Constructing knowledge for educational leadership outside the national policy context: An examination of headteachers’ professional knowledge landscapes in the independent sector

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Abstract:

Since 1997 the government has introduced a number of significant policy initiatives which have impacted heavily on the professional knowledge base of headteachers. In 2000 National Professional Standards for headteachers were introduced; in 2001 a National College of School Leadership (NCSL) was opened, and in 2002 the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) was made compulsory. But these initiatives do not apply to independent schools, their headteachers are not compelled to engage with them and there has been relatively little take-up of the NPQH or involvement with the NCSL within the sector.

This research seeks to investigate what is informing and sustaining the professional knowledge base of headteachers in independent schools in light of the apparent absence of much of the provision which is available for maintained sector colleagues.

A postal survey of 101 recently-appointed independent senior school headteachers was conducted. This was followed by semi-structured interviews with three case study headteachers, two experienced headteachers and the joint professional development officer of the two largest professional heads’ associations (PHAs) in the independent sector. The historical and policy contexts of the contrasting leadership development approaches found in the two sectors were examined. The literature was then used to establish a theoretical basis for subsequent analysis of professional workplace knowledge and recently-appointed headteachers’ professional knowledge landscapes.

Drawing on Eraut’s concept of personal and codified knowledge and notions of tacit and experiential learning, the study argues that, with the limited influence of the NPQH and NCSL in the independent sector, the most significant aspect of professional knowledge acquisition for leadership is aspirant headteachers’ informal apprenticeship, facilitated by distributed leadership. Other significant aspects are their educational background, Masters Degrees and PHA training. Once in post, headteachers further enhance their knowledge base through networking and mentoring in a professional community of headteachers, often at a regional level but sometimes nationally.

Recent government policy initiatives in headteacher preparation do not seem to have taken firm root in the independent sector, instead it is often diverse and ad-hoc influences which contribute to the construction of professional knowledge for educational leadership.
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Chapter 1 Introduction: The aims and purpose of the study

1.1 The research rationale

The main aim of this research is to investigate what is informing and sustaining the professional knowledge landscapes of recently-appointed independent secondary school headteachers. Effective educational leadership has been subjected to huge focus in recent decades in the maintained sector, and the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), National Standards for Headteachers and the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) are some of the more high profile government responses to a perceived need to improve leadership development provision in schools. This study is particularly focused on independent school leaders, who have no formal links with the NCSL, for whom the NPQH is not compulsory (as it is with maintained sector colleagues), and to whom the national standards for headteachers do not apply. This hugely contrasted position forms an important and potentially illuminating backdrop to this research project.

This research examines the different ways in which newly-appointed headteachers in the independent sector gain professional knowledge, it examines how this contributes to their professional knowledge landscapes and investigates their perceptions of the origins, composition and effectiveness of this knowledge in sustaining and enabling them in their professional practice. It will also examine how and why these processes differ from what we already know from existing research in the maintained sector. It will explore the relationship between professional knowledge assimilated prior to taking up headship and its development once in post, in particular the effect of
previous posts and personal biography on tacit and more explicit professional knowledge which new headteachers use in their jobs. The research will also examine independent school headteachers’ perceptions of the leadership development programmes available to them, what they know of those which exist in the maintained sector. It will also explore possibilities for the future development of independent sector leadership training.

At first glance it seems that there is little formalised training for heads in the independent sector, and little is known about the various media which these heads use to inform their own professional knowledge. Little previous research has been carried out into what kinds of externally-provided professional development are available in the independent sector, or how effective this provision is in preparing newly-appointed heads and facilitating them in their early years in post. Additionally, there is little existing knowledge about other possible sources of professional knowledge for headteachers of independent schools, perhaps coming from within schools themselves, and the tacit effects of previous posts and personal biography new heads bring to the job. Recent comment has been made by one of few current educational researchers who has spent any time on the independent sector that there has been very little academic research and literature on British private schools in spite of their central importance (Walford 2006: vii).
1.2 Subsequent central research questions

The data-gathering process was guided by the following 11 questions:

1. What is the nature of the professional knowledge for headship which is acquired prior to appointment?

2. How well prepared did beginning headteachers feel in various aspects of their work?

3. What professional knowledge is not acquired until in post? Is it distinctive?

4. How do heads perceive the role of networking and mentoring in developing their professional knowledge?

5. What is the impact of previous posts, professional qualifications, educational background or moral-religious perspective on the professional knowledge brought to early years of headship?

6. What barriers to acquiring new professional knowledge were experienced whilst in post?

7. What other sources of informing and sustaining professional knowledge can be identified?

8. What similarities or differences can be identified in the way that more experienced heads respond to the questions 1-7 above?

9. What perceptions of the NPQH and NCSL are encountered in the independent sector?

10. How do those who provide headship training in the independent sector explain their provision, its rationale and value?

11. How effective do they perceive their programmes to be? In what ways?

Additionally, in chapter 2, the main historical and policy factors behind the difference in headteacher preparation in state and independent sectors are examined.
1.3 Why this research is worth doing?

The central paradox which underlies the research is the apparently striking differences between how the independent sector trains and supports its headteachers and the provision which is made available to their counterparts in the maintained sector. There seems to be a significant difference in the type of training, its frequency and scale. New independent sector heads have access to a mentoring scheme, an optional two day conference and limited on-going training. In contrast, the maintained sector includes a compulsory and lengthy training course in the form of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) prior to application for a headship, and substantial on-going support and training for those in post (for example the Headteacher Induction Programme (HIP) and the Advanced Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH)). Table 1.1 summarises this position:
Table 1.1 A brief comparison of maintained and independent sector training for headteachers

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<th>Independent Sector</th>
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<td><strong>Training Provider</strong></td>
<td><strong>National College of School Leadership (NCSL) and devolved regional centres, HEIs.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation for headship</strong></td>
<td><strong>NPQH (compulsory) Underpinned by national standards for Headteachers.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2 years school visit 48 hours residential 33% of some MA courses.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Support for new heads</strong></td>
<td><strong>Headteacher Induction Programme (HIP) New Visions, Headlamp, Trainee Headteachers’ Programme</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>3 years mentoring coaching NPQH refresher</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Support for serving heads</strong></td>
<td><strong>Advanced Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) Partners in Leadership</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Support for serving heads (cont.)</strong></td>
<td><strong>8-10 months 3 days residential 6 weeks integration 1 day session &amp; review 6 meetings over 12 months with business leaders</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Development for senior heads</strong></td>
<td><strong>Development programme for consultant leadership</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Pre-sessional reading 2 &amp; 3 day residential 2 study modules</strong></td>
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The existing literature, and in particular research over the last decade, provides insight into the origins, acquisition and construction of professional knowledge in the maintained sector, but little work has been conducted in the independent sector. During this period, the education sector as a whole has seen a huge growth in the emphasis given to headteacher competency and capability with the focus on newly-appointed heads and the effectiveness of the professional development opportunities.
available to them (for example, various National College of School Leadership studies (NCSL 2003a, 2004, 2005, Bright & Ware 2003) and Earley et al. (2000)).

There are now systematic training programmes for heads, and there are principles of transparency in how knowledge and requisite skills for headship are built up. The stipulation of NPQH as compulsory for aspiring heads in 2002, the publication of national standards for headteachers (DfES 2004), and the delivery of initial and in-post training to heads by the NCSL since its foundation in 1997 are all examples of such growth.

It should be noted that such developments have not been greeted with universal enthusiasm by those involved in school leadership development. For some they have been controversial. The increase in leadership ‘training courses’ such as those offered by the NCSL and as part of the NPQH focus heavily on practical management skills and a school effectiveness-driven agenda. They have been termed ‘education management studies’ (Grace 2000:231). This move towards a more generic, top-down driven ‘education management studies’ agenda has been criticised by some as a means by which government has sought to gain control of education policy reform and redefinition through the training of headteachers (Fullan (1992), Ball 1994, Brundrett (2000), Grace (2000), Allix (2000) and Walker & Dimmock (2004)).

In contrast to this method of school leadership development is the more critical, pluralist, and culturally-aware model, termed ‘critical leadership studies’ (Grace 2000: 231) traditionally offered in the academic setting of university-based Masters and Doctoral programmes. Recent trends have seen this type of school leadership
development decrease in popularity in favour of programmes focussing more on education management studies. The number of aspiring school leaders enrolling on education management-related Masters Degrees dropped significantly at the same time as the NPQH became compulsory for new heads in England.

Significantly, such changes do not appear to have been matched in the independent sector, where few, if any of these recent changes in head teacher training and development have been reflected, and perhaps where traditional notions of being an ‘academic’ are considered a more desirable approach to school leadership. Indeed there seems to be no recognised training route for aspirant heads in the independent sector, no agreed competencies for headship, no systematic in-depth training programmes, and little coherent on-going support for those recently appointed. In a sector where one might presume that the DfES, LEA or NCSL have little impact, where is the professional knowledge of independent school heads coming from?

At the outset it seems there are a number of possibilities which warrant investigation, namely:

- The independent sector has lost sight of recent leadership development in maintained education
- An outdated leadership culture still exists in the independent sector where as a head you’ve either got it or you haven’t and ‘heroes are expected to stand alone’
- The existing provision for recently-appointed headteachers to acquire professional knowledge is satisfactory and these learning processes are identified through this research project
- The sector is resisting recent movement towards an ‘education management studies’ model of training now prevalent in the maintained sector, and a different rationale is in operation
There is also one further paradox underlying the proposed research. Increasingly, the government seems to be holding up the independent sector as a model for maintained sector improvement, and emphasising the importance of leadership as the key to raising achievement in our schools. Meanwhile the independent sector seems to have a very different idea of what constitutes good preparation and support for its headteachers.

The New Labour government, through its proposed introduction of more ‘independent maintained schools’ and high-profile encouragement of cross-sector collaboration designed to improve standards in some maintained schools, is, implicitly at least, holding up independent sector leadership as a model of good practice. But the independent sector appears to be following a very different leadership development agenda from the one which has been strongly driven by the government since 1997.

Thus, this research project will aim to:

- Investigate what contributes to recently-appointed independent school headteachers’ professional knowledge landscape, prior to and after appointment

- Establish whether the apparent differences between the maintained and independent sectors in the training provision for headteachers really do exist, and explore explanations as to why this might be the case

- Investigate how independent heads perceive the success of their professional knowledge in sustaining and enabling them in their jobs, and whether they feel adequate provision is being made for them

- In respect of all of the above, provide points of comparison with existing research which has already been conducted on similar themes in the maintained sector

- Share results with colleagues in the independent sector (via the independent professional development network and the heads’ associations)

- Perhaps act as an agent for change in raising awareness of differences and similarities in the professional development of heads in the two sectors
If maintained and independent sectors have grown apart in recent years in headteacher preparation and leadership development then this might be significant in terms of new independent heads' preparedness for the job and future policy direction in the sector. It is also important to establish what is really taking place in this field as successive governments increasingly seem to suggest that the independent sector is a model of good practice. Additionally, and in its own right, attempting to evaluate the present state of professional knowledge in newly-appointed independent school heads provides ground for a viable and valuable study. With 615,000 children attending independent schools, and in excess of £4 billion per annum being spent on their education (ISIS 2006), this appears to be a significant niche of education to research with potential for an original contribution to knowledge.

An extensive search of the literature has been undertaken since January 2004, including ERIC, SOSIG, BERI, AEI, OVID, PsycINFO and the Institute of Education library catalogue. Very little is known about what feeds the professional knowledge of independent school heads, and uncovering differing patterns of head teacher learning in this sector may be significant. Through undertaking a questionnaire of independent school heads with fewer than five years experience (a group not previously investigated), and subsequent case studies in hitherto un-investigated settings, this project will attempt to shed some light on this under-researched setting and make an original contribution to knowledge.
4 Where does the researcher come from?

Being closely involved in working under and observing new heads in action in the independent sector and studying the effectiveness of headship training in the maintained sector at Masters and Doctoral level has led me to make tentative comparisons and analysis. It is hoped that this research will generate insights into the nature of leadership development in the sector and potentially act as a catalyst for discussion, review and change within the settings being investigated. For aspirant and recently-appointed headteachers, the project should prove useful in revealing perceptions about effective preparation for a more senior post, and will familiarise readers with the practical challenges faced by new heads in this sector. It should also increase the reflectivity of the researcher and readers, enriching their professional experience. It is hoped that a contribution can be made to the wider debate surrounding the nature of leadership development in the independent sector, particularly through contact with the professional heads’ associations concerned, meeting with the professional development officer and presenting a research paper at conference.

The research will take into account the influence of the researcher’s own perspective as it involves the co-creation of meanings with respondents and the interpretation of participants’ own views within their social and professional setting. The issue here is an up-front recognition of the impact that personal motivations and aims may have on the research. It is hoped that any negative effect in this regard will be tempered by self-awareness and reflection on the part of the researcher. This means being aware that the researcher may be regarded as an aspiring head and an outsider by participants, and there may be limits as to what they will wish to reveal. This effect
may be amplified by the relatively small world of independent schools, and my own identity as a senior teacher in it.
Chapter 2: Preparation for headship in maintained and independent secondary schools in England and Wales: The historical and policy context of the study

2.1 The loss of an autonomous preparation for headship in maintained schools in England

It seems that the present government regards preparation for school leadership as something too important to be left to the vagaries of the teaching profession or individual headteachers. This represents a major shift in education policy in recent years, substantially increasing the influence and control of central government in a domain which was traditionally the sole preserve of the teaching profession and its aspirant heads. The historical and policy background to such a move is relevant to the content of this study, and warrants further analysis.

Historically, from nineteenth century heyday until the Conservative reforms of the 1980s, the headteacher in England and Wales was a largely autonomous figure, empowered with the potential to innovate, and operating from a strong independently professional powerbase. With the introduction of the local management of schools under the Thatcherite reforms of the 1980s, a more business-minded model of school leadership emerged, where the head was increasingly regarded as the Chief Executive Officer of the school, arguably changing the nature of the role’s autonomy rather than eroding it. Although schools were now in competition with each other, and heads were required to implement more and more external directives, they remained able to determine school aims and strategies for themselves, set the leadership culture, and enjoy more financial flexibility and control than their predecessors (Bottery 2000: 22-23).
It is significant that, despite the changing nature of headteacher autonomy and government’s increasing interest in control, training and preparation for headship was left firmly in the hands of the teaching profession itself. This was facilitated by local education authorities, universities, unions or educational consultancies. In this way, the knowledge base required for performing the task of headteacher remained sacrosanct, to the extent that it could not be interfered with by government or dictated in any way from the centre.

When New Labour took office in 1997 the pace of change quickened and this situation came to an end. The boldness of the new government was that, for the first time in the history of education, it was to consider putting forward a specific model of headship which would obligate these professionals to behave in a certain way. By terming these specified practices as ‘professional standards’, central government was able to do something which would have been inconceivable in previous decades – replacing traditional headteacher autonomy and independence with a centrist statement of what constituted a good headteacher. After consultation and acrimony with the unions, national standards for headteachers in the maintained sector were published in 2000. At the outset, it was clear that an important aspect of the standards was ‘incorporating current government thinking and guidance’ (DfES 2000:2), and, with this as its basis, a detailed and prescriptive set of standards was set out, spanning 100 different competencies under 6 sub-headings by the time they were revised in 2004.

One of the key implications of establishing national standards for headteachers was that it enabled a model of the essential features of school leadership to be established, and a centralised and highly prescriptive training programme was the logical next
The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) was launched in 1997 and it was announced it was to become compulsory for all new headteachers in 2000 (enacted in 2004). The contracts for provision of the NPQH were carefully controlled, and awarded by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), a government quango, to only 10 training and development centres across England and Wales. In terms of headteacher autonomy it is significant that, after the centralised imposition of professional standards on headteachers, the government’s next step was to ensure that access to the post itself became controlled and measured by compulsory assessment against those same standards.

Such measures were taken by Blair’s government as part of a radical new public services agenda and a long-considered plan to focus on and revive the education system, which Labour regarded as one of the Conservatives’ biggest failures. ‘Education, education, education’ became New Labour’s now famous clarion call. Very early in the new government’s term, the DFEE pronounced clearly that it felt that ‘the quality of the head often makes the difference between the success and failure of a school’ (DFEE 1997:46), and that our schools need to be transformed into a ‘world-class education system’ in order to maintain competitiveness in global markets (Barber & Sebba 1999: 187).

David Blunkett, the strong-willed Education Secretary was determined to push forward radical reform regardless of the feelings of the teaching profession. This was presented in the Green Paper Teachers: meeting the challenge of change (DFEE 1998) through performance-related pay, career fast-tracking, renewed emphasis on professional development, and plans for the establishment of the headteacher
standards, the NPQH and a National College of School Leadership (NCSL). All of these measures were considered necessary for the UK to ‘compete in the global economy…with the new challenges from international competitors such as pacific rim countries…and to unlock the potential of every young person’ (DfEE 1997). Here we find an important clue to the underlying motivations for the government’s reform agenda to which we will turn shortly.

In summary then, the first term of the New Labour government saw a noticeable move away from the traditional idea of successful headteachers as competent in their subject knowledge, of good character, capable in self-presentation and public relations, and perceived as having fairly non-specific ‘leadership qualities’ of some sort (Eraut 1997:37). Instead, for a new generation of heads, it was to be management expertise and the ability to maximise educational outcomes (i.e. high pupil assessment scores, improved examination results and positive external inspections) that mattered most. Thus, government policy was to introduce a model of headship training aimed at promoting management competence for school effectiveness above all.

But these were not just measures for the sake of being seen to be introducing new and innovative policy initiatives in their early years in political office. New Labour had clear political, socio-economic and philosophical motivations underlying their incursion into the training, preparation and professional knowledge base of headteachers. We shall now turn to a brief consideration of these.
2.2 Why did New Labour choose to go where no government had been before?

Like poets, teachers are potentially dangerous. But poets are fewer and reading poetry is voluntary (Hill 2001:135)

The production of a centrally-controlled set of competencies for headteachers and their compulsory and highly-prescriptive training by a handful of government-approved institutions can be seen in the light of a number of significant pressures directly affecting education policy production at this time. Here I offer four broad reasons as to why government policy has moved in this direction.

Firstly, long before the election of Blair’s government in 1997, a so-called ‘backlash against professional society’ had begun (Perkin 1990:472), leading to widespread ‘professional decline’ (Freidson 1986:110). The end of the ‘professional mandate’ for teachers had begun under Thatcher in the late 1980s (Whitty 2000:283) with the ever-increasing intrusion of external accountability and performance-related accountability. Professionals in the public sector were seen as an obstacle to greater efficiency (often conveniently at the same time as cutting expenditure), and it is against this background of a developing conflict between the state and autonomous professionals, that the distinct political philosophy of New Labour emerged in the 1990s.

