set standards and expectations for high academic standards within and beyond their own schools, recognising differences and re-

specting cultural diversity within contemporary Britain. Headteachers, together with those responsible for governance, are guardians of the nation's schools.

The Four Domains

The National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers are set out in four domains, beginning with a Preamble. There are four 'Excellence As Standard' domains:

- Qualities and knowledge
- Pupils and staff
- Systems and process
- The self-improving school system

Within each domain there are six key characteristics expected of the nation's headteachers.

Domain One

Excellent headteachers: **qualities and knowledge** Headteachers:

1. Hold and articulate clear values and moral purpose, focused on providing a world-class education for the pupils they serve.
2. Demonstrate optimistic personal behaviour, positive relationships and attitudes towards their pupils and staff, and towards parents, governors and members of the local community.
3. Lead by example - with integrity, creativity, resilience, and clarity - drawing on their own scholarship, expertise and skills, and that of those around them

Appendix 22

Example of thematic coding: Extract from NPQH Final Assessment

Competencies

Strategic Leadership

Personal drive and accountability

Someone who is ready for headship is driven and focused on improvement. They are results orientated and seek to achieve the highest standards within their role through setting and striving to achieve their goals. They are self motivated, energetic and willing to take on new challenges to improve their performance. They are decisive, work for the best interests of pupils and account for their performance to the governing body and other stakeholders.

Why it matters

Headteachers need to be motivated to reach the highest possible professional standards, to deliver tough objectives and take on challenges in order to achieve and be accountable for high performance throughout the school.

Positive indicators

Sets challenging personal goals, strives to be effective and to achieve goals
Adopts a high personal profile; is clearly visible as a leader both internally and externally

Takes a disciplined approach to work and demonstrates effective time management

Uses a range of strategies/techniques to enhance own and others' effectiveness and motivates others to achieve results

Takes responsibility for personal/school performance, regularly measuring own/school performance against targets

Accounts for own/school performance to governing body and other stakeholders

Makes significant improvements in school performance across a broad range of measures.

Resilience and emotional maturity

Someone who is ready for headship is resilient, focused and tenacious when faced with the demands of the job and continually challenging circumstances. They are able to respond positively when managing uncertainty and adversity. They remain focussed on personal and organisational values, and adhere to these, even in difficult, long-term situations.

Why it matters

Headteachers work in a challenging, highly autonomous and pressurised environment. They will be faced with adversity and will have to manage and recover from set backs. They also need to be

honest and transparent in their interactions and communications with all key stakeholders to reflect a high trust culture.

Positive indicators

Is optimistic, motivated and determined over the short and longer term

Is reliable in a crisis, remains calm and thinks clearly when under pressure

Speaks and acts in accordance with school values, and challenges others to do so

Implements appropriate decisions that lead to school improvement even if difficult or controversial

Resolves conflict in a calm restrained way, with empathy and non possessive warmth; seeking support appropriately

Responds positively when faced with personal criticism or setbacks, maintaining a sense of perspective.

Impact and Influence

Someone who is ready for headship has a positive impact on pupils, colleagues and the wider community through inspiration and persuasion to their perspective. They know when they need to negotiate to a solution. They communicate effectively, understand others' perspectives and priorities and tailor their communication to suit their audience. They lead others and bring their governing body and communities on board by articulating a compelling vision and uniting them around shared goals and objectives.

Why it matters

Headteachers must be able to inspire and influence pupils, colleagues, governors and the community in an appropriate and considered manner, articulating a compelling vision in order to create an energising learning environment for all. To do this they must understand the needs and motivations of others, adapting their leadership approach to create the desired impact and outcomes.

Positive indicators

Articulates a compelling vision and unites others around school priorities

Presents information and proposals well to enhance impact and to increase the understanding of governors, stakeholders and the community

Generates energy and enthusiasm and comes across with confidence and credibility when engaging with others

Prepares and calculates impact of actions and words and tailors approach to hold the attention of and to influence others

Uses evidence based, logical arguments and focuses on important elements of complicated issues when seeking to persuade or influence others, or negotiate a solution

Listens to others and responds appropriately to secure engagement

Understands and employs others' preferred approaches when agreeing solutions

Uses direct and indirect influence to gain support, builds alliances and secures support before presenting proposals or taking decisions.