A second reason is found in the policy language of the early New Labour years. This gives a clear indication that producing young people capable of competing in the ‘knowledge economy’ of the global markets was seen as the core purpose of the education system. And, as headteachers can make or break an effective school, they have a crucial part in delivering what the market requires. Unlike its Old Labour predecessors, the Blairite project accepted (along with the governments of many other
developed countries) that the power of globalisation and the market could not be resisted and that the ‘macro-problems of the state and society could be addressed through improving the micro-efficiency of the school’ (Riley 1998:112). This notion extended to mean that the nation-state’s primary asset in a world with decreased international barriers to trade is its populace, or workforce, and their knowledge skills. Tony Blair himself referred to the significance in the future of the ‘knowledge economy.’ In marked contrast from the last 200 years of British economic success, our brains are now the ‘hands’ of a previous industrial age, a replacement for the physical attribute most crucial in labouring to produce profit (Grant 2002 quoted by Hill 2003:15). As a result the nation treats its education system as a tool for national and economic development, and the training of headteachers has an important role to play in this task.

A third reason extends directly from this economic imperative, and again results from the impact of globalisation on education resulting in the ever-increasing move of the private sector into the provision of public services, accompanied by a corporate managerialist model of operation (Hill 2003: 9). The ‘new modernising’ form of neo-liberalism which New Labour represents requires a reduction in public spending as part of the ‘post-welfare state’ (Bottery 2000:30). As a result, the involvement of the private sector in providing services such as health care, cleaning, catering and education is encouraged. Using an analogy of a boat requiring both rowing and steering (Clarke & Newman 1997), this permits more of the ‘rowing’ of the welfare state to be done by other bodies (i.e. private companies), but, as a result of economic necessity, this absolutely does not extend to policy ‘steering’ – as the government’s close involvement in headteacher competencies and training demonstrates.
A fourth and final reason, alluded to above, is the rise of managerialism in the public services and in particular the education system, to control public services - for when ‘rowing’ is delegated to a crew who government cannot directly control, then ‘steering’ becomes all the more important. Broadly speaking, managerialism involves the transfer of the style and language of management from the commercial and business sectors into the public sector, coinciding with the introduction of internal markets, competitive tendering, and tools for ‘productivity’ measurement. The methods of managerialism form the only way of planning, implementing and measuring such productivity (Bottery 2000:63) and its proponents argue rather simply that ‘better management leads to a better world’ (Wright 2001: 281). In such a performance-driven education system, it becomes vital that the headteacher must know how to promote performance and how to produce data which validates that performance (Gunter 2001:156). Inevitably this has led to perceptions of an erosion of professionalism in the public services, for example in the notion of the ‘post-modern professional’ where professional discourses have been captured and re-articulated as ‘performances’ which can be measured (Goodson & Hargreaves 1996:21). An integral part of managerialism in education is control of agendas and surveillance from the centre. It is very important to the success of the government’s economic agenda that it has a strong grip on the policy being played out in our schools. Establishing national standards for headteachers, qualified teachers and advanced teachers and prescriptively training towards these demonstrates such motivation in action. ‘Such competencies are, of course, specified by the agencies... and are now designed to extend across the whole professional life of teachers’ (Beck 1999:228).
In summary, we can see that a number of macro processes have influenced recent policy changes in the preparation of headteachers in England and Wales. As education has become subordinate to economic imperatives of post-industrial capitalism, the result has been a centralised and instructional approach to education policy. Government has attempted to take over, to an unprecedented degree, domains where educators and producers of knowledge have in the past enjoyed significant autonomy (Beck 1999:223, 227).

In terms of school leadership, this has produced a highly controlled, prescriptive and standardised technical-rational model of headteacher professionalism which is located in neo-liberal versions of the performing school (Gunter 2001 cited by Hatcher 2005:255). This policy process might be summarised in the following way:

Figure 1.1 The process by which global forces impact on education policies and headteacher preparation in England and Wales (derived from Bottery 2000: 1-80)
2.3 How does investigation of this policy context illuminate a current and relevant issue for an empirical investigation?

Once education has become so thoroughly subordinated to such instrumental purposes and agencies, what may be left of education itself? (Beck 1999: 224)

Recent changes in national policy concerning the preparation of headteachers in the maintained sector mean that there is now a stark contrast between what goes on there and what training and preparation goes on for aspirant headteachers in the independent sector. With the independent sector increasingly being held up by the government as an example of providing the 'world-class' education service which is its ultimate goal, it is interesting to note that the independent sector has not moved along similar policy lines as the government when it comes to preparing its school leaders. Moreover, the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and National College of School Leadership (NCSL) have received a great deal of criticism in the educational literature, and it could be that the independent schools are now the only part of the education sector which has been able to resist the capture of school leadership discourse by the managerialist project, and the resultant prescriptive and all-controlling nature of government in respect of headteacher preparation and training (Wright 2001:139). We will now turn to the historical and policy context of the independent schools' position in this regard.
2.4 The Independent Schools: Immunity from government interference?

The essence of independent mind has been to think and act according to standards from within, not without: to follow one's own path, not that of the crowd

(Tharcher 2000:23)

There are over 2,000 independent schools in the UK educating approximately 7% of the total school population. In many cases, schools such as King's Canterbury (598CE), Winchester (1382) and Eton (1440) outdate any kind of state education provision by many centuries. Although under no obligation to follow much of government education policy, many independent schools have traditionally shown a tendency to keep abreast of policy initiatives at a distance, and to adopt aspects of them as they see fit (e.g. some have adopted their own version of the threshold pay structure). However, the introduction of the compulsory NPQH for all new heads in the maintained sector has not been mirrored by the independent schools who remain with no formalised qualification or training route for appointment to headteacher.

Instead, at first glance at least, the independent sector seems to provide an informal apprentice-style preparation for headship, usually as a deputy head, with great weight being attached to an existing head vouching for the aspirant's readiness for post (a full investigation of this setting forms an integral part of the research which follows).

Nevertheless, as part of a discussion of policy context to this research, it is worth investigating why independent schools have not only survived, but also kept so organisationally insulated from mainstream schooling - school leadership preparation included - and this despite independent schools remaining a live political issue over previous decades, and the Labour Party being committed to their abolition for a large part of the last 30 years.
2.5 Long-term policy paralysis towards independent schools

The history of government and opposition policies towards the independent sector is a long and tortuous path (for a more detailed account of such policy procrastinations see Johnson 1987, or for more recent analysis, Peterken 2005). Difficulties arose throughout the post-war period in reaching any kind of political consensus for radical change for a number of reasons.

Firstly, because a high proportion of members of parliament had attended such schools themselves and had a vested interest. Secondly, because battle lines were drawn along very entrenched and hostile political divides. On the one hand between socialists striving to break down a perceived elite, and on the other, those to the political right who were in favour of keeping government interference to a minimum and promoting any kind of successful private endeavour. Thirdly, for many decades the issue has been further complicated by independent schools’ continued success in examination results and winning university places, and their steady popularity with middle-class parents. Polls of the public over the last two decades have regularly illustrated that the majority of parents who do not pay for their children’s education at present would choose the private sector, if they could afford it. Fourthly, there have been additional difficulties in the complications and knock-on effects of any reform of the charity law which would be necessary to abolish or fundamentally amend most independent schools. There have even been concerns that abolition of such schools might breach the Human Rights Act.

More recently under a New Labour government, the need to win the middle-class vote at the ballot box has been of crucial importance for the party in securing its first ever
second, and then third, term in office. The nature of the British electoral system, with its first-past-the-post system, and its geographical and social divide, means that a relatively small number of key marginal seats can make all the difference in securing a parliamentary majority. Many of these constituencies swing on key middle-class votes, and policy hostility towards independent schools in such places may risk losing valuable votes, especially in parts of the country where a large proportion of children attend such schools (the proportion varies, but the highest is in areas like Walton-on-Thames where nearly 30% of children attend independent schools). In addition, any policy which would adversely affect independent schools would run contrary to the government’s ‘new modernising’ agenda of encouraging the private sector to take on aspects of the public service provision to compensate for the shrinking ‘post-welfare’ state.

For all of these reasons, successive governments have produced very little major legislative change affecting the independent schools since 1945; and this was unlikely to change with the advent of New Labour and its extensive second-term foray into the minutiae of headteacher preparation and training in maintained sector schools. This meant that clear differences sprang up between the two sectors in this regard.

Another contributory factor to the policy paralysis which gripped successive governments over the independent schools issue was the organised resistance encountered from independent schools themselves. Historically they have produced a collective and organised response at the first signs of any policy hostility from government or opposition. As early as 1869, Edward Thring the Headmaster of Uppingham formed the Headmasters’ Conference (HMC) as a response to the
Endowed Schools Bill of 1868. Over 40 years ago, this organisation was forward-looking enough to appoint a PR consultant (Fox 1985: 25), and in 1972 the Independent Schools Information Service (ISIS) was set up, shortly followed by the Independent Schools Joint Council (ISJC) specifically to negotiate with government about any changes in policy towards its schools that it proposed. These highly organised strategies demonstrate the commitment of the independent sector to remain, seeing themselves as needing to stand up to governments, retaining independence and autonomy. Initially at least, all these bodies are defensive in conception, and influential - drawing on wealthy supporters in high positions. The independent sector had become a ‘monolith’ as a system (Gathorne-Hardy (1977:228) which over the years made it more and more difficult for the government to take on.

Having outlined some of the broader historical and policy aspects of why the independent sector has remained organisationally insulated from the maintained sector in recent decades, we will now look at some of the more immediate workplace-related policy issues. These might account for why the independent sector has elected not to adopt the NPQH or any form of compulsory training for aspirant headteachers and why it has shown little interest in the recent changes imposed by government in maintained schools. It will also briefly suggest why notions of acquiring professional knowledge for the post of headteacher seem so different. This will include some analysis of the expectations of governing bodies; the intellectual nature of the NPQH; differences in aspects of the professional knowledge which heads from the two sectors require (mostly related to accountability), and whether the nature of independent schools themselves permits, even requires, headteachers to be more individualistic in the way they operate.
2.6 Governing Bodies and the appointment of headteachers in independent schools

What little evidence there is (Wright 2006, McIay & Brown 1999) suggests that governors are less closely involved in the everyday running of independent schools and there are far fewer (if any) existing parents on such bodies. This may mean that many independent school governing bodies are more comfortable appointing heads on personal recommendation, looking closely at track-record in previous schools and interview performance, focusing too particularly on academic credentials (see below). This selection model is facilitated by the relatively small world of independent schools where reputations and recommendations can afford to carry far more weight than in the wider public services, and perhaps by a belief that what cannot be assessed is at the core of headship (Gunter 2001: 164). This is surely what Creissen refers to in pointing out that:

There are aspects of the head’s job which are hard to assess (through NPQH) and which have to be measured through confidential references and the interview process. Such issues are about leadership style, the individual’s notions of ‘power’, and personal traits. There is also an intuitive nature to headship which is a problematic issue for assessment. (1997 in Gunter 2001: 164)

In defence of the NPQH, it might be that maintained school governing bodies and parents feel a need to see clear evidence of a candidate’s ability and transparency of ‘fitness for purpose’ on a CV, and the NPQH is good at this. Presumably it gives a governing body confidence that all the candidates in front of them would be competent to take on the role of headteacher. But should it? This question needs to be considered alongside a number of factors:

Firstly, if ‘competence is a necessary but not sufficient condition for good management’ (Earley 1992 in Outson 1997:76), then the recent move in the
maintained sector - from the preparation of aspirant heads to their training and assessment - may be a negative move, encouraging governors to ignore the difference between competence in a job and ability to do a job.

Secondly, the independent sector has traditionally regarded academic qualifications as important in the appointment of a headteacher (perhaps more so than the maintained sector) because of the implication which accompanies it of an ability to handle a number of different perspectives and views and thus to manage change and conflict more effectively. Thus Doctoral and Masters Degrees are more recognised by independent school governing bodies who are not particularly au fait with educational ‘training’ qualifications such as the PGCE and NPQH.

This may have become a more pertinent issue since the recent criticism of the compulsory NPQH as ‘intellectually and emotionally sterile’ (Gunter 2001: 163) and the ‘businessification’ of education in the maintained sector causing ‘the suppression of critical thought’ amongst headship training programme (Hill 2003:1). This is supported by the view that NPQH candidates are tested through measurement rather than through intellectual challenge, where the promoted thinking processes are more about how to conform and comply, rather than about individually acquired professional knowledge and courage and creativity in performing (Gunter 2001: 163).

Perhaps the preference for traditional academic qualifications, interview and personal candidate recommendations still found in the independent sector makes for an unlikely alliance with educational academics who have criticised government policy for headship preparation. They argue that constructions of leadership coming from the
centre have been too narrow, failing to take into account sufficiently the range of contextual factors which may impact on school leadership (Riley 1998: 13). Again, Gunter summarises this view precisely:

The day-to-day work of the headteacher is full of contradictions and dilemmas, but the normative modes of leadership promoted by government agencies and their collaborators present certainty in the cause-and-effect connection between effective leadership and effective schools...the danger lies in the closing down of the debate about the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ in the preparation of headteachers (2001: 158-159)

Precisely if and how the independent sector encourages consideration of these ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ in its aspirant leaders will be investigated as part of this research.

2.7 Independent schools are, by their very nature, more independent

Independent schools are just that – independent – meaning that their independence from governmental or quasi-governmental agencies is an integral part of the difference that they offer to parents. At a glance it might appear that independent schools are responsible to a large number of different bodies – to parents, the ISI (independent schools inspectorate) and CSCI (commission for social care inspectorate); to relevant government legislation (such as health and safety law and the disability rights act), the local and national media, and ultimately to the market (through the threat of lack of fee income forcing redundancy or closure).

In reality however, they are subjected to much less of this than their maintained sector counterparts who face a bewildering array of accountability, even surveillance, from beyond the school gates. A recent publication from the Secondary Heads Association suggests that headteachers are now accountable to 21 different bodies involving around 5,000 different people (SHA 2003 in Chitty 2004:204) and the imposition of
over-accountability and the ‘audit culture’ have been widely commented on in the
literature (e.g. Silcock 2002, Stronach et al. 2001, Mahony & Hextall 2000, Whitty

It is important to note that independent schools themselves have adopted the term
independent rather than private – ‘the claim being that such schools are not in a
private, market situation for commercial reasons, but because of the espousal of the
values of independence, autonomy and individual choice felt to be incompatible with
the provision directed and monitored by the state’ (Bottery 1998:116). Thus many in
the independent sector see being independent as an ‘ethical commitment’ to
stakeholders, and are not keen to ‘be tied to someone else’s purse or principles’ (ibid.)

As a result, headship in the independent sector is very different, and many aspects of
the NPQH are not applicable in this context. The complications caused by operating in
such a multi-agency environment and the bureaucracy which this entails being an
example in point. The technical-rational information and knowledge which is required
to be proficient in this environment (in some aspects at least) forms a major part of the
NPQH, but is not directly relevant to running an independent school. The financial
skills required in the independent sector are different in nature too. Often with a full-
time bursar (usually an accountant or finance specialist) to assist, and usually with
more certainty of fees income and therefore expenditure, independent schools in some
ways have a less complicated financial course to plot. By way of illustration, one
comprehensive school head reported theoretically accessing up to 80 different sources
of income, before which a long, drawn-out, and distracting, bidding process had to be
undergone (Wright 2006: 29).
In contrast, independent schools have little or no experience of being managed by non-teaching professionals such as politicians, quangos, civil servants, or private sector ‘edu-businesses.’ Rather, the lack of such financial pressures and complications means that most independent schools are not dependent on others for their resources, and headteachers are therefore free to innovate, to set goals and strategy as they see fit, and to operate as an individual should they choose. As we have seen, this may not be compatible with the NPQH’s mode of thinking. Additionally, the separate inspection arrangements for many independent schools mean that any part of the NPQH which refers to OFSTED (the maintained sector’s inspectorate) would not be applicable to aspirant heads working in, and intending to stay in, the independent sector.

In summary, the independent school head is a very different animal who, through a variety of policy and contextual factors, is comparatively free to innovate, and to set independent strategies and goals for their organisation. This is one factor in a significant mismatch between the competencies taught by the NPQH and the professional knowledge needed to be a headteacher in the independent sector. Having touched on the relative freedom that the independent school head has over his maintained sector colleague, we will now turn to a more specific examination of the contextual factors which may help to create this situation, suggesting that this makes the NPQH model of training even more inapplicable to the independent sector.
2.8 The unique nature of headship in independent schools?

There is a long-standing tradition, most notably in the independent sector, in which the headteacher is virtually synonymous with the school... hence there is a deal of 'proprietary language' such as 'my school' and 'my staff.'

Riley 1999: 116

This finding suggests that the independent school head, because his or her school holds an individual and specialised position in the education 'marketplace', may be operating from a more individualistic and personality-dominated perspective than heads in the maintained sector. Certainly, many parents select independent schools because of the head, particularly as, if such heads are regarded as 'synonymous' with the nature of the school itself, this will impact on the individual environment of the school concerned or its particular specialisation and (e.g. offering a more or less academic environment, or a particular focus on music, drama or sport). It is often the characteristic of the headteacher and their individual enthusiasms which shape such specialization, adding to the sense of individual heads creating their individual schools.

Independent schools heads also differ from maintained sector colleagues in that catalysts for major institutional reform tend to come from within the sector rather than being imposed from outside. Thus necessary change is initiated by individual heads as they see fit at an organisational level as they experience the need for their institutions to develop. This is a tradition extending right back to the first liberal reforms of boarding education introduced by Thomas Arnold at Rugby in the first half of the nineteenth century, or more recently, through to the introduction of co-education in the mid-1970s and further modernisation of the boarding model from the mid-1990s.
onwards. These examples indicate a very different model from the centralised method of change from within which public sector education by its very nature must entail.

These two fundamental differences in the nature of headship have a significant bearing on the applicability of the NPQH for aspirant heads in the independent sector, demonstrating that individualism and independence lie at the heart of the head’s role in this environment. As a result, an informal, ad-hoc, reflective and un-assessed headship preparation programme seems to have developed in the sector, akin to an apprentice model of leadership development (most deputy head posts now specify they are suitable for candidates who would be looking to progress to headship in the next five years). Such a model encourages mentoring, personal reflection, and consideration of the values and moral aspects of leadership. It is as individual and independent to individual leaders, as the schools themselves are individual and - by name - independent. This seems at odds with any formalised, centralised and compulsory form of headteacher training found in the maintained sector, and perhaps explains, in policy terms at least, why no aspects of the NPQH or professional standards for headteachers have been adopted in the independent sector.

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, the policy context of the government’s decision to introduce a compulsory qualification for headship has been examined, revealing a deep-seated economic motivation for a more centralised control of the headteacher agenda in our schools. Such change in policy has led to a significant difference between maintained and independent sectors in this regard. Consideration was then given to the historical
and policy context of the independent sector and to why government did not seek to impose such change on the sector as it did on the public sector. Finally, explanation was sought as to why independent schools have not adopted the NPQH or any other form of compulsory training for those aspiring to headship, and a variety of suggestions for this state of affairs were offered, many referring to the unique individual and independent nature of these schools, and the different nature of headteacher professional knowledge required, or preferred by those in influence, in the sector. As a result we are faced with two very different traditions, generating two contrasting models of headteacher preparation, with a complex matrix of reasons as to why this is the case, rooted in historical precedent, politics, socio-economics, and questions of policy priority.

However, this does not mean that in a global world such diversity between the two sectors in the area of headship preparation will continue. As we have seen, the independent sector has a habit of following developments in the maintained sector from a distance and it is not inconceivable that it will move to some sort of formalised preparation or training for headteachers in the future. Thus, gathering perceptions of this divergence in policy between the two sectors from professionals in the field will be insightful, as will a detailed investigation and evaluation of the existing provision found in the independent sector. It is hoped that expounding and analysing the study’s findings against the policy and historical context outlined above will prove illuminative and will make for a valuable, relevant and original contribution to existing knowledge. It is also hoped that it will enable some valid policy recommendations to be offered based on the findings of the research.
Chapter 3: A critical review of relevant literature and research

3.1 Approach to the literature review

Having introduced the research question and, in the last chapter, set it in its historical and policy context, it is now necessary to approach the literature to illuminate the research contribution offered here and critically evaluate any relevant theories found therein. Research into the literature was conducted from January 2004 until June 2007.

This chapter falls into two main parts. Firstly, a consideration of the epistemological basis of professional learning and knowledge acquisition in educational management and leadership which will centre on the concept of professional knowledge and the recent attention given to its application in the workplace. The second part will analyse previous research which has been conducted into recently-appointed headteachers’ professional knowledge in the maintained sector, and the very small amount of previous investigation into leadership in the independent sector.

Conducting a literature review into headteachers’ professional knowledge is not entirely straightforward. Although there is relatively little specifically dedicated to the professional knowledge of headteachers per se, there is quite a large, diverse and disparate literature on professional knowledge itself. There is little agreement on the nature or content of professional knowledge with a large part of this due to two main factors. Firstly, the increased complexity and changeability of the current professional workplace, and secondly, the personalised nature of much of the professional’s knowledge causing much of it to be un-codified or even un-codifiable in nature.
In the 1960s, with the positivist paradigm prominent in educational research, the academy was confident that carefully co-ordinated research could uncover the characteristics of a good manager or leader and this generic model of excellence could be passed on to others as part of training the future generation of headteachers. However, the emergence of the postmodernist paradigm and the accompanying decline in the scientific-rationalist approach to leadership and management has highlighted that it is essential not to underestimate the variations which occur in a complex and highly personalised knowledge base which is primarily constructed through experience and intuition (Eraut 1999:61).

This was demonstrated to researchers when they found managers and leaders using codified and discipline-based knowledge in a very different form from that which they had originally been given by external sources. In the interim it had been subjected to complex, personal and internalised contextual adaptation by those managers and leaders. An example of this might be a headteacher attending a training course, taking away from it one or two perceived 'truths' or operating rules which are personalised at the point of delivery, internalised, often amended, and thereby made relevant to the school and leader’s context. This example demonstrates one of the difficult complexities of discussing professional knowledge - the personalised and partially hidden nature of much of the professional’s knowledge base. This will warrant further attention in due course.

With these initial caveats in mind, we will approach the literature on professional knowledge in four specific areas: Firstly, the question of the formation of knowledge in the workplace, which is not specific to schools and approaches adult learning from
the theoretical and psychological perspective. Secondly, literature which makes the link between claims to professional knowledge and the wider debate about the status of professions, some of which is general, some of which specifically refers to education. Thirdly, work which focuses on teachers’ professional development and the role of improved professional development in the future of the profession. Fourthly, literature from a political and economic development perspective which promotes the idea of the knowledge economy and the knowledge-creating school. Part of this involves developing the professional knowledge base of teachers and school leaders, particularly with reference to improved modes of communication and dissemination of that knowledge and expertise.) In the majority of cases this literature does not cross-reference and there is not a great deal of integration in the way academic writers have approached this area. This literature review attempts to cover some salient themes from all these areas and draw them together to present a contextualised and coherent background to approaching the professional knowledge landscapes of independent school headteachers.

The second part of the chapter is less complex in that there is a clear body of previous research which has been carried out into the settings and professional practices of headteachers and a small body of research which has been conducted into independent school managers and leaders. This research can be used in the orthodox manner to illustrate what we already know about the topic and how this study fits into gaps in the existing knowledge base.
Part 1: Professional Knowledge in the Literature

3.2 Professional knowledge landscapes

The idea of professional knowledge ‘landscapes’ which occurs in the title of this research is best explained through reference to the work of Clandinin and Connelly who first use the metaphor and from whom the concept has been adapted. The metaphor of landscape is used quite deliberately to reflect an undulating terrain, representing the complexities and multi-faceted aspects of headteachers’ professional setting and context. It is intended to refer to the broader contexts in which heads live and work, encompassing a broad complexity of historical, personal, communal, moral and epistemological dilemmas (1995, vii)

A landscape metaphor...allows us to talk about space, place, and time. It has a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse people, things, and events in different relationships. Understanding professional knowledge as comprising a landscape calls for a notion of professional knowledge as composed of a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places, and things... it is both an intellectual and moral landscape.

(Clandinin and Connelly 1995:4-5)

3.3 Professional knowledge

Before we start addressing the complexities involved in discussing different types of professional knowledge, it is helpful to consider some of the attempts that have been made to categorise the knowledge base of professions in general, before moving to the specific.

Of particular significance here is Eraut, who identifies a number of traditional notions of the professional knowledge base: a distinctive expert knowledge base and certainty surrounding it, a long period of training, often beyond degree level, and a close link of legitimisation with universities (1994:14). In the context of this research, this is true...
of headteachers who have a first degree, a further qualification to teach and, in addition, the now compulsory NPQH qualification, all closely linked with universities.

A further significant voice is Schon (1983, 1987, 2002) whose attempts to capture the essence of professional knowledge have also been very influential. In his model of the ‘reflective practitioner’, he emphasises the importance of learning as ‘sense-making’ through reflection on one’s own professional experience. In this way, professionals move forward by creating their own understandings and future theorisations about their own professional operating domain, depending on ‘tacit knowing-in-action’ (2002:50). This is a form of knowing that does not stem from any kind of prior learning which is spontaneous and made in situ rather than being based on knowledge or skills acquired at some earlier date perhaps by the transfer of technical knowledge in codified form. In this context, professional knowledge is ‘know how’ which is generated from within the profession itself, free from the straight-jacket of specified processes generated from beyond, and which contains unique technical knowledge learned by the professional in the course of his/her own work rather than competencies acquired from outside the profession.

At a basic level, a headteacher’s professional knowledge might be understood as the holistic understanding of the operating environment of the school as an organisation and the educational processes contained therein. This might involve historical, economic, sociological, philosophical, and psychological understandings, including knowledge about learning, diversity, technology, professional ethics, legal and policy issues, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession of teaching (State of
Kentucky 2007). This constitutes claims to a unique form of expertise which are not shared by other occupations.

We can see from this that "knowledge" is a vast general term and it will be helpful here to distinguish some of the different types of knowledge that have been identified in the professional workplace. An illuminative distinction is made by Gibbons et al (1994) in their labelling of Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge creation. Mode 1 knowledge is closely associated with the universities and is most commonly diffused through teaching and learning and books and journals. This knowledge is then applied in the workplace by practising professionals and this is the dominant mode at present. Mode 2 learning evolves from the context of the workplace by problem-solving professionals; it is concerned only with knowledge that is useful and practical in the workplace setting. It is communicated informally through a diverse system of networks (e.g. the internet and other media, informal contact at work or more formal means). The table below offers a summary of the distinction between Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge:

Table 3.1 A summary of mode 1 & mode 2 knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode 1 Knowledge</th>
<th>Mode 2 Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dominant, hierarchical, disciplinary</td>
<td>Trans-disciplinary, diverse, mobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University-based, expert-led, peer-reviewed</td>
<td>Problem-based, applied, embedded in networks, entrepreneurial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure, homogenous</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(after Gibbons et al 1994)
Eraut categorises professional knowledge along broadly similar lines, although with increased complexity, demonstrating that Kolb’s (1984) influential but simplistic model of experiential learning in the workplace is no longer sufficient to deal with the modern professional setting. His two main categories are codified and personal knowledge; codified knowledge can also be referred to as public or propositional knowledge which is given status by incorporation into educational programmes, examinations and courses, whereas personal knowledge is the cognitive resource which a person brings to a situation that enables him or her to think and perform (2000:114). Table 3.2 offers a summary of Eraut’s categorisation and further consideration suggests that there are some similarities between Gibbons et al’s mode 1 knowledge and Eraut’s codified public knowledge and between mode 2 knowledge and personalised knowledge. Eraut’s ‘public’ knowledge comprises ‘know that’ knowledge which is explicit, often technical-rational in style, delivered externally and is codified and firmly bounded. In contrast, ‘personalised’ knowledge or ‘know how’ can be explicit or tacit, is often procedural and about knowing how to ‘conduct various processes which contribute to professional action which may be indescribable and encompass the taken for granted assumptions of professional practice’ (1994:105). Additionally, Eraut identifies ‘impressions’ as part of this knowledge category. These flow continuously from experience, and where personal reflection on professional matters is crucial in contributing to the evolving knowledge base. Thus it is important to acknowledge that substantial aspects of professional competence and expertise cannot be embedded in a publicly accessible knowledge base (1994:15) and so a distinction between ‘public’ codified knowledge and ‘personal’ knowledge is necessary (1997:40). Public knowledge is necessarily explicit and comprises facts, case material, concepts and theories, whereas personal knowledge can be acquired
from personalising public knowledge or by learning from experience (becoming partly tacit). Eraut demonstrates that, because a consequence of this is that people are not aware of what they know, these ideas are not fully under their own critical control and therefore confidence in their validity is questionable. This may be of significance later when analysing the responses to interview questions which seek to draw out some of the influences on this somewhat enigmatic form of professional knowledge. The subtlety of Eraut’s model is it allows codified knowledge which has been learned through formal learning scenarios to be simultaneously converted into personalised knowledge when it is contextualised and internalised by a professional for use in specific work contexts. We have already seen how this is a scenario which occurs in educational management and leadership and needs to be acknowledged in any theoretical models of learning.

Eraut’s model will provide a useful grounding for subsequent analysis, particularly at the case study stage, where headteachers were asked to explore some of their learning experiences prior to and once in post. His work also extends to defining the theoretical content of headteachers’ professional knowledge as we shall see later.
Table 3.2 Eraut’s typology of professional knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codified Knowledge</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Validity</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Usual learning style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Educational programmes, exams and courses</td>
<td>• Quality control from editors, peer review and debate</td>
<td>• Propositions <em>about</em> skilled behaviour, but not skills. • ‘Know that’ rather than ‘know how’ itself</td>
<td>• Explicit by definition</td>
<td>Formal: e.g. • Prescribed learning framework • Organised learning event or package • External specification of outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also known as ‘public’ or ‘propositional’ knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalised Knowledge</td>
<td>• Impressions in episodic memory • Experiential knowledge</td>
<td>• Own self, can lack objective quality control</td>
<td>• Cognitive knowledge enabling situational performance • Might be codified knowledge in personal form according to context • Process or procedural knowledge - skills</td>
<td>• Explicit or tacit</td>
<td>Non-formal: e.g. • Implicit, i.e. independent of conscious attempts to learn • Reactive, i.e. responding to explicit learning but spontaneously to imminent situations without time being set aside for it • Deliberative, i.e. reviewing past actions or experiences, engagement in decision-making, planned informal learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(from Eraut 2000:114-116)*
So, as we approach the research, we must distinguish between specific objective technical knowledge which might appear in codified form to be passed onto a professional, for example, knowledge about how to make sense of the detail of a school’s statement of financial account. This might be contrasted with a more subjective and personalised form of knowledge acquired on-the-job, (perhaps even without conscious awareness), for example, placating difficult parents before a meeting by allowing a ‘cooling off’ period before any contact takes place.

Professional knowledge can therefore refer to both the traditional notion of expert knowledge as pre-constructed and codified which can be passed on through teaching and learning, and the more individualised form of knowledge, constructed individually and often held as working ‘know-how’, perhaps without much conscious awareness of its existence (Hargreaves 2000: 226). This ‘tacit’ knowledge is important and will be discussed in full later.

A further complication with respect to the definition of ‘knowledge’ in the professional setting is the positioning of ‘skills.’ Although sometimes attempts are made to separate them (for example in the often-cited description of ‘knowledge, skills and attitudes’) skills form a legitimate part of knowledge in the sense of ‘knowing how’ which can be traced back to Aristotle (‘practical knowledge’) and early work by Ryle (1949) – ‘knowing that and knowing how.’ For the purposes of this research and drawing on the precedent of Eraut, ‘knowledge’ will incorporate theoretical and practical understanding of knowing how to do something – all essential features on the headteacher’s professional knowledge landscape.

So what other sorts of characteristics might this type of professional knowledge possess? Walker & Dimmock stress that what matters in professional knowledge is
teachers' reflective tacit knowledge which is embedded in their own personal beliefs, experiences and values (2004:279). This personalised and un-codifiable aspect of professional knowledge can be recognised in the contribution of Goodson who also emphasises the 'personal' aspect of professional knowledge. In his work on teachers' life and work and its impact on their workplace knowledge (1996), he argues that professional knowledge is embedded in teachers' wider lives, in their personal and biographical details, workplace and life history, even educational and faith background. It is only through ensuring the teacher's voice is heard in research that findings can be productively fed-back into teachers' own professional knowledge. Drawing on the work of Lortie (1975), Goodson (2000:6-7) emphasises the 'socialisation' aspect of teacher's professional knowledge - that is the process whereby teachers and headteachers obtain professional operational knowledge through their own experiences as pupils. Lortie refers to the time teachers themselves spent as pupils as an 'apprenticeship of observation' of how teachers work, during which different styles of teaching, classroom management and even leadership of a school are internalized and observed. These experiences are then 'carried in suspension' until re-activation during a teacher's own training period. The research will pick up on this notion, and consider whether this idea could be taken a step further in terms of headteacher professional knowledge. The proposition is that headteachers, as well as serving an observational apprenticeship themselves as pupils during their own schooling (in which they assimilate information about heads of the schools they were in) also internalise and observe headteachers that they work under in their earlier careers, and re-activate these experiences to inform their own professional knowledge once they take over the role themselves.
Continuing the theme of the 'personal' in professional knowledge, there are also interesting recent parallels found in the literature on business leadership. Here an emphasis is emerging as a counter-culture to the scientific, technical-rational model of organisational management which stresses that leadership is more than just the sum of operations carried out in the workplace. This view emphasises leadership as more than simply a matter of doing, of carrying out prescribed processes, but also about being and projecting a lived example and demonstrable values which are integral to the leader as a person (Deverell 1999 in Antonacopoulou & Bento 2004:86).

In similar vein, Sockett (1993) stresses the 'moral' as an essential element of being a professional and therefore part of, although perhaps not an explicitly stated element of, professional knowledge. In particular for a headteacher, knowledge of collegiality, a concern for relationships within the organisation and moral wisdom and judgement in action are all crucial elements of effective work. The focus of 'moral professionalism' and the professional knowledge contained therein must be through attention to attributes such as honesty, care, fairness, courage and a deep commitment to improving professional practice.

But any profession, in order to preserve its status as an authoritative body within society must lay claim to a distinct body of knowledge which is unique and closed to the public. However, the suggestion of a de-coupling of theory from practice-in-action and the increased emphasis on the personal and subjective in professional knowledge has been seen by some as an assault on this position. Taken to its furthest extreme, the notion that academic knowledge is not relevant to the everyday work of the professional any more brings into question the role of traditional institutions, such as universities, in providing this knowledge. It also serves to reduce emphasis on the
critical and evaluative powers of professionals in continuously assessing and re-assessing their practices, and to take on significant lessons from researched-based knowledge (Edwards 1997 in Brooks 2003:73). It might be argued that reducing what matters in professional knowledge to teachers’ reflective tacit knowledge which is embedded in personal beliefs, experiences and values (Walker & Dimmock 2004:279) is to destabilise the professional knowledge base and render it nothing more than subjective, personalised impressions and theories. This problem is emphasised if the difficulty in articulating this kind of knowledge in a form which is useable by others is taken into account – ultimately people ‘do not know what they know’ (Eraut 1994:15) or ‘know more than they can tell’ (Horvath 1999: ix). As we have seen, this tacit aspect of professional knowledge is important, but also problematic because personalised knowledge is often, by its very nature, tacit and therefore difficult to explore. But this does not make tacit knowledge any less significant.

Argyris (1999) argues that tacit knowledge is the primary basis for effective professional management and Schon (1983) that it characterises the knowledge base of all professions. For Jarvis, tacit knowledge has two processes underlying its composition (1997:28). The first, based on the earlier work of Ryle (1949), is that of forgetting - as practitioners gain experience they forget the original rules upon which their practice is based. The second, is ‘incidental’ (Marsick and Watkins 1990) or ‘pre-conscious’ learning (Jarvis 1987) – learning from ordinary experience without being conscious of it. For Hatsopoulos & Hatsopoulos (1999) tacit knowledge leads to an intuitive process which generates instincts or feelings which help make a decision. These feelings are based on experience and analogical inference from other experiences within or outside the company or from society at large. The strength of this particular research project is that it does not attempt to quantify the personalised
nature of what such tacit knowledge is, only to chart some of the influences on its formation and continuing influence on headteachers and their professional practice. This is an aspect which will be specifically developed in the case studies which follow the survey.

In recent years, and perhaps as a result of this difficulty, a broader concept of the ‘learning professional’ has developed, incorporating both theoretical, practical and tacit knowledge, and encompassing a more holistic approach to the way in which professionals develop. In terms of headteacher professional knowledge, this might mean heads being overtly and thoroughly committed to lifelong learning themselves, appreciating that profound learning occurs outside educational institutions as well as within them, and exploring ways in which formal or competency-based qualifications can be related to informal learning experiences in the workplace (Guile and Lucas 1999: 218). This indicates the changing nature of professional knowledge in the modern age, where professional knowledge becomes less clear cut, even ‘messy’ - Knowledge can no longer be regarded as discrete and coherent, its production defined by clear rules and governed by settled routines. Instead, it has become a mixture of theory and practice, abstraction and aggregation, ideas and data.

(Gibbons et al 1994: 81)

This lack of certainty causes D. Hargreaves to promote a notion of ‘creative professionalism’ where the onus of creating professional knowledge falls on the profession itself. He calls for ‘knowledge-creating professionals’, using their expertise as the prime source of professional power and influence, and rethinking the dissemination of professional knowledge about what works in schools, which he argued at the time was almost entirely inappropriate and ineffective (1998: 13). This involves properly aligning educational research and the needs of practising teachers and leaders, and ensuring they themselves contribute to, and disseminate better,
professional practices. This can be achieved through ‘collaborative cultures’ which characterise the ‘post-modern professional’ - offering help and support as a way of using shared experience to solve the ongoing challenges found imbedded in professional practice (Goodson & Hargreaves 1996:20-21). The research will attempt to identify examples of such practices in the field.

3.4 The professional knowledge of headteachers

Hargreaves goes on to offer a rare theoretical definition of what the new ‘working knowledge’ for headteachers might look like:

1. Working knowledge of how to manage the school
2. Working knowledge of how to manage teaching and learning
3. Working knowledge of how to manage the school’s external partnerships
4. Managing and creating of new working knowledge for teachers and heads
5. Managing the dissemination of this new knowledge to every single school

(1998:19-20)

For Hargreaves, this kind of professional knowledge is ‘working knowledge’, and it is essential to workplace achievement as the most significant contributor to a heads’ ability to manage the school and its major asset, the teachers (1998:19). Eraut also specifically approaches the professional knowledge of headteachers from a more theoretical perspective identifying six categories which make up the nature of heads’ knowledge, summarised in the table below:

Table 3.3 a theoretical categorisation of head teachers’ professional knowledge base

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Knowledge of people</th>
<th>Important in decision-making, fallible, appears insightful, largely acquired unintentionally as a by-product of unrepresentative encounters, may be random and subconscious, over-simplified.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

47
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Situational knowledge</td>
<td>‘Reading’ professional situations, often conscious, but seldom written down. Learned through being in situations rather than studying them. Heads often must rely on second-hand information filtered by other managers. Hence a need to interpret this subjective information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Knowledge of educational practice</td>
<td>Knowledge which permits the head to be a ‘lead professional’ concerning policies and practices within a school (academic, pastoral, staff development etc.) Not necessary to be an expert in all of these – hence delegation. Decision-making likely to be dominated by heads’ own personal values or knowledge of educational theory (conscious or subconscious).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conceptual knowledge</td>
<td>Concepts, theories and ideas which the head has consciously stored in memory for use in analysing problems/issues. Involves re-learning during the transformation process from concept to practical use (e.g. government guidelines to classroom practice).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Process knowledge</td>
<td>Usually featuring prominently in management courses. ‘Getting things done’ – e.g. planning, organisation, monitoring etc. - process knowledge or ‘know-how.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Control knowledge</td>
<td>Self-knowledge (about one’s strengths and weaknesses), self-awareness, self-management (e.g. use of time, delegation), self-development of head’s own learning. Rarely given explicit attention.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(from Eraut 1994:76-9)

What is clear from this model is that headteachers possess a great deal of knowledge, some acquired in a formal manner (through training conferences or reading), but most is acquired through experience (only some of which has been reflected upon and written down.) This is mainly because such experiential knowledge is often formed and then used without people even realising it. It is tacit and unspecified, incorporated into habit and ways of thinking, and not externally scrutinised; it is ‘unknown’
knowledge. Such learning is continuous and can be either ‘assimilation’ (taking new information on board and adding it to existing frameworks) or ‘accommodation’ (taking on new frameworks which better fit the newly-acquired information). Eraut suggests that assimilation dominates headteachers as they get more experienced in their careers (the ‘you can’t teach an old dog new tricks’ scenario), but unplanned reflection and assimilation remains very valuable perhaps when driving back from work or talking to a friend about your work (Eraut 1994:75).

Eraut also points out an important reality for those seeking to understand the professional knowledge of headteachers and the interplay between the theoretical and practical forms of knowledge that this might entail. He points to a ‘false dichotomy’ (1994:76) between the two, and that many education ‘theories’ contained in books are in wide circulation in our schools already. It is only the fact that they are not used which consigns them to the label ‘theoretical’- as soon as they come into usage and form part of teachers’ thinking and everyday conversations they become simple common sense! This is an important point when approaching the research, as it is possible to encounter cynicism in the field from heads who claim no interest in educational leadership literature, but are often working at the cutting edge of what the educational management literature observes and writes about, without even being aware of it.

An alternative perspective on professional knowledge in educational management is outlined by Bennett (1997:60) who sees professional practice as comprising an understanding of what a job should entail and what we actually do in that job. Thus professionals construct a theory of their job by evaluating actions, and in turn informing judgements about the quality of their practice. This knowledge is
formulated from multiple sources such as what worked in the past, experience and observation of others doing the same or similar work, reading, education and training. Additionally, one of the most important sources of professional knowledge is the practitioner’s own value system. The link between the professional workplace and the ‘assumptive world’ is made by Young (1981) who proposed that in any given situation the professional creates an understanding of what is happening by drawing on existing knowledge from similar experiences or second-hand knowledge, such as reading, as well as personal attitudes and values. Thus in every situation, a new ‘theory of the situation’ is constructed in order to work out what to do. Young draws on similar theorising by Argyris and Schon (1978) who terms this an individual’s ‘theory-in-use’ which is based on critical reflection of the perception of what the job involves, what has been done and why that action was taken. This they refer to as ‘double-loop’ learning because not only is the problem explored, but a reconsideration of the assumptions causing the definition of that particular problem is also sought (Bennett 1997:60-61).

3.5 Professional knowledge, the knowledge economy; schools and their leaders.

‘Knowledge is the only meaningful resource today’ Drucker (1993:54)

Another important area which needs exploring in order to appreciate fully the research contribution being offered here is the growth of attention - both in the literature and in political terms – that professional knowledge has received in recent years, and why it has become such a prominent theme in the discourse surrounding the future of education.
In 1996, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported with certainty that ‘all economies are moving towards a knowledge-based economy.’ The New Labour government’s response to this was to call for a ‘world class education system’ in their first education white paper, identifying the main driving force behind educational change as economic competition from international competitors, such as the pacific rim countries (DfES 1997). Similarly, the crucial importance of the UK’s future ‘knowledge economy’ to Britain’s prosperity was stressed by the Prime Minister in an important speech (Blair 2000). In essence the argument was that as the effects of globalisation come more to the fore, knowledge in the form of science, technology, research, development and innovation should become the critical determinant of economic growth rather than capital and labour, as it was in the industrial age. As part of this, a constant process of change and adaptation becomes necessary, particularly considering the speed and ease of modern communications and the economic emphasis on service as opposed to commodity. This means the economy of the future requires ‘knowledge workers’, and teachers become the catalysts of the knowledge society by instilling ‘knowledge creation capacity’ in schools (Hargreaves 2003:10). This political and policy context suggests it will be particularly important for future school leaders to have the capacity to update their own professional knowledge regularly as they facilitate other teachers in their own schools to do likewise and inspire their pupils to become highly-qualified contributors to the knowledge economy.

Thus a new professionalism agenda emerges, with accompanying claims to unique and professional knowledge. As sizeable shifts in society and particularly in economic realities have taken hold, one reaction has been an increased emphasis on the continuing lifelong learning of the professional. In terms of headteachers and their
professional knowledge, this has led to a change of emphasis from the traditional individualised model of professional development where emphasis was placed on informal and individual learning to a more formalised, prescriptive, and structured approach. Whereas in the past the craft of being a school leader might have been grasped through experiential learning, drawing on the lessons of trial and error, previous experiences, shadowing or apprenticeship, the new agenda argues that a more complex approach is needed. This shift in complexity can also be found in the general business literature. Antonacopoulou & Bento argue that, for many decades, and as a result of the positivist behavioural science tradition, it was presumed that leadership could be taught to anyone that could learn. However, over the last decade there has been an increasing realisation that whilst it is possible to be taught about leadership, this does not necessarily develop the leader per se. Instead the emphasis has moved to a more learner-centred transformational approach, seeking to draw on personal discovery and experimentation on the part of the learner, based on reflexivity and values. This is the premise that ‘leadership is learning’ by its very nature, and that for all leaders (and particularly school leaders), if nothing else, professional knowledge should be about learning, continuing to learn and facilitating the learning of those around them (2004:81):

Learning itself can be seen as a dynamic capability (in leadership) because it is a purposeful adaptation and reconfiguration of attributes (including knowledge and skills) and a capacity to renew previous competence to maintain congruence with changing requirements. (Antonacopoulou & Bento 2004:85)

This also emphasises the state of continual change and growing complexity that educational leaders find in their professional contexts and knowledge base today.
But this development is not without challenges. Inevitable tension occurs when this sort of personalised, experiential and workplace-based type of professional knowledge is emphasised. This is because it runs counter to the prescriptive elements of an overarching leadership training programme such as the NPQH. This, as we have seen in chapter 2, is partly motivated by government’s need to control the leadership of schools which are seen as crucial to political and economic success in the globalised market (for example the national standards for headteachers DfES 2004). This does not necessarily sit easily with a resurgent, uncertain and often un-codified professional knowledge base for school leaders. Indeed it has been heavily criticised for the restrictions it places on individual professional development, individuality, innovation and creativity which we have seen is an integral part of headteachers’ professional knowledge (see, for example, Chown 1996 or Schon 2002).

3.6 Conclusion

The discourse of teacher professionalism and professional knowledge has come a long way since Schon referred to a ‘crisis of confidence in professional knowledge’ (1983:3), and where attacks on the traditional knowledge base of teachers (and other professions) were gathering pace. Although it has come through difficult times, in particular successive governments’ preference for the market rather than professional judgement, and a loss of public confidence in professional institutions perpetuated by constant attacks in the influential media during the 1980s and 1990s, a resurgent new professionalism agenda has emerged for the third millennia which has reinvigorated debate about professional knowledge in education. Importantly this has highlighted that professional work involves a great deal of practical knowledge and this knowledge base is often difficult to define and clearly articulate. As a direct result of
this, Bottery (1998) argues that professionals who attempt to portray themselves as experts above and beyond challenge can only invite censure and cynicism. Instead they must acknowledge that epistemological uncertainty is a fact of life, and that this does not suggest a lack of technical expertise on their part. Indeed, the complexity of professional settings in the modern age requires professional knowledge to be fluid and perhaps less assured than it has tried to be, and it is only through these means that it will ultimately prevail. Thus Bottery calls for the ethics of ‘reflective integrity’ and ‘humility’ in building the constantly developing knowledge base required for teachers, headteachers and all professionals in the new professional age (1998:165-166).

What is clear from this review of the literature is that professional knowledge is difficult to define and spell out explicitly. It is a complex concept which varies according to individual, context and setting.

Professional knowledge cannot be characterised in a manner that is independent of how it is learned and used. It is through looking at the contexts of its acquisition and its use that its essential nature is revealed. Although many areas of professional knowledge are dependent on some understanding of relevant public codified knowledge, professional knowledge is constructed through experience and its nature depends on the cumulative acquisition, selection and interpretation of that experience.

(Eraut 1994:19-20)

An examination of such experiences and of the contexts of professional knowledge acquisition, construction and use is what this research project seeks to undertake.
Part II: Research-generated insights into the acquisition and effectiveness of professional knowledge for newly-appointed headteachers

In surveying previous research related to the area of study being undertaken in this thesis, a number of strands emerge. The aim of this section is to explain what existing research in the maintained sector tells us about:

- What is effective in preparing teachers for headship; deputy headship as a preparation for headship
- The state of readiness of new headteachers and problems faced by them once in post
- Sources of headteachers’ professional knowledge, support strategies for new heads, mentoring and reflection
- The effect of life history and personal experience on informing and sustaining the professional knowledge of school leaders

Particular attention will also be given to the independent sector in the final section namely:

- Previous research into leadership and management in the independent sector, with particular reference to informing and sustaining head teachers’ professional knowledge

3.7 Preparation for headship & deputy headship as a preparation for headship

Preparation for headship:

Male and Hvizdak (1999) conducted a national postal questionnaire survey of headteachers in England, taking a 10% random stratified sample, primarily seeking to establish the respondents’ perceived state of readiness for the demands of the headteacher position in a number of job categories and competencies. The survey is significant because it is the last set of data where the majority of recently-appointed headteachers had no formal programme of preparation for the role. The main findings
were that headteachers needed someone to talk to help them settle into their new role and over half of respondents felt they needed further professional support and mentoring. In terms of perceptions of readiness for the role of headteacher, the activities where respondent felt least prepared were working with underperforming teachers, use of ICT in management, and knowledge and application of education law. They felt best prepared in working effectively with adults, parental involvement and maintaining effective school discipline (Bright & Ware 2003:29). These categories were helpful in formulating some of this research project's data-gathering questions and some interesting points of comparison should be possible. Male & Hvizdak found that 57% of secondary school headteachers perceived themselves to be either ‘well prepared’ or ‘extremely well prepared’ for the job. They also concur with Glanz (1994) and Muijs & Harris (2003) that the traditional task-driven role of deputy heads is not capable of giving adequate preparation for headship on its own.

Earley & Evans (2004:329-300) attempted to evaluate the impact of the National College of School Leadership. Using data from their 2001 and 2003 surveys, they found that there had be slight improvement in the overall percentage of headteachers that indicated they felt adequately prepared for headship between the two studies - 67% in 2001 compared to 73% in 2003. It is important to note however that these were heads prior to taking up post. Once in post and given a chance to reflect subsequently, the figures drop to 57% in 2001 and 51% in 2003. For deputy headteachers, little change was observed over this period: 70% felt adequately prepared for headship in 2001, 71% in 2003. Data also indicated that the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) was considered by 76% of heads to have a very significant or significant role in developing the school improvement agenda; 84% felt it had a significant or very significant role in promoting leadership development.
These findings will make for interesting comparison with the independent sector, particularly as one of the recommendations of the Earley & Evans study was that NCSL and independent schools should work more closely together (2002b). In a follow-up to the Earley et al. (2002a) study, Stevens et al. (2005) in a very large-scale and comprehensive study of headteachers, LEAs, governors and middle leaders, found that 87% of candidates who completed the NPQH felt well prepared for the role of headteacher as opposed to 77% of all deputy headteachers. For headteachers with 5 years or less experience (308 respondents), 11% felt very prepared for the role, 60% fairly well prepared, 23% not very prepared and 6% not at all prepared. Working with good headteachers (26%) and covering the heads' absence (22%) were mentioned as the best two preparatory aspects for headship by deputies.

Deputy and assistant headship:

West (1992) identifies three possible roles for the deputy head, one of which is as the prospective head, implying that the time spent as a deputy offers a preparation and entry point for headship. Although potentially useful when enquiring about the career paths of heads, this study was conducted only in primary schools where things may be different. Ribbins (1997) identified a large number of headteachers who found their experience as a deputy frustrating because of a perceived lack of influence, particularly with regards to leadership to which they felt they had better access in middle management positions within the school (for example, as Head of Department). Glanz (1994) in an American study, identified a group of recently-appointed headteachers who felt that deputyship had not been adequate preparation for school leadership because it had not given them the requisite experience in leadership. A reasonable conclusion from this previous research is that the experience of being a deputy or assistant head is not always helpful preparation for headship particularly
because of possible lack of genuine leadership opportunities in the role. Additionally, there is not enough targeted training for assistant or deputy heads particularly in the area of leadership development (Harris et al 2003:10). Muijs & Harris (2003) and Hartle & Thomas (2003) found that distributed leadership (i.e. sharing leadership practice among senior managers or other teachers) was more likely to coincide with a deputy or assistant head that was in an emergent role. This finding is of interest as it will be illuminative to compare this with members of the study group in this research who saw themselves in a ‘prospective heads’ role when deputies.

Hayes (2005) identified that some headteachers are providing their deputies with an excellent grounding with which to go on and take on headship, although this is far from guaranteed and depends on the personal chemistry of those involved. This is a similar finding to those of Garrett & McGeachie (1998) who also looked at the role of the deputy head as preparation for headship in primary schools and identified the main factors which are required for this to work: quality time, sufficient funding and the heads’ willingness to support all aspects of a deputy’s preparation for leadership.
3.8 Issues for new headteachers once in post

By identifying what is known already about the professional challenges encountered by headteachers newly in post and reporting on research into their early experiences and helpful and less helpful mechanisms for supporting and sustaining new heads, a picture of what has been discovered already about the scope of the professional challenge and the role of professional knowledge in informing and sustaining successful leadership can be established. This can then be taken forward into this research project, guiding the data-gathering process and acting as an illuminative point of analysis and potential comparison between the maintained and independent sectors.

The first major study of newly-appointed secondary heads in England and Wales was conducted by Weindling and Earley (1987) which involved questionnaires from 188 headteachers and interviews with 47. In this study 15% of new heads said they were well prepared for headship, 16% poorly or less adequately prepared. In a follow up study Earley et al. (1990) found that most headteachers emphasised the value of their previous experience as a deputy or existing head, whilst some raised problems which stemmed from a lack of experience of dealing with a governing body. Heads also saw contact with other heads in similar settings as central to their own professional development (see Hobson et al. 2003a:6).

More recently, issues for new headteachers have been investigated by Brown (2002) who looked at their first 100 days in post. She found that it is important to develop a team ethos amongst the staff on arrival, problems with administrative support were distracting, establishing management systems where none had existed before initially distract from teaching and learning objectives, and that the legacy of previous
headteachers is not necessarily helpful. The limitations of this study are evident as the research was conducted in only one school, but it might give some helpful insights into the research data which emerges later from heads who are in their first year in post.

Bolam *et al.* (1993, 1995) suggest that dealing with the existing staff structure is seen as more problematic by secondary heads compared with time-management, consultation and communication, team work, staff appraisal and deciding whether or not to teach. Again these can be important starting points for this research project as it unfolds.

Smaller scale research has been conducted by Daresh & Male (2000) who interviewed eight headteachers from primary and secondary schools and reported that they found difficulty in coming to terms with the isolation of the role and some technical skills, particularly financial. Jones (2001) researched eight newly-appointed primary school headteachers who identified a number of difficulties in post such as dealing with the esteem in which the previous head was held and the need to make an impact.

Studies of problems faced by new heads have also been carried out elsewhere in Wales (Dunning 1996), Scotland (Draper & McMichael 1998), Europe (Bolam *et al.* 2000), New Zealand (Wadsworth 1988), Australia (Bowman 1996 & Dunshea 1988), and the United States (Daresh, 1986; Webster, 1989; Parkay & Hall, 1992; Parkay *et al.*, 1992a; Parkay & Currie, 1992; Parkay & Rhodes, 1992; Daresh & Male, 2000).

For the purposes of space and relevance, we will cover some of the common problems for new heads identified by these studies highlighted by Hobson *et al.* (2003a):
• Feelings of professional isolation and loneliness (Weindling & Earley, 1987; Bolam et al., 1993; Daresh & Male, 2000; Draper & McMichael, 2000; Bolam et al., 2000)

• Dealing with the legacy of the previous headteacher (Weindling & Earley, 1987; Bolam et al., 1993; Dunning, 2000; Draper & McMichael, 2000; Webster, 1989)

• Managing time and priorities (Bolam et al., 1993; Dunning, 1996; Draper & McMichael, 1998; Bolam et al., 2000; Webster, 1989; Parkay et al., 1992a; Daresh & Male, 2000)

• Managing the school budget (Daresh, 1986; Bolam et al., 1993; Dunning, 1996; Male, 2001b)

• Dealing with ineffective staff (Weindling & Earley, 1987; Dunning 1996; Bolam et al., 2000)

• Implementing new government initiatives (Dunning, 1996; Bolam et al., 2000; Male, 2001a)

• Problems with school buildings and site management (Dunning, 1996; Bolam et al., 2000; Male, 2001b)

(It should be noted that these studies were all carried out before the introduction of the compulsory National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in 2002).

Of potential interest to this current project is whether, without the support of the NPQH, NCSL and other targeted training found in the maintained sector, different challenges for beginning headteachers are evident in the independent sector.

3.9 Sources of professional knowledge for headteachers

Stevens et al., in researching ‘sources for inspiration in ideas about work and practice as a school leader’ (2005: 93), found that 82% mentioned other school leaders; 75% conferences and seminars; 71% books, newspapers and other publications; 50% professional associations; 50% their own leadership teams; 44% the LEA; 40% the DfES and 38% the NCSL; 33% the internet and teachers they have worked under. Of particular interest to the current research project is in the absence of LEA, DfES and
NCSL in the independent sector and what fills that void in informing headteachers’ professional knowledge. Stevens et al (2005) also suggest that networking with other headteachers has become more common since 2001, with 72% of headteachers saying they network ‘very regularly’ or ‘fairly regularly’. Networking between headteachers in the independent sector may prove to be a more problematic affair with the concerns of commercial competitiveness within local areas, and confidentiality within small and potentially parochial professional heads’ associations.

Stevens et al. also looked at alternative sources of headteacher professional knowledge and development. Some of the questions which were asked will be replicated in the research being conducted as part of this thesis, so it is important to have an understanding of their main findings:

- Over half of all school leaders draw on educational theory or research findings to support their work, with deputy headteachers (62%) and NPQH candidates (60%) even more likely to consider it

- 83% of headteachers were ‘very involved’ or ‘fairly involved’ in undertaking periodic and systematic self-assessment of their own leadership role

- Headteachers visited the following websites ‘at least sometimes’:
  - DfES: 92%
  - OFSTED: 88%
  - NCSL: 73%
  - Other government-resourced websites: 61%
  - NCSL’s talk2learn online community: 35%

The fact that web use is on the increase is not surprising, but the growing increase in the use of the NCSL (from 43% to 73% in the last 3 years) is potentially significant when compared with the independent sector which has no formal links with the College. Likewise, 86% of headteachers are now aware of the purposes of the NCSL (compared with 52% in 2001) which only further emphasises its growing influence.
(although only 34% of heads are actually involved with the NCSL, dropping to 26%
for those who have been in post more than 10 years).

Even so, the question needs to be posed: With little or no access to the increasingly
influential NCSL, and little material of direct relevance at least on government-led or
resourced websites, where are independent school leaders turning for their
professional development and renewal of their professional knowledge?

At the same time is it important to consider that Stevens et al.’s findings make it clear
that ‘headteachers are the main source of inspiration to other school leaders’ (2005:
165). This makes investigation of the role of the independent sector professional heads
associations in linking school leaders in professional networks very important.

Bush (2004), in addressing the issue of the performance of educational leaders and
their development, points to the ‘New Visions’ programme at the NCSL as an
‘untypical learning model’ which emphasises knowledge creation for headteachers
during their early headship. In particular the knowledge of individual headteachers, of
theory, research and academics, and the knowledge created in a community of
headteachers. Participants are encouraged to share their experiences in a ‘problem-
solving and action-learning approach’ and are given key short papers which are
digests of leading writers on school leadership. The programme is essentially co-
created by lead facilitators and, crucially, by the participants, through tapping into
each others’ professional knowledge and expertise. In his findings, 87% of cohort one
and two participants were very positive about the programme and 90% felt it was
appropriate for their stage of development (Bush 2004:9). This emphasis on
experiential methods of professional learning may or may not be detectable in the
independent sector.
Sieber (2002) in a study of 19 secondary headteachers who had been in post for 12 months found:

- Previous heads who they had worked under formed an important part of making sense of the new role
- The 19 heads described 60 headteachers who they had worked for previously, often at great length and with substantial feeling and who they felt had influenced their perception of the role significantly
- 8% were regarded as inspirational; 25% clearly positively; and 65% ambivalently or clearly negatively
- Heads who are successful early in post had worked under ‘enabling’ heads as deputies and gained good practical experiences on the road to headship
- Masters degrees and the NPQH were seen as the most helpful opportunities for professional development in preparing for headship. The Masters degree was rated as more useful by the majority, although in 2005 Stevens et al. reported that since 2001 the percentage of headteachers undertaking training from higher education institutions dropped from 26% to 13%
- Only 31% were positive about the NPQH, 23% were ambivalent, and 46% were either negative or dismissive (although this runs counter to recent evaluation of the NPQH by Wong (2006), Bennett & Smith (2000) and others who have found perceptions amongst headteachers of its effectiveness to be broadly positive)
- It was particularly challenging to follow a headteacher that had been in post for a long time
- There was a deal of variation in the amount of contact between a new head and the school prior to taking up post
- There was a largely negative response concerning the new headteachers’ opportunities for feedback and to reflect critically on their performance
- The governors, in almost all cases, were not good at providing constructive feedback
- Heads identified providing opportunities for deputy heads to have a personal mentor, an introductory internship or shadowing an experienced head as things which might have made a significant difference to their early experiences in post (see also Stevens et al. 2005)
Many of these themes will be picked up in the research contribution offered here. Building on Sieber’s research, the focus of this current piece of research will be to cover many more headteachers (over 100 compared to 19), and to triangulate findings by also interviewing training providers and more experienced heads (Sieber’s project did not seek any triangulation because he anticipated it would have an effect on respondents’ openness and honesty).

In a methodology which used in-depth interviews to uncover experiences of 13 teachers who had just acquired a school management post (but not necessarily only heads), Bullock et al. (1997) identified a number of particular characteristics which are relevant to understanding educational management learning. Successful managers had a clear perception of the task they had to undertake, were concerned with establishing themselves in post, and had explicit criteria for success in a way that those established-in-post did not. The group was also characterised by feeling the need to react quickly in decision-making, unease about delegation and avoiding conflict, again in contrast to managers more established in post. The conclusion of this study was that more research was needed to try and understand the knowledge-acquisition process whereby educational managers move from novice to expert. The research questions in this current project may provide further illumination in this area.

3.10 Support strategies for new headteachers

Hobson et al. (2003a) review the literature surrounding support strategies for new heads offering a summary of recommended methods but pointing out that very little evaluation of their effectiveness had been conducted. They suggested:
• Detailed documentation for the appointee prior to them taking up headship (Newton, 2001)

• Preparatory visits to the new school prior to taking up post (Dunning, 2000)

• Bringing local headteachers together to provide peer support (Baker, 1992; Rutherford & Gunraj, 1997)

• Mentoring by more experienced headteachers (Bolam et al, 1993; Bush & Coleman, 1995; Draper & McMichael, 2000; Male & Male, 2001)

• Training in specific skill areas, such as finance and personnel issues (Male & Male, 2001)

• A needs assessment process that is acted upon (Newton, 2001)

(Hobson et al. 2003a:18-19)

Added to this is evidence from outside the UK which includes the value of ‘principal support networks’, involving regular meetings at locations away from principals’ schools (Krovetz, 1993). This may be of particular relevance because the research undertaken here will attempt to identify such provision in the independent sector and investigate perceptions of its effectiveness.

A study of new headteachers in 2004 for the National College of School Leadership (NCSL 2004) found that 32% of new heads (who had been in post three years or less) said that they did not have a mentor or other individual who was able to offer them practical professional support, but 68% agreed or strongly agreed that they were supported by a network of peers (strong agreement was most likely amongst primary school headteachers). The study was given to headteachers attending NCSL events and 311 completed questionnaires were returned (a 46% response rate). The fact that the survey was not conducted from a random national sample may raise questions about its validity.
Mentoring:

Hobson (2003b: iii), in a review of the literature surrounding headteacher mentoring on which this section draws, concluded that all major studies of formal mentoring programmes for new headteachers have found that such mentoring was effective. For example, in a large-scale evaluation Bolam et al (1993) found that 66% of new heads and 73% of mentors rated the process as successful or very successful. In the US, 80% of new principals rated mentoring as helpful or extremely helpful (Grover 1994), although Stevens et al. (2005) found that only 46% of headteachers had been mentored by other headteachers.

In terms of supporting and sustaining the professional knowledge of new heads, of most benefit were opportunities to reflect on the new role (Southworth, 1995; Pocklington & Weindling, 1996), leading to an accelerated rate of learning (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000) and professional growth (Grover, 1994). Improved communication (Bush & Coleman, 1995) and inter-personal skills (Coleman et al., 1996) resulted from the mentoring experience and help with practical advice and problem-solving was also important (Bolam et al., 1993; Pocklington and Weindling, 1996; Bush & Coleman, 1995.) Advice on administration and knowledge of the school system (Grover 1994), the offering of insights into current practice (Bush & Coleman 1995), mutual information sharing (Monsour 1998), and the opportunity to discuss professional issues with an equal partner (Bush & Coleman, 1995) were also very valuable. This invariably led to increased reflexivity on the part of the headteacher and improved self-esteem (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). The success of such mentoring schemes was influenced by the availability of time (Bush & Coleman, 1995; Monsour, 1998; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000) and the matching of mentors and mentees (Bush &

The survey and interview parts of the research design in this project give the opportunity for some in-depth discussion of the successes and difficulties of headteacher mentoring in the independent sector. This is particularly significant because both the professional heads’ associations being investigated - the HMC and GSA, have a compulsory one-year mentoring scheme for all newly-appointed headteachers. Monsour (1998) and Blandford & Squire’s (2000) findings that mentors are best located geographically close to the new headteacher will be interesting to explore with the potential complication that heavy commercial competition may exist between two locally-placed independent schools.

Weindling (2004), in a report into innovation in headteacher induction found that case-study evidence suggested that mentoring plays a vital role in helping new heads establish themselves and function as effective school leaders, especially during their first year in post. In addition, it is ideal if mentors are experienced and practising headteachers themselves, and the recruitment and training of mentors is also an important consideration. Weindling also concluded that new headteachers benefit from meeting with other colleagues to share ideas and overcome feelings of isolation. Again, it will be interesting to take these findings forward into research of the independent sector and investigate whether a similar or contrasting situation is identified.
As we have seen in part one of the literature review, Goodson (1996, 2000, 2003) has called for a broader understanding of teachers in terms of their personal life experiences and biographies if there is to be a holistic understanding of their professional knowledge and setting and the practices which are encountered there. A number of recent research studies have picked up on this and have attempted to assess the impact of life history on school leadership. Put simply, this is the idea that ‘how we work and how we lead depends to a significant extent on who we are’ (Parker 2002:1). This research project will only pick up on Parker’s work to a limited extent – i.e. only in the case-study interview phase of the research - but it is important to outline some of his main findings.

In 2002 Parker interviewed five headteachers from geographically mixed secondary schools in challenging circumstances within England. He drew on the work of Gardner (1997), who highlighted the success of the personal ‘story’ of the leader as important in successful leadership, and Gronn & Ribbins (1996), who found that leadership attributes are developed within the context of life histories and these can be analysed like ‘balance sheets.’

Parker (2004:30) found that all the heads interviewed, on looking back to their formative years in school, realised just how these experiences helped them define their educational philosophies and leadership attributes. In all but two of Parker’s cases, headteachers trace the passion they have for the success of the children in their school back to their perceptions of their own schooling, its success or failure or whether they
felt advantaged or disadvantaged at having received it. It is hoped to pick up on these findings in the current research project.

Of relevance too, is Flintham’s 2003 study of 25 headteachers from a variety of school contexts which found that they all felt a strong moral or spiritual basis to their professional role, although this was not necessarily religiously-based (2003:8). Of those, 15 heads cited Christian value frameworks as influencing their professional practice despite the fact that this was double the number of church schools in the sample. Again, there will be a limited opportunity to explore these issues, and the case-study phase of the research, particularly in terms of the contribution educational background and spirituality (in it broadest sense) makes to the informing and sustaining of the interviewed headteachers’ professional knowledge and practice.

3.12 Previous research into leadership and management in the independent sector

The proposed research project builds most closely on the work of Earley & Evans (2002b) who conducted a large-scale research project of 260 schools in 2001 on the current state of leadership in independent schools. This paralleled a similar project undertaken by the University of London Institute of Education Leadership Project Team for the DfES on ‘the current state of school leadership in England.’ The research looked at a broad range of subjects around independent school headteachers. In particular, how they interpreted their leadership role and that of others; their motivations, preparation for their role, areas for further training and the sources of knowledge about best practice. Also the use of ICT in their work, their attitudes to educational research and independent-maintained sector links with regard to headteacher preparation, training and practice. It has major significance for the
research being undertaken here, and hence in this literature review, because it is the only piece of large-scale professional research which has been conducted which specifically tackles issues surrounding headteachers’ professional knowledge and development in the independent sector.

The research involved questionnaires being sent to 260 heads of both primary (preparatory) and secondary (senior) independent schools (a 10% sample). 176 returns gave the study relatively good statistical significance and represents the most comprehensive previous study into these settings which has been conducted. The research methodology is significant because it asks open-ended questions about headteachers ‘most significant development opportunities’ which elucidated a wide array of responses. This was helpful in formulating terms of reference and initial considerations in my own study, and will provide useful points of comparison with my own findings. Earley and Evans then followed up the questionnaire with telephone interviews with 21 respondents (12% of those who returned the questionnaire).

The main findings of the research which related to the focus on the study being undertaken here were:

- 58% of heads felt either very prepared or quite well-prepared for headship when they first took on the role; 41% did not feel well-prepared; 7% not prepared at all

- 75% of heads had undertaken training offered by their own professional association; ‘very few’ had participated in any of the government sponsored national training schemes for headteachers

- The three most cited examples of effective opportunities for enhancing professional knowledge were: conversations with other education professionals, professional association training and mentoring

- The three most cited examples of effective professional development ‘on the job’ were: working with a good head or senior manager (20%), just ‘doing the job’ (16%) and being a deputy head (10%)
The three most effective cited examples of professional development ‘off the job’ were general life experiences or bringing up children, attendance at in-service courses or conferences and study for the higher degree or MBA.

The most frequently cited source of inspiration and ideas were ‘other school leaders’ and professional head teacher associations.

Respondents appeared to be fairly well networked in their regional or divisional heads’ associations. 84% with regular or fairly regular contact with other heads while 81% found these contacts useful.

10% of heads thought it was important to draw on the findings of educational theory and research to support their work; 51% thought it was fairly important.

6% of heads were ‘very aware’ of the work of the NCSL, 74% were ‘vaguely aware’ or ‘not aware at all’.

70% of independent school heads had undertaken professional development and training (specific to their leadership role) over the last three years.

57% of independent school heads used headteacher networks ‘on a regular basis’ compared with only 30% in the maintained sector (according to Earley & Evans’ wider research, 2003).

The current research project will look to build on the work of Earley and Evans in the areas of issues for new heads and the acquisition of their professional knowledge. These were touched upon in their 2001 study, but they were not investigated with any specificity because of the broad range of issues the study was attempting to investigate. In the research being presented here, investigation was carried out into the next cohort of recently-appointed independent sector heads, as it has been conducted more than 5 years since Earley & Evans’ initial work. It also uses a postal questionnaire, but this is followed up face-to-face interviews rather than by telephone as in Earley and Evans’ work. This gives further opportunity to focus specifically on professional knowledge issues, rather than a broad range of issues surrounding school leadership.
Other large-scale professional research into the independent schools is very rare and only partially related to this study. Waite & Watson (1998) investigated perceived needs of senior staff in independent schools. A postal survey from a sample mix of independent schools gained a response rate of 61.6% making 191 respondents in total. They found that 92% said they had taken part in some meaningful staff development programme, but were ‘somewhat alarmed’ to find that 20% said they had no need for further skills or knowledge to sustain their present position or for future promotional purposes. The survey group identified (in order of interest) finance, marketing, pastoral care, ICT, appraisal, curriculum development and interviewing as the main requirements of further training. The conclusion of this research makes stark reading:

One of the most disturbing findings of this study is the relatively high level of complacency amongst senior staff in the independent schools. They seem to have failed to grasp the enormity of the changes that have taken place in the state sector and which now threaten the very survival of many independent schools.