Educational Excellence

Delivering continuous improvement

Someone who is ready for headship will have a clear vision of the central importance of leading teaching and learning in terms of driving and sustaining school improvement and creating improved life chances for pupils, their families and their community. They use their skills to quickly gain a full understanding of the overall performance of the school and make a judgment about what requires improvement. They work with the governing body and other stakeholders to successfully identify, strategically plan for and lead delivery of the necessary and appropriate improvement strategies.

Why it matters

Headteachers need to be able to develop vision and to identify the priorities which lead to improvements in teaching and learning and to implement these to achieve a high quality education to improve outcomes for all pupils.

Positive Indicators

Develops shared vision and positive culture of high expectations, and establishes them within and beyond the school.

Appendix 23

Example: Comparative framework for English national standards and NPQH assessment system

Theme; Beliefs, attitudes, values

Document	National standards of excellence for headteachers	NPQH assessment system
Codes	extracts	extracts
prepared to give active support to self- improving school-led system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self improving school system • within and between schools • create outward facing schools • work with other schools • climate of mutual challenge • develop school led system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raise achievement through partnership working • works collaboratively with schools, governing body and wide community • contribution to be made across the education system • share expertise to achieve common goals • improve outcomes for the education system • value inputs and expertise from a range of people • builds consensus • schools and education sector deliver what is expected • builds partnerships
have a strategic vision for improving the teaching profession nationally through instructional leadership and the development of a collaborative school culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • empower teaching profession • shape teaching profession • the lead professional • establish culture of open class rooms • sharing best practice • ethos of self-improvement in all staff • ethos of staff mutual support • value excellent practice • champion best practice • shape quality of teaching profession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adopts high personal profile • clearly visible as a leader • listens to others and responds appropriately • clear vision of central importance of leading teaching and learning • curriculum reflects needs, abilities, interested of pupils • enhance teaching and learning • focuses on aspects of teaching that make the most difference to pupils learning and progress • improve quality of teaching • build a culture of cooperation

Document	National standards of excellence for headteachers	NPQH assessment system
<p>prepared to act as champion of social justice, equity and education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • influential role in society • significant role model in community • recognise difference and respect cultural diversity • guardians of nations schools • overcome disadvantage • safeguard pupils • equitable deployment of budgets and resources in best interests of pupils achievements • secure excellent achievements for all pupils • improve academic and social outcomes for all pupils • see education as fundamental to young peoples lives • promote value of education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • works for best interests of pupils • creating improved life chances for pupils, families and communities • improve outcomes for pupils • the learning and achievement of all pupils is maximised • foster equality of access • unswerving belief that schools have a crucial role to play in changing lives and improving life chances • committed to improving life chances of all pupils • ensure that every pupil has the opportunity to succeed • commits to improving the school learning experience for all pupils and staff • high expectations for al pupils aspirations and achievements • removing barriers to learning • deep understanding of issues pupils and parents face both inside and outside school, including safeguarding and takes action to ameliorate these • builds relationships with pupils and parents/carers • fosters equality of access • takes account of diversity • improve outcomes for all pupils

Document	National standards of excellence for headteachers	NPQH assessment system
moral purpose articulated and lived	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hold and articulate clear values and moral purpose • demonstrate optimistic personal behaviour, positive relationships and attitudes • have clear set of principles centred on school's vision • uphold principles of transparency, integrity and probity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • articulates compelling vision • sets challenging personal goals • strives to be effective and achieve goals • regularly measured own and schools performance against targets • remains focused on personal and organisational values and adheres to these • honest and transparent in interactions and communications with key stakeholders • reflects a high trust culture • optimistic • motivated • determined • speaks and acts in accordance with school values • implements appropriate decisions that lead to school improvement, even if difficult or controversial • open to different perspectives and viewpoints • with best interests of pupils and school in mind • disciplined approach to work • willing to take on new challenges
nothing but excellence will do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set standards and expectations • high academic standards • focused on providing world class education • excellence is the standard • develop exemplary behaviour • secure high academic standards in nations schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • driven and focused on improvement • results orientated • seek to achieve the highest standards • motivated to reach the highest possible professional standards positive culture of high expectations • ambitious targets • articulates broad vision and fine detail of high expectations about standards of teaching and learning • consistently challenges low expectations in the school and community • maximise performance • ensure educational standards are raised