(Waite & Watson 1998: 510)

A smaller-scale study was conducted by McLay & Brown (1999) into the perceptions of preparation and training for headship in eight independent secondary schools in the Manchester area. The study’s main focus was gender discrimination, but there were some findings which will illuminate this study:

- All of the headteachers had received mentoring via their professional association, but the study makes no comment on its effectiveness

- All found their previous posts of responsibility useful preparation for headship to a greater or lesser extent

- Two heads who had been housemistresses in boarding schools emphasised the relevance of this experience (acting in a loco parentis role)

- All had attended some training courses, the majority Girls’ Schools’ Association (GSA) training for deputy heads and heads

- All of the headteachers interviewed found that contact with other heads was the most useful aspect of the training; five specifically mentioned the financial content of the training
• Only one headteacher showed particular enthusiasm for the training which had been undertaken, and this was a Master of Education degree

• Seven out of eight were actively seeking more involvement from governors

• One felt her subject (Geography) was a useful preparation for headship because it was multi-disciplinary

• The study concluded that training for headship, although perceived to be quite useful, needed to be more extensive, in particular training in budgeting and legal matters, handling the management of change and dealing with staff

It is interesting to note that in a piece of ad-hoc research in 2000 conducted by a headteacher and member of the Headmasters’ and Headmistresses’ Conference (HMC) the views of 18 heads were sought to identify the main tasks of a headteacher there is no mention whatsoever of sustaining the heads’ own professional knowledge or expertise in the 79 activities which are mentioned, except one head who mentioned ‘creating a culture of professional renewal.’ This is a concern and is in keeping with the findings of Waite & Watson (1998), but as a piece of ad-hoc research it is not supported by an overt and defended methodology and so its findings must be considered in context.

Delany (2005) also raised some interesting questions about the process of preparation for headship in the independent sector, albeit combined with a study of concepts of leadership and in a piece of small-scale MBA research. He interviewed 10 senior school headteachers who had been in post less than five years. The findings and recommendations of this study which are of relevance to the research being undertaken here are:

• There was substantial evidence of shortcomings in the approach to preparation for headship
The majority of heads interviewed did not feel their governing bodies had a real understanding of the needs of the school or a clear sense of direction.

Approaches to training and gathering necessary experience prior to taking up headship were unstructured, including scepticism towards the NCSL and the idea that leadership can be improved through training.

Deputy headship appears to offer the optimum prospect of exposure to the responsibilities of headship.

A review of training should be undertaken by the professional heads’ associations in the independent sector, particularly focusing on leadership rather than management in the context of leading change.

Independent and maintained school heads should have their training aligned ‘to some degree’.

On appointing a new head, the incoming appointee should be involved in the new school as soon as possible in terms of making appointments and attending strategic, operational and financial meetings.

The professional heads’ associations should adopt a more structured approach to the identification and training of suitable mentors for new heads rather than the current policy of helping a new headteacher find a sympathetic friend.

New heads should be enabled to find opportunity for critical reflection and act as the school’s leading learner by undertaking professional training and development.

Training for independent school heads should concentrate more on the educational management and leadership theory and the management of change.

Heads should foster distributed leadership in order to prepare younger members of the teaching staff for future leadership roles.

These findings are closely related to some of the issues which this study will investigate, and it will be interesting to follow up some of these areas to see whether there has been any progress on any of these recommendations, or indeed Delany’s findings can be substantiated in the subsequent data.
Calnin & Davies (2004) offer some reflections on the current leadership approach of independent school headteachers in England and Australia, interviewing ten headteachers in each country. On the subject of staff development opportunities, the study found that there was big variation in the way different headteachers approached professional development for promotional purposes. The most common approach in England was the learn-on-the-job approach, where a headteacher would identify a prospective leader and mentor that person. Some headteachers ensured that their deputies were given training in every aspect of the job, so they were prepared for possible promotion. In independent Australian schools the situation is quite different with an expectation that principals will have a post-graduate or doctoral degree most likely in an area of school leadership and this criterion is normally listed by schools as essential for selection. This applies to those seeking promotion to middle-level leadership roles too.

3.13 Conclusion

The review of previous research here demonstrates that school leadership in the UK and beyond has been subjected to a great deal of attention, particularly over the last ten years. Research into recently-appointed headteachers has also been large-scale and extensive. The research project being presented here has a legitimate (and modest) claim to be adding to this existing knowledge for a number of reasons:

1. The independent schools operate in a specialised field of their own, and this has been subjected to very little academic research. Additionally, the sector is far from homogenous, a fact which is not widely recognised. This research investigates HMC and GSA schools - the two biggest and most academically-elite groups in the sector.

2. The survey aspect of the research allows some replication of earlier research, in particular Earley & Evans (2002) and Stevens et al (2005). But conducting
research in 2006-2007 into headteachers who are only within their first 5 years in post means accessing a separate cohort of new heads from the group previously studied by Earley & Evans. This should give some insights into the most recent developments amongst the new generation of independent school leaders.

3. The case study aspect of the research allows in-depth probing of issues which come to light in semi-structured interviews; in particular personal influences on the professional knowledge landscape, such as previous heads, or educational and religious background, which have not been investigated in this setting before.

4. The face-to-face aspect of the interviews is a step closer to the field than Earley and Evans’ (2002) telephone interviews which focused on preparedness for post rather than professional knowledge.

The review conducted here places this research project within a legitimate context of recent professional research and demonstrates that it builds on existing knowledge and can contribute to a deeper understanding of an under-researched, yet influential part of our school system, and society as a whole.
Chapter 4: Some Considerations of Design and Method

The scale of the research design represents a challenging, but manageable project for a practitioner doctorate on a part-time basis. As a modular professional doctorate, the project builds on previously assessed portfolio of around 40,000 words.

Table 4.1 An outline of method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA COLLECTION PROCESS</th>
<th>METHOD</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS (NUMBERS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 September &amp; October 2006</td>
<td>Sampling process and piloting of postal questionnaire survey</td>
<td>HMC &amp; GSA heads appointed within the last 5 years = 143 (of a total of 452 heads, GSA – 210, HMC – 242)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 November 2006</td>
<td>Sending out of postal survey to newly-qualified heads</td>
<td>143 selected heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30th November 2006</td>
<td>Follow-up letter</td>
<td>143 heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3 March 2007</td>
<td>Convenience sampling of suitable case-studies for follow up interview.</td>
<td>5 selected heads &amp; the Professional Development Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Piloting of interview schedules</td>
<td>2 other heads outside the study groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4 May – July 2007</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews with selected newly-appointed heads</td>
<td>3 selected newly-appointed heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5 July 2007</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews with selected experienced heads</td>
<td>2 selected experienced heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 6 June 2007</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview with an independent sector headship training provider</td>
<td>The Director of Independent Professional Development, serving HMC and GSA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1 Selecting the field of study

The independent schools are divided into a number of different umbrella groups, five of which make up the Independent Schools Council (ISC). Of those that represent secondary schools, the two largest are the Girls' School Association (GSA) with 210 schools, and the Headmasters' Conference (HMC) which has 242 schools. Researching these two groups provides a manageable scale to the study, and a reasonably even spread of gender. These two groups also provide their own training programme for headship, and have a full-time professional development officer who facilitates this provision. The study does not seek to investigate training provision in other parts of the sector because, with its fragmented nature and the enormous diversity in programmes, it would be logistically impossible with the resources available. It would also make coherent research outcomes very difficult to obtain.

The survey aspect of the research focuses on recently-appointed heads who are defined as those who have done less than five years in their first headship, as they should have reasonably fresh memories of starting the job, but also a sense of perspective on how their professional knowledge has progressed over their first few years in post. Within a total of 452 GSA and HMC heads, 143 fitted into this category.

4.2 Sampling

The population was specified as recently-appointed HMC and GSA heads who had been in post less than five years. The HMC and GSA were contacted and given a brief description of the research, and they agreed to provide a list of the names and
addresses of the study group. A survey of 143 heads seemed a manageable project, and this enabled the ‘sample’ for the study to be the entire population.

4.3 Rationale for the chosen research methods

The research uses a pragmatic approach to paradigm, design and methodology aimed at securing the most convenient and illuminative methods for acquiring and presenting useable and rich data. The study uses predominantly qualitative research methods (through survey and subsequent interviews), but also draws from the mixed-method paradigm in using some basic quantitative tools in some statistical parts of the survey analysis.

Moving from survey to interview is a well-trodden research path, where one method acts as a prelude to the other - initial survey data leads into evaluative settings to be investigated in further depth by interview. Miles & Huberman speak of a confidence in qualitative data collected on a face-to-face basis because of its ‘local groundedness’ and the close proximity of the data to a specific situation on the ground, rather than via post or e mail (1994:10).

4.4 The Survey - mixed methods design

The survey aspect of the proposed research methods will entail some limited quantitative handling of data. This is an intentional part of the research design as this study takes the view that there is no ‘best method’ in educational research, and that most real world study produces data which call for both qualitative and quantitative analysis (Robson 1993:304, 307). Mixed method research enables findings to feature some statistical information, with narrative explanation added, perhaps giving some
precision to the data uncovered in the case studies and certainly widening the perspective. The intention is to use the survey to overcome the weakness of the singularity of case studies, and to use case studies to overcome the lack of opportunity for in-depth interpretative analysis in a survey. Thus both methods work to produce more complete knowledge and further insight into the study.

The survey incorporated a number of open-ended questions to give ample opportunity for respondents to add further comment in support of the choices they had made in the closed questions. This was intended to allow motivations and meanings to come through in the survey as an informative background to the follow-up interviews. The adoption of a Likert Scale for a number of questions was important as attitudes to professional knowledge acquisitions is at the heart of the research. The reliability and relative ease of handling such data, the compatibility of the scale with a postal questionnaire and the opportunity to get a sense of meaning and motivations whilst retaining quantitative aspects were all important motivations in selecting this tool. The questions were carefully brainstormed with a group of aspirant heads and a headteacher who also closely checked the wording of the provided statements.

4.5 The Interviews – a justification of qualitative design

There are a number of reasons why qualitative interviews were considered most appropriate for following up on the findings of the postal questionnaire. Drawing on Snape & Spencer’s justification of qualitative method (2003:4), the following rationale emerged:
1. Attempting to establish the effectiveness of headship training involves engaging with the perceptions and constructed meanings of others, assimilating their lived experiences and uncovering the complexities of heads’ social experiences in their natural setting. This cannot be achieved wholly through counting or quantifying statistical empirical material (Strauss & Corbin 1998:11). Data collection through interview will be on a relatively small scale and will involve interaction between researcher and participant, allowing issues important to interviewee and researcher to be explored and developed in depth. The semi-structured format of the interview ensured that respondents were given the same questions, and meant data collection could be systematic. At the same time it enabled salient and relevant issues to be explored in more detail.

2. The research will attempt to provide theoretical and holistic perspectives to interview data whilst explaining the contexts, using personal insights and taking a non-judgemental stance. Such personal insights form an important part of professional doctoral work where research is conducted into an area of the researcher’s own professional interest. In terms of analysis and interpretation, this means offering ‘meaning’ rather than ‘cause’, acknowledging complexities in the uniqueness of each case and identifying themes which emerge from the data rather than identifying a priori categories.

3. The research design is flexible and sensitive to social context. A relatively small number of interviews works in practical terms for participants and researcher, and provides the best opportunity to explore meaning. The method involves both
flexibility of method (e.g. in the selection of suitable case studies) and methodology (e.g. in incorporating some basic quantitative techniques in analysis of survey data).

4.6 Case study interviews

Case study is ideal for professional doctorate researchers who aim to be close to the field they work in and wish to engage in a dynamic and interactive process drawing on the interpretative paradigm (Edwards 2002: 157). The research aims to provide an interpretation of the professional knowledge and development of newly-appointed headteachers. An evaluative case study enables discussion rather than dictation of findings, and generates new insights rather than providing specific answers to close designed field problems (Atkinson 2000:328). Interviews were conducted in headteacher’s schools and were semi-structured in a way that was suited to probing aspects of a heads’ career prior to headship; work-based acquisition of professional knowledge; senior management experience; present sources of improving professional knowledge and skills; externally-delivered training and the future of leadership training and development in the independent sector. The semi-structured interview schedule allowed sufficient scope for a free discourse in areas which the headteacher felt was particularly important to them.

4.7 Approach to Analysis & Theory generation

The research looks to investigate the personal perceptions of heads and others in terms of what contributes to their professional knowledge and how successful they feel this is in sustaining them in their role. It does not try to establish some general criteria for
the effectiveness of heads’ professional knowledge and attempt to evaluate responses systematically in terms of these.

The study offers some explanatory theory, seeking to explain and describe what is happening in the professional settings which were investigated, making inductions from specific empirical data to a more general and abstract proposition which can explain the phenomena in hand (Punch 2000: 39). It is a core aim of the research to offer theoretical explanations to the research questions, and to provide an argumentative element, potentially offering different explanations of the same phenomena from different perspectives. This sort of dialectical process of analysis is particularly appropriate in research areas where little previous work has been conducted, and where it is hoped to generate illuminative theory. It is hoped that emerging theory is demonstrably grounded in the data, and reporting the research findings involves supporting the interpretation of the meaning of situations which were uncovered through the research process.

Such theory is therefore not predictive, as predictions have to be derived from theory by interpreting it into the situation in which the prediction is made.

(Stenhouse 1979: 12)

Analysis primarily focuses on regularities and contradictions in the data and the relevance they have in answering the research questions. The research design allowed data from the surveys to be analysed first. At this early stage, themes were identified which might assist both in providing a workable descriptive framework and in carrying forward a number of theoretical propositions to the interview stages. Salient findings in the survey which were closely related to the research questions were used to guide analysis of interview data, and influenced which issues were focused on during interviews.
4.8 Epistemological perspective

This study draws on aspects of the social constructionist perspective. It will not claim to be faithfully reproducing reality through the categories of analysis which are selected (as ethnographers might do), but acknowledges the role of researcher and participant in co-constructing the realities and perceptions which are encountered. The paradigm holds that there are multiple realities and adopts a relativist perspective, linking with the concept of capturing people’s ‘lived experiences’ or verstehen (Dilthey) which this research attempts to do (Snape and Spencer 2003:7). The underlying approach contained in this study is that meanings are co-constructed by researcher and participant and that the capture of direct ‘lived experience’ is a problematic concept. Put another way, logic flows from the specific to the general and explanations are generated inductively from the data, thus the knower and the known cannot be separated because the subjective knower is one source of the multiple realities which exist (Guba 1990 in Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004:14). The constructivist-perspectivist paradigm is based in the natural world and its multiple contested complexities and realities. This in turn calls for a ‘perspectivism’ from within a social constructionist framework, i.e. ‘accepting that knowledge claims and their evaluation take place within a (constructed) conceptual framework through which the world is described and explained (Schwandt 2000:197).
4.9 Generalising

Within the underlying perspective outlined above, it is also necessary to consider whether it is desirable to attempt to generalise from the findings of this study to a broader professional context. With respect to the survey, despite the fact that its aim is to survey the entire population as specified in the research project, the fragmented nature of the independent sector means that there can be no generalisation between GSA and HMC schools and the entire independent secondary sector.

With regard to the interviews, as is usual with case studies, they will not take what is observed at face value and argue for its generalisability; rather phenomena will be seen in ‘relational terms’ where phenomena exist only in their relationships with other properties in that particular context. The study will follow the suggestion of Bassey (1999:41), that good educational research can be individualistic and can use singularities to generate theory which may prove illuminative for practitioners. The research findings of this study will make what Bassey terms ‘fuzzy generalisations’: suggestions such as *x is possible or that in some cases y may be true*. It will be an accepted perspective of this research that ‘time and context-free generalizations are neither desirable nor possible’ (Johnson & Onwuebuzie 2000:14).

4.10 Validity

The study attempts to explore the complexity of the situation involving newly-qualified heads and their perceptions of training effectiveness by studying it from more than one standpoint.
Firstly, triangulation is provided by the dual methods of questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. This will allow some basic quantitative data to be incorporated into a fundamentally qualitative study, aiming to improve confidence in their validity. An interview was conducted with the sector’s senior training provider and this enabled the research questions to be approached from the opposite angle, and a full investigation into the rationale behind headteacher preparation in the independent sector to be explored. Additionally, two experienced heads were also interviewed, and this allowed similar issues to be approached from different career perspectives, enabling a variety of voices to be heard. Thus three distinct perspectives have been sought on the research area from three different professional settings.

Secondly, although the study is inevitably positioned from a practitioner-researcher perspective, the field of study is beyond the researcher’s own workplace and any distortions to the data that may have been caused by this have been avoided.
The Research Process

4.11 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire itself was devised in draft form with close reference to the central research questions. Some of the questions were designed to be comparable with Earley & Evans’ earlier research in the independent sector (2002) and a more recent large-scale postal questionnaire of headteachers (and others) by Stevens et al. (2005). Questionnaire design was also influenced to a limited extent by the work of Delany (2005) with a view to offering some comparison with his findings in analysis. Most of the questions in the survey are closed, but there are a substantial minority of open-ended questions which enable respondents to express their views freely and give reasons for their choices. After undergoing several revisions, it was piloted by two separate heads from outside the study group who completed it and were asked to offer feedback on question clarity, ease of response and any improvements which could be made. Many of their suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire.

The HMC and GSA were contacted to provide the names of all the heads who had been appointed to their first headship within the last 5 years. Their contact addresses were then extracted from the internet using their schools’ websites. A personalised covering letter was prepared and its wording was carefully reviewed by two heads from outside the study group to ensure the maximum number of respondents. This letter contained clear contact details should any further questions arise. The questionnaires were sent via second-class post with an addressed return envelope
enclosed. This was pre-paid with a second class stamp. A follow up letter was sent to all of the heads in the sample 20 days after the initial survey thanking those who had already responded and reminding others that it was not too late to contribute. The letter and questionnaire are reproduced in full in the appendices.

4.12 Response to Questionnaire

The first 10 responses to the questionnaire were checked for any problems with their completion; none were obvious. In total 101 completed or partially-completed questionnaires were received, making a response rate of 71%.

4.13 Handling of data

The data was entered into the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) which enabled descriptive analysis and some cross-tabulations. There were a number of open-ended questions in the questionnaire responses which required coding. Codes were allocated on the basis of frequency after an initial assessment of all the data. Coding details can be found in the appendix.

4.14 Negotiating access and obtaining consent

For the postal survey, the right of non-reply overcame the need for specific consent. The letter which accompanied the questionnaire stated clearly that the survey was confidential and detailed how the data would be used. It stressed that no individual responses could be attributed to individuals or organisations. The absence of a Unique Reference Number or detailed questions about their school also reinforced this.
All interviews were speculatively requested via letter, with a subsequent follow-up by telephone to request participation. A copy of this letter is in the appendices. Potential participants who preferred not to be interviewed were not subjected to any pressure.

4.15 Interviews

An interview schedule was drafted based on the research questions and any illuminative data emerging from the questionnaires. Again, the interview schedules were piloted by two heads from outside the study group and this led to some alterations to the wording of questions. The power of the semi-structured interview is the flexibility it offers in terms of enabling participants to raise and pursue issues and matters that concern them, and may not have emerged in a prescriptive pre-devised schedule. Agreement to participate was secured on a case-by-case basis initially by letter, then by telephone after the questionnaire phase of the research. The same process applied to interviews with more experienced headteachers and the professional development officer. As the postal questionnaire was anonymous, and needed to be so to ensure a good response rate and candid contributions, it was not possible to select cases on the basis of particularly illuminative questionnaire responses or an indicated willingness to participate in an interview. Instead cases were selected on the basis of willingness to participate, the practical distance from the researcher, and variety (a mixture of day, boarding, single-sex and mixed). This was ‘convenience sampling’ (Cohen et al 2000:102). The necessity for logistical convenience, as in many small scale research projects, means that no attempt will be made to generalise from these cases. Originally it was envisaged that the number of case studies would be around 10% of those returning a completed postal survey, but an unprecedented return rate of over 100 heads coupled with the number of heads who
when asked to participate in an interview declined, and the large distances involved, has meant that this figure is 6%. Again, it was originally envisaged that attendance as an observer at a headship training course would be illuminative and permission was sought via the HMC/GSA professional development officer, but access was declined due to the confidential nature of this ‘closed course.’

Semi-structured interviews with headteachers were conducted at their schools and lasted for one hour. The professional development officer was interviewed at the researcher’s place of work. Participants were notified by letter of the intention to record the interview, and on arrival confirmation was again sought that the participant was happy for recording to take place. Every effort was made to avoid a feeling of stress or ambush during interviews; all participants were again offered reassurance about confidentiality and anonymity before the interview commenced, as they had been previously by letter. All the interviews were conducted in a positive and co-operative spirit. A frequent response from participants after the interview was surprise at how much they had enjoyed the experience of being interviewed and talking about their work. One head asked for the tape to be switched off at a particularly sensitive point of the interview and none of that material has been used in the study. During the interviews the researcher took some basic field notes highlighting any particular areas of significance or interest in responses.

Interviews were recorded using a handheld digital recorder and files were then uploaded onto a PC for transcription. Permission to record the interview was requested in the initial interview letter, and this was confirmed verbally and personally before the interview commenced. Transcription was conducted by the researcher.
because the process allowed a familiarity with the data to develop which would not have been possible had the transcribing been done by a paid assistant and this proved very beneficial when it came to analysis.

4.16 Coding

The research design used the assembled data to develop distinct categories which illuminated the data; appropriate evidences which emerged from interview transcripts and questionnaire responses were added to each of these categories. These were then charted and compared for links and commonalities. Consideration was also given to developing these categories into more general analytical frameworks with relevance outside the specific setting in which they were encountered (Silverman 2001:71).

This study used a simple coding technique suggested by Strauss & Corbin (1998): Firstly, ‘open coding’ in which distinct categories of phenomena are developed by breaking down, conceptualising and categorising the data as it emerges. Secondly ‘axial coding’ - putting the data back together again, by seeking out links between categories. Thirdly, ‘selective coding’ involving the selection and production of core categories for summary, redefinition and analysis in terms of their specific content and relationship with other categories. After all the transcripts of the interview had been typed, these were re-read and some initial codifying undertaken, using a mixture of numeric and alphabetical labels. This also enabled a sense of the whole interview to emerge and allowed a greater understanding of the contexts of various statements to be appreciated (Hycner in Cohen et al 2000:285). The system of coding was designed to assign particular pieces of the data to themes which were emerging from the interview responses and comments on survey returns. This then enabled themes in the
data to be identified and gathered as evidence under specific headings or concepts. Care was taken not to pigeon-hole data into pre-conceived themes, but to allocate material on the basis of the evidence from the research process itself. Data was then cut and pasted onto diagrammatic posters which represented different aspects of the findings. This permitted a holistic view of the data - the aim was not just to report a few telling extracts, but to work through all the material, searching out examples which did or did not fit into the headings or concepts which were emerging (Silverman 2001:83).

4.17 Anonymity

It was an important condition of the participants’ willingness to participate that they were guaranteed anonymity, either by their data merging into the input of many others (e.g. in the case of statistical information from the survey), or by changing the name of the school and removing/editing any specific information that would make the name of the school or participant recognisable (e.g. in the case of interviews). A profile of each case study school is given in the appendix, but it does not contain any information that would allow the school to be identified. Application was made for ethical approval to the university ethics committee at the same time that the initial research proposal was submitted. The interviews did not involve material of a private or personal nature, but some strictly confidential information did arise which would be damaging if it surfaced in a school setting. The Professional Development Officer’s anonymity was potentially compromised because there is only one such post in the country, but there was nothing to indicate this had a negative impact on the interview process.
4.18 Potential improvements to the method

Broadly speaking, the study unfolded in a successful and expected manner. However, there were a few issues which emerged that might be avoided if other researchers were to attempt similar empirical inquiry in the future:

- Some heads in their first year in post felt they ought to emphasise that their responses were only on the basis of their first term in the job with the implication that they weren’t qualified to comment on some of the issues, although they invariably did. A subsequent study might consider leaving heads in their very first year out of the study group or specifically reassuring them that their responses will be valuable regardless of how they feel about them.

- The very high response rate of the survey meant that the ratio of evaluative case studies to completed questionnaires was lower than originally planned. In actuality, in view of the amount of data collected and the opportunities for triangulating its validity, this was not a major concern as the project unfolded.

- Headteachers are very busy and a number of the questionnaires had no additional comments or responses to the open-ended questions. That said, the attitude scales proved very successful because most of the respondents completed these, if little or nothing else.

- Misunderstandings of questionnaire were very rare indeed, but two respondents left a section blank and instead wrote a clarification question back to me.

- In future, consideration might be given to using a unique reference number on the questionnaire to enable the researcher to follow up interesting responses with a specifically-targeted interview - although this would mean losing the element of anonymity which might affect the quality and candour of questionnaire responses, particularly considering the sensitive nature of some of the comments about senior colleagues or governors. This issue was particularly acute in this project because of the researcher’s own positioning within the independent sector.
Chapter 5: The research findings, analysis and discussion of results

Part 1: The Survey

5.1 Characteristics of the survey respondents

Of 143 surveys posted and 101 completed questionnaires received (making a response rate of 71%) 63.4% of the respondents were male and 36.6% female. In the original sample, 60.2% were male and 39.8% were female, meaning there was no appreciable difference in the response rates between male and female heads.

Gender:

The two professional heads’ associations – the Headmaster’s and Headmistresses Conference (HMC) and the Girls’ School Association (GSA) – provided a list of heads who had been appointed to their first headship between 2002 and 2006, and this enables a brief analysis of the gender balance of headteachers in this part of the independent sector. The evidence suggests that female headteachers are making some inroads into the HMC (formally known only as the Headmaster’s Conference), making up 9.4% of heads appointed between 2002 and 2007, and 3.8% of its total membership. These appointments, without exception, have been made in co-educational schools which were formally single-sex boys’ schools. Within the GSA (made up only of single-sex girls’ schools) there are four male headteachers, making up 7.3% of heads appointed within the last five years, and representing 1.9% of the total membership. Four male heads have been appointed to lead all-girls schools within the GSA since 2002, but there are no female headteachers running all-boys schools in the HMC.
Table 5.1 A gender comparison of HMC & GSA headteachers starting their appointment between September 2002-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent sector heads' professional association:</th>
<th>Headteachers with 5 years or less in post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| HMC schools                                   | Male: 85  
|                                              | Female: 8  
| GSA schools                                   | Male: 4  
|                                              | Female: 51  
| TOTAL:                                        | Male: 89  
|                                              | Female: 59  

This is in-line with McLay & Brown (1999) who found that 10% of all-girls schools in the sector had male heads and 0% of all-boys schools had female heads.

Age:

The age spread of respondents was concentrated in the 41-45 and 46-50 age ranges. No respondents were under 36 years of age and only 16.8% of respondents were over the age of 50. This is perhaps not surprising considering the sample have been appointed to their first headship within the last five years. Figure 5.2 summarises this data.
Experience of between one to five years as a head was spread fairly evenly amongst the survey group, with around 20% in each category, indicating an even turn-over of headteachers and new appointments from year to year within the two professional associations.

Previous post held:

Immediately before appointment to head, 80% of the headteachers had been deputy or assistant heads, 7% of whom were previously head of department and 12% housemasters (a senior pastoral position). At some stage in their career, 70% had been head of department 41% housemasters/mistresses, and 23% had been on the senior management team in more than one school. The high proportion of new headteachers
who had been deputies immediately before headship seems to indicate a shift in career progression patterns over recent years, with fewer heads being appointed from positions other than deputy or assistant head. Earley & Evans (2002:12) identified only 44% of heads who had been a deputy immediately prior to appointment as a head, although their survey was a cross-section of the whole independent sector, not just recently-appointed heads, and 22% of their respondents had been heads in other school prior to taking up their present post. Nevertheless, the evidence uncovered here does suggest a changing picture, with perhaps governing bodies being less prepared to take a risk on a candidate who has not experienced the work of a headteacher at very close proximity beforehand.

The average length of tenure in post immediately prior to headship was 5.97 years. This figure is slightly higher than the finding of Earley & Evans (2002) which was 4.9 years, but there does not seem to be any significance in this variation. The average length of tenure in the post prior to this was 6.29 years.

5.2 Sources of professional knowledge and its development:

This section of the research questionnaire started by investigating headteachers’ feelings about the most useful aspects of their previous jobs which they subsequently took into their early experiences as heads. Figure 5.3 summarises the findings.
This was an open-response question which was coded later, and therefore allowed respondents to express their views in detail. An overwhelming majority were keen to stress the importance of learning how to manage staff in their previous role. In many cases, this involved a revision of the normal operating relationship between teaching colleagues, evolving into a more hierarchical and authority-minded dynamic. Heads mentioned the following aspects which support this: ‘dealing with challenging individuals’, ‘dealing with wide variety of difficult staff’, ‘dealing with people’ (respondent underlined), ‘changed relationships with colleagues’, ‘leading groups of staff’, ‘dealing with colleagues as their line manager’, ‘developing staff and personnel
management.' Unsurprisingly, taking a whole-school perspective in planning and strategy was also frequently referred to as it is an important and different perspective for staff at the most senior level. In addition, there were numerous references to opportunities for working with a governing body prior to headship. This is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, it supports the notion that heads are adopting a distributed leadership approach in their schools, giving their deputies hands-on experience of strategic planning and reporting to and working with the governing body (traditionally the domain only of the head). Secondly, because it suggests that new headteachers in the GSA and HMC have already enhanced their professional knowledge by gaining various experiences traditionally reserved for headship prior to taking up post.

It is perhaps surprising that, despite this, 22% of respondents said that deputy headship was not the best preparation for headship, and this warrants some exploration. Six respondents felt that it depended on what kind of head was required, whilst six felt they were very different roles. This comment seems to refer to a form of deputy headship which is based purely on a task-orientated and process management type of role which is quite different from the normal duties of a headteacher. It is likely that these replies came from heads who had not had leadership and strategic tasks delegated to them as a deputy. Twenty two respondents felt that deputy headship was the best preparation for headship in day schools, but that in boarding schools the role of housemaster might be equally suitable because of the all-encompassing nature of the loco parentis aspects of this role. This sentiment seems to be at odds with the increasing number of heads (of all types of school) who had been deputies immediately prior to appointment.
5.3 How well prepared for headship?

Table 5.4 Thinking about your early years of headship, overall how well prepared did you feel on taking up your new position?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very prepared</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Not prepared at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings are similar to those of Stevens et al and Earley & Evans whose findings are summarised in table 5.5. Whilst exact comparison is not possible because of variation in the scales used, the figures are very similarly spread. There seems to be little appreciable difference between the two findings. This is perhaps surprising considering the introduction of the NPQH in the maintained sector which has seen a rise in the levels of preparedness. At the same time, there has been little change in leadership development provision for the independent sector.

Table 5.5 A comparison of previous research into state of beginning headteachers' preparedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very well prepared</th>
<th>Fairly well prepared</th>
<th>Not very well prepared</th>
<th>Not prepared at all</th>
<th>Notes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earley &amp; Evans (2002)</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>Independent sector heads with five years or less in post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens et al. (2005)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Maintained sector heads with five or less years in post</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Earley & Evans 2002:20, Stevens et al. (2005:64)
In this study the ‘not prepared at all’ figure drops to 0% which may be an indication of better leadership training provision in the independent sector. But perhaps it is more likely that, even with anonymity, headteachers were reticent to admit to being vastly underprepared for headship in a survey undertaken by a researcher from within the independent sector. There was no appreciable variation in the replies of male or female heads to the overall state of preparedness or in any of the subsequent categories reported on in table 5.5 below. This may not be surprising considering the two professional heads associations are now running some joint training courses at all levels below headship.

### Table 5.6 A Cross-tabulation of immediate previous post compared with overall how well prepared in post

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate previous post</th>
<th>Overall how well prepared?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy/assistant head</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housemaster</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior role elsewhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting head</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With 58% of those who had only been a housemaster before headship admitting they were less well prepared for the role, as opposed to 32% of those who had been deputy or assistant heads, the suggestion is that there is a considerable step up to the role of head, and that deputy or assistant headship gives the best chance of overcoming this.
**Table 5:7 Preparedness for specific areas of work in early headship**

n = 101

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Very prepared</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 Not prepared at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration &amp; organisation</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting &amp; finance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum development</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral management</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic management</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis management</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing &amp; appointing staff</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency proceedings against staff</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of employment law</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of education law</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing staff appraisal</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with parents</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How well heads felt prepared for a number of different competences was investigated and the data shows some specific areas where confidence levels in professional knowledge and competence are not as strong as others. In particular,
- Knowledge of employment law (42.5%)
- Competency proceedings against staff (34%)
- Budgeting and finance (28.7%)
- Knowledge of education law (22.8%)
- Marketing (12.9%)
- Crisis-management (8.9%)

(\% of respondents saying they were ‘not prepared at all’ (5) or (4) on the attitude scale in brackets)

Respondents’ comments:

Eighteen respondents went on to comment on their state of preparedness for headship.

Ten of these referred to the fact that new heads have little or no understanding of whole-school finance issues and seven commented on the need to improve training on employment law and other legal issues related to schools.

The evidence suggests that the HMC and GSA training providers should consider increasing the training available in these areas and incorporating clear features of these elements on their training courses for recently-appointed heads, as well as courses for deputy heads and preparing for headship courses. With an overall figure of over 35\% of recently-appointed HMC and GSA heads saying they felt under-prepared for headship, further consideration should be given to how training and professional development provision can be improved for aspirant heads. In addition, thought should be given to encouraging more experienced heads to delegate and distribute certain financial and legally-orientated tasks (such as consultation on policies or staff disciplinary issues) to their deputies who are aspirant heads. Heads feel most comfortable in:

- Pastoral management (93\%)
- Dealing with parents (91.3\%)
- Appointing and interviewing staff (83.2\%)
Many of these competencies are part of the standard job description for a deputy or assistant headteacher, again suggesting that the major source sustaining and informing the professional knowledge of headteachers is experiential problem-based learning at deputy level rather than expert-led codified technical knowledge being passed down in a codified form. This form of ‘apprentice learning’ is very significant and many of the survey respondents identified it without prompting and went on to explore its importance in terms of their own professional knowledge in early headship. The simplest and most concise expression of this idea was ‘experience was best’ in preparing for the job of headteacher, or as another explained: ‘most of the job is learnt from heads you work closely with… a shrewd observer can learn much.’ This idea of an aspirant head constantly watching and learning as an apprentice would in any traditional craft (e.g. carpentry) be fairly commonplace, as it is now in the medical and legal profession, where a large part of the training period of a doctor or lawyer is undertaken in the workplace learning from doing and observation. Watching, experiencing, doing and learning are all closely linked in this process, summed up in these contributions:

All training has its uses, but there is no substitute for experience... the best training of all, by a mile, was watching three outstanding heads do the job... no training was as useful than my experience as a deputy. (A head)

There was a deal of enthusiasm for school-based learning with an accompanying implication about the limits of educational and management theory and its value in the workplace:

There is no substitute to learning from people within the context of your school. No amount of books, journals or websites can enable you to do the job, either you can't do it or you can... I don't believe courses can make a head. (A head)
Theory is very different from the reality of the job… being a good teacher is the first essential for headship. (A head)

This kind of experiential learning is also likely to produce tacit or ‘unknown’ knowledge unrelated to generated theory, which may never be consciously acknowledged, let alone processed and codified. Reflection plays an important role in cementing such experiential learning and advancing it into the acquisition of firm-placed practical professional operating knowledge (or as Eraut might call it ‘process knowledge’). One respondent may be identifying this: ‘there is little better than learning from doing…. while taking time to reflect away from school is very important.’

5.4 Mentoring

Table 5.8 Frequency of use of mentoring with heads from other schools

![Diagram showing frequency of use of mentoring]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Use of Mentoring</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Regularly</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use of mentoring was found to be fairly widespread, with nearly 84% of heads using it often or occasionally. Women were slightly more likely to use mentoring than men. This is a higher proportion than in the maintained sector where most recently Stevens et al. (2005) found only 46% of heads had been mentored by other headteachers, this may be due to the compulsory system of mentoring which the HMC and GSA have adopted whereby every new head is automatically linked with a more experienced colleague, either chosen by the head him/herself or arranged by the professional association.

Heads reported that by far the most useful aspects of mentoring was sharing good practice and comparing problems (53%) and talking through staffing and personnel issues with a more experienced colleague who was not directly involved. One respondent referred to mentoring as ‘keeping your sanity’ and ‘reducing the sense of isolation.’ One head who had previously worked as a senior teacher in the maintained sector observed that you could always pick up the phone and speak to a known person at the LEA personnel department but there is no equivalent source in the independent sector. Another wrote ‘I am still in touch with all who were at the GSA new heads conference – excellent networking!’

These sentiments are reflected in the fact that 13% of heads strongly agreed that heads would benefit from more support from outside their schools, 38% agreed, 38% were neutral and only 11% disagreed. Asked where this support might be needed, 27% referred to legal advice and employment law issues; 17% to a more formal mentoring system; 13% to more support from the professional heads’ associations and 9% to
financial mentoring and advice from business; while 20% said that existing provision was satisfactory.

Despite this, problems were identified with the mentoring system, particularly in the case studies and interviews. Much of this focused on a sense of ‘fake collegiality’ which some felt exists among this group of heads - simply explained by one head who wrote: ‘we always say “give us a ring if you’ve got a problem,” but few of us ever do!’

Despite this, the data here suggests that the mentoring system is more widely used than in the maintained sector, and might be proving a substitution in some way for the type of advice and support the LEA might give in the maintained sector.

5.5 The role of the chair of governors

The majority of headteachers felt that the chair of governors should play a considerable part in supporting the professional development of heads, but fewer felt that chairs were actually delivering useful support. Heads were asked how much of a role they felt the chair of governors should take in offering them professional support (table 5.9) and how useful they had actually proved (table 5.10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n = 99</th>
<th>1 Major role</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 No role at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.9 The role of the chair of governors in offering professional support for heads
Table 5.10 The effectiveness of the chair of governors in sustaining professional development of heads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Very useful</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 Not at all useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results suggest considerable variations in the support that chair of governors are giving their heads. Some are evidently supportive in their attitude and opportunities for developing professional development, but over half of heads (53.4%) are not receiving very useful or useful support from their chair of governors. This is an area to which further consideration might be given by the Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools (AGBIS).

Table 5.11 How useful have the following proved in sustaining professional development?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Very useful</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 Not at all useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n = 99</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from other members of your SMT</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The national press</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading in management or education-related books</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Journals</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational research findings</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.11 suggests that recently-appointed headteachers in the independent sector are informing professional knowledge and practice through a variety of means, including ICT. A substantial minority seem to see value in educational research and education or management-related literature, and the distribution for use of the internet is evenly spread. The national press is not seen as having much of an impact on professional knowledge. This is perhaps surprising considering the substantial press attention given to important issues for the future of the independent sector such as charitable status and the widening access agenda. Learning from other members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) is also seen as a very useful way of sustaining professional knowledge, and this suggests that new heads are listening to those around them and prepared to take on board their feedback in order to improve practice. It is worth noting that a significant minority (16.5%) felt that education or management-related books are not useful at all and the figure is nearly 10% for educational research. This is somewhat alarming, and suggests that the professional heads’ associations might take on board the need to gently introduce new heads to the potential value of management theory and school-based research for their own practice.

Seventy five headteachers gave further details of the professional journals or publications they referred to in their work. By percentage of responses, those were publications by:

- Times Educational Supplement – 23%
- Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) – 15%
- GSA/HMC - 12%
- Independent School Council (ISC) - 10%
- Secondary Heads’ Association (SHA) – 10%
- National College of School Leadership (NCSL) – 5%

Websites that were cited as useful were:

- GSA/HMC (15)
Educational research findings were rarely referred to, those mentioned were:

- ISC (5)
- NCSL (2)
- Sutton Trust (1)
- DfES (1)

(Number in parenthesis refers to the number of references made)

What is surprising from these findings is that there is no single dominant source of professional input for independent sector heads from *within* their own sector. This is unusual when compared with other parts of the education sector or with the legal, medical or nursing professions. No specific mention was made in any of the responses to ‘Conference and Common Room’ the quarterly journal produced by the HMC which refers to itself as ‘the magazine for leading independent schools.’ This suggests that there is a lack of coherence and focus to the information new heads are getting and may mean that they are not able to access the sort of context-specific information, advice, news and research which would better inform and sustain them in their role.

5.6 Identifying professional development needs of the head

94% of heads identified themselves as being responsible for identifying their own professional development needs, with 67% then going on to identify the chair of governors as also having a role. Only 18% mentioned outside advisors or appraisers as having an input here, and this may reflect the hit-and-miss nature of the appraisal systems which are in place (or not in place) for independent school heads. Evidence
for this emerges in subsequent case studies and interview with the HMC/GSA appraisal trainer.

5.7 Externally-delivered headship training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HMC/GSA leadership training</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>81 (75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management masters degree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPQH</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education masters degree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14 (14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures seem to suggest a growing trend towards externally-delivered professional development. It should be noted however that in the 2002 study the question was directed to a sample of all ranges of experienced headteachers, not just recently appointed ones, which may explain why the participation figures are higher.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that nearly one-in-five new heads of HMC/GSA schools have now completed the NPQH which indicates its growing significance in the independent sector and is an example of cross-fertilisation between the two sectors. Stevens et al. reported that between 2001 and 2005, the number of headteachers in the maintained sector undertaking training from higher education institutions dropped from 26% to 13% (again these figures apply to a sample of all ranges of experience in headteachers). Contrary to the trend in the maintained sector however, the findings of this survey suggest that study at Masters level amongst those who are appointed to headship in HMC and GSA schools is increasing. This may be because M level study is being pursued instead of the NPQH by recently-appointed or aspirant GSA/HMC heads because it is not compulsory in the independent sector.
Comments on the usefulness or otherwise of this training were insightful with 37 heads mentioning HMC/GSA leadership training without prompting, although five heads specifically said it was not useful. There were 13 positive comments about the value of MBA or Masters’ courses, in particular concerning the application of organisational theory in the workplace and the ability it gave participants to think more reflectively.

There were also strong indications in the responses that most of the heads appreciate the limits of training, with an implied concern that making any training compulsory suggests that on completion you are capable and ready to do the job. The data endorses this premise:

Being prepared is one thing, doing it is another…

Nothing could have prepared me (for the first year in headship)... a social services investigation, gypsies, a lunatic with a machete….

There are a lot of things that training can’t prepare you for…. some of the best heads I have met have been originals who would have gained nothing from a management course (or failed it!)

There were also a number of heads who had done the NPQH but were less than positive about its content and impact on their knowledge and practice. Such responses ranged from a blunt ‘The NPQH was a total waste of time’ to more complex analysis which criticised the qualification for its mono-dimensional approach and lack of challenge (such criticism can also be found, amongst others, in the work of Wright 2001 and Bolan 2004). One commented:

Completing the MA was the best thing that I did, having tried NPQH for one module which was extremely disappointing as well as being intellectually undemanding.

Another explained:
I looked at NPQH when deciding to do postgraduate study, but I wanted something to develop my own ideas/values so I decided against it and went for the MA route.

Again the tension between completing a compulsory qualification and whether that denotes any kind of ability to do a job emerged:

One governor recently described another independent school head who I was recently appraising as ‘a typical NPQH head’ – ticks all the boxes, but it doesn’t mean he can do the ‘people bit.’

There was also some understandable criticism of the content of the NPQH and its applicability in the independent sector with the financial aspect of the training being particularly mentioned as irrelevant. This links with the suggestions of three different heads that, if a NPQH-type qualification were to be introduced in the independent sector, it must be substantially adapted to fit their specific needs and concerns.

Table 5.13 Cross-tabulation of training prior to headship compared with overall how well prepared for post

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training prior to headship:</th>
<th>Very prepared</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Not prepared at all 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management- masters degree</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education – masters degree</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMC/GSA leadership training (only)</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPQH</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comparison in table 5.13 indicates that those headteachers that pursue a Masters Degree or the NPQH are more likely to feel better prepared for the post than those who only take the professional association’s training. This is not unexpected, as both Masters Degrees and NPQH provide an opportunity for in-depth study and are likely to cover issues closely related to managing staff and organisational behaviour.
Additionally, the figures may be influenced by the fact that those who pursue Masters level study and NPQH may just be more confident about their state of preparedness, rather than being any more technically proficient in their job.

5.8 Other sources of professional knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.14</th>
<th>How important do you think the following alternative means of gaining professional knowledge are? n=98</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Essential %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on your job with a mentor</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping a reflective journal</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing on experiences or anecdotal stories of other heads</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping in touch with former colleagues</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing on significant events in your own personal biography</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.13 again suggests the importance and success of mentoring for some heads in the GSA and HMC. The idea of keeping a reflective journal was resoundingly dismissed, with some respondents attaching exclamation marks to their replies and commenting on lack of time. Drawing on experiences and anecdotal stories of other heads and significant events in personal biography was also a significant input for recently-appointed heads. This ties in with the importance of mentoring and a sense that the headteachers in these two professional associations see learning from
themselves and each other as a very important adjunct to their professional knowledge. This agrees with the findings of earlier studies that the best source of inspiration for headteachers is other heads (Stevens et al 2005: 165). No appreciable differences in the responses of men and women were evident in these responses.

Of those who offered further comments on this section, 11 mentioned the importance of contact with other heads for enhancing professional knowledge, and one spoke enthusiastically about the idea of ensuring that all governing bodies had a supportive retired head as a member. A structured and centrally-promoted shadowing system, endorsed by the professional associations was mentioned by four heads, and in one of the subsequent case studies. The opportunity to spend a day or two in each others’ schools or to shadow a successful head for 48 hours in the period between appointment and taking up post were seen as being particularly useful. One head described a need for recently-retired heads to be accessible for advice and guidance through the guise of an e mail support system.
5.9 The future of independent sector leadership training, NCSL and NPQH:

| Table 5.15 Views on statements about independent sector leadership training |
|---------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| N = 97                          | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    |
|                                 | Strongly agree % | Agree % | Neutral % | Disagree % | Strongly disagree % |
| Professional knowledge for heads is best acquired ‘on the job’ | 21.6 | 54.6 | 8.2 | 14.4 | 1 |
| Professional knowledge is best acquired through contact with other heads | 7.2 | 59.8 | 22.7 | 9.3 | 1 |
| Professional knowledge is best acquired through externally-delivered training | 2.1 | 39.2 | 33 | 20.6 | 4.1 |
| Opportunities for GSA/HMC heads to extend their professional knowledge are limited | 2 | 22 | 27 | 39 | 10 |
| I am familiar with the work of the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) | 8 | 54 | 19 | 11 | 8 |
| I am familiar with the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) | 14 | 35 | 19 | 24 | 8 |
| The NPQH should be made compulsory in the independent sector | 2 | 6.9 | 22.8 | 27.7 | 40.6 |
| The headship training available in the maintained sector is irrelevant in the independent sector | 2 | 8 | 36 | 37 | 17 |
| GSA/HMC should introduce a compulsory qualification for new heads in the independent sector | 5 | 7 | 25 | 25 | 38 |

This section acted as an opportunity to survey heads in two main areas. Firstly, their attitude to external codified knowledge passed on through training programmes as opposed to ‘know-how’ learnt on the job. Secondly, attitudes to maintained sector leadership development provision and following the lead of the sector in introducing a compulsory qualification for headship in independent schools.
Most heads felt that professional knowledge is best acquired 'on the job', relating closely to the apprentice-style development path. It appears that, to a certain extent, this arrangement has been doing some of the work of the NPQH in the independent sector, but in a more ad-hoc fashion. This might be summarised as:

- A clear time frame of five to six years for working as a deputy headteacher, at close hand with a headteacher who is facilitating distributed leadership and giving a rounded experience to his/her ‘apprentice’

- Undertaking Masters level study or the NPQH, allowing an interface of theory and practice and providing added reflexivity in the professional workplace

- On appointment, networking with other heads and establishing a close link with a mentor who can be used to discuss issues such as staffing difficulties or legal concerns

- Enhancing professional knowledge early in post by learning from the senior management team (SMT) and contact with other headteachers through professional association training events (which are compulsory on appointment and for the first year in post)

The enthusiasm for developing professional knowledge 'on the job' and through contact with other heads does not mean that there is a polarised negative attitude to improving knowledge through externally-delivered training. Indeed 39% agreed that professional knowledge was best acquired this way, but it seems likely that heads feel that there is no single best way. Instead the data suggests that there is enthusiasm for different methods of professional development and the case studies and professional development officer interviews provide further opportunity to investigate where these different methods might be more appropriate.

There was considerable and strong disagreement (49%) with the idea that training for GSA and HMC heads was limited, although with 27% neutral and 24% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement there is a substantial minority who feel that more should be provided for them in terms of professional development. This might be of
interest to the professional associations when they assess their future provision. Nine heads talked positively about the introduction of a qualification for headship within the independent sector. The majority felt that this should be based on the NPQH but adapted for the specific needs of the sector. It should be modular in structure, allowing flexibility and reflecting the diverse nature of schools in the sector and the different training requirements of its headteachers. Three heads talked about the lack of opportunities for leadership development once the initial compulsory training ended after the first year in post. An ongoing professional development programme for ‘not quite so new heads’ along the line of the leadership programmes for serving headteachers (LPSH) and other NCSL programmes was mentioned. Although the HMC and GSA claim on their website a 92% satisfaction rate from participants on their training courses (IPD 2007), they do not seem to be reaching some of their headteachers with their provision. This view was subsequently supported by the professional associations’ own Professional Development Officer and one of the more experienced heads who was interviewed who had set up his own fragmented sub-group to keep mutual learning alive in the absence of what he perceived to be adequate provision by HMC.

Familiarity with the NPQH and NCSL was surprisingly high in a sector which has no formal links with either. The NCSL seems to have made a particular impact with this group of recent headteachers, perhaps because the publicity surrounding its establishment coincided with the time they were approaching applications, or just taking up post for the first time when, arguably, they would be most receptive to such an event. 49% of the headteachers agreed or strongly agreed that they were familiar with the College’s work. This is a high proportion, particularly when compared to
Earley and Evans (2002:34) who found that 28% of independent school heads were not aware of the NCSL at all - in this survey that figure drops to 8%. Heads were less familiar with the NPQH with nearly a third disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that they were familiar with it. The figure of 49% who strongly agreed or agreed they are familiar with it (substantially more than the 19% who actually undertook the qualification) suggests that many other heads thought about taking the NPQH and perhaps researched its content before deciding not to pursue the course.

The number of heads who disagreed or strongly disagreed that leadership development programmes predominantly designed for the maintained sector were irrelevant in the independent sector was high (54%), with only 10% agreeing. This suggests there is scope for closer co-operation in the future and that more and more independent school aspirant heads are likely to consider taking the NPQH in the future. 45% of heads felt that there was value in bringing the two sectors closer together in their training and 26% disagreed. Two heads commented that funding for the NPQH should be available for independent school heads. The HMC has appointed its own NCSL liaison representative, but negotiations between them and the NCSL about some joint provision in leadership development have not yet been successful (more on this is contained later in the chapter).

However, there was clearly a feeling that introducing a compulsory qualification, whether it be the NPQH or an alternative, would not be welcomed by these heads as over 40% strongly disagreed with any attempt to endorse the NPQH as compulsory and less than 9% agreed. This is one of the most comprehensive views expressed in the entire questionnaire. There was an equal amount of displeasure about the
Possibility of the GSA or HMC introducing their own compulsory qualification, suggesting that it is not the content of such a course which is considered important, but the principle of a compulsory qualification at all. There is a sense that independence means just that, and introducing any element of compulsion runs counter to this. Some of the comments which accompanied this section sum this up: ‘good headship is not all about training’... ‘training is limited, you also need ability’... ‘a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate’ and ‘qualifications should be voluntary.’

5.10 Perceptions of similarity and difference in leadership in the two sectors and bringing leadership development closer together

Whilst 39 heads felt unable to comment on this, (perhaps because they had no experience of the maintained sector or that the question was at the end of a long questionnaire), a large number wrote about perceived differences in the nature of headship in the two sectors and the value of bringing the two sectors together for leadership development and training purposes. Positive responses to this idea were approximately twice as frequent as negative ones. The comments of seven headteachers reflect their positive feelings about independent/maintained sector links:

As one of the few independent school headteachers who has spent a number of years in the maintained sector, I am in no doubt that, just as there is much that we could offer that sector, there is a wealth of talent and best practice that we could glean from them if a more open and fruitful dialogue should exist.

Links with the maintained sector could be very helpful in developing a better understanding of teaching and learning which they undoubtedly have... but not at the expense of further erosion of independence.

Very often the issues facing us are similar but our style or approach can be very different. We can learn much from their use of assessment data.

The maintained sector is much further ahead in terms of research and professional development.

Independent schools need to learn the need for questioning and reviewing what has ‘always’ been in place... maintained sector interest groups (e.g. LEAs) might grasp how much of their current input is political and not in the best interest of many groups of pupils.
The maintained sector has developed a more managerialist culture, a shared language, and is more research-led. We have relied too much on bright pupils and highly competent staff. This is not the case any more as change is so rapid.

The independent sector has a lot to learn from the vibrancy and commitment of the maintained sector. Our complacency is a times outrageous!

The evidence suggests there is much enthusiasm for increased links between the two sectors with some suggesting that the maintained sector is more advanced in research-informed practice and effective monitoring of teaching and learning. It seems that there is an apparent attitude of open-mindedness, perhaps even self-deprecation in some of these comments which would seem to make a good starting-point for contact between the two sectors. A number of schools within the study had already done this on an individual basis.

There were also a number of more qualified responses which emphasised either the different natures of the role of head in the two sectors or a perceived danger to independence if greater co-operation was pursued, although it is not clear exactly how these two issues might be linked:

There may be some generic skills, but many are context-dependent

Good practice is already widespread in the independent sector, bringing the two together would risk the independent sector’s freedom of action

The two different systems have entirely different starting points and driving forces...commercial nous is needed much more in independent schools...

Independent schools must maintain independence, especially at a time when independence is more widely appreciated in the maintained sector.

The gulf between the two sectors is generated by mistrust and suspicion on both sides. I have rarely found that the state sector is willing to look positively towards the independent sector, and I suspect the same is true of independent schools heads

This last comment is a stark reminder of the obstacles which would need to be overcome if a more fruitful and mutually-beneficial atmosphere is to flourish between
the two sectors. Nevertheless, a majority of recently-appointed HMC and GSA heads are in favour of closer relationships over leadership training and evidence points to the many commonalities which exist in the process of professional knowledge generation for leadership and issues which heads new-to-post face. There seems to be enough common ground to suggest hope of co-operative progress being made in the future. Regardless, at the very least heads of independent and maintained schools are likely to come into more contact with each other if the increased take up of the NPQH and awareness of the work of the NCSL continues amongst the new generation of HMC and GSA heads.

It is worth pointing out again at this stage that the independent sector is by no means a homogenous group of schools, varying hugely in size, academic and religious ethos; and that this study does not report on head teachers outside the GSA and HMC who represent the most elite and academically selective schools within the sector. But there are a number of issues which emerge from the survey which it would be helpful to encounter before analysis of the case studies:

5.11 Apprenticeship

Public school headmasters have no formal training. It is assumed that if you have been an assistant master in a good school you will be able to make the transition to chief executive by virtue of the lessons you have learnt from the headmasters under whom you have served.

(Rae 1993:31)

As we have seen apprenticeship is evidently an important part of the professional knowledge gathering experience of heads recently appointed