Document	National standards of excellence for headteachers	NPQH assessment system
embrace accountability to all stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> welcome strong governance accountable for education of children confident of vital contribution of internal and external accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> account for their performance to GB and other stakeholders accountable for high performance throughout the school takes responsibility for personal and school performance accounts for own and school performance to GB and other stakeholders work with GB and other stakeholders account to GB and others for school's performance take responsibility for the performance of the school and account for this to the GB and others accounts to governors and others for use of school's resources
be innovative and entrepreneurial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> challenge educational orthodoxies model entrepreneurial and innovative approaches to school improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attuned to opportunities that increase the resources available to the school

Appendix 24

Example: Thematic tables summarising and analysing collated data

Extract from England: national standards and assessment system

Beliefs, attitudes, values

National standards	Assessment system	Comments
principals expected to articulate and live by clear moral standards; be optimistic, demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviour	assessment system mirrors these expectations	neither document specifies what the moral standards are, or gives details of positive behaviour

National standards	Assessment system	Comments
play major role in promoting social justice and equity within society; will want to promote value of education and act as “significant role model in the community”, while taking account of cultural diversity	These expectations strongly reflected in assessment system where the extracts have the same or very similar wording.	social justice/equity role reflects successive government policy; only in national standards that academic outcomes are specified
expected to work: “within a self-improving system” - reflects decentralising trend of recent policy	performance-orientated managerialism evident: “improve outcomes for the education system”; professional control shown by expectation that schools “deliver what’s expected”.	overall emphasis is on collaboration and partnership within a school led system. Both docs anticipate headteachers will wish to develop sharing and supportive ethos, and open culture based on cooperation
expected to secure “high academic standards” and should be focused on “providing a world class education” where “excellence is the standard”.	expected to be “results orientated”, to “seek to achieve the highest standards”, and to “maximise performance”.	common expectations reflect managerialism - rooted in performance-orientated culture with focus on results. NS stress academic outcomes.
headteacher should accept moral obligation to monitor and report on own and school’s performance; expected that headteachers will “welcome strong governance” and be confident of the vital contribution of accountability	focuses on headteachers being accountable for performance; term used six times	documents are broadly aligned in terms of attitudes they expect of headteachers regarding accountability
should model entrepreneurial and innovative approaches to school improvement, as well as challenging “educational orthodoxies”	no reference to entrepreneurial attitudes or innovative outlook, but expectation that headteachers will be “attuned to opportunities that increase the resources available to the school”	some limited alignment

Extract from Hong Kong: research findings and assessment system

Impact and expectations

Research finding	Assessment system	Comment
positive impact on stakeholder engagement: “engaging families and community in school improvement”.	principal to promote parental and community involvement in the school	some alignment, but no specific reference to school improvement in assessment system
Improving teaching staff performance a key concern	no focus on direct impact of principal to raise performance - more on indirect requirement of giving constructive and quality feedback	some reflection of leadership practices that will impact on staff performance Overall though there is not a clear alignment

Research finding	Assessment system	Comment
developing collaborative decision-making structures, including distributed leadership designed to develop leadership capacity, has a positive impact on pupil outcomes.	principals will develop shared decision-making, delegate responsibilities, and themselves collaborate as team members	assessment system stops short of employing the term distributed leadership - while there is a close alignment, it cannot be said to be exact.
professional accountability expected, albeit within a collaborative decision-making structure and trusting and caring school culture.	supervision, appraising, quality assurance and accountability all required, but no detail so analysing what expectations might look like when operationalised difficult	some alignment on cultivating a sense of professional accountability - less evidence that the assessment system is concerned with setting professional expectations for others

End of Appendices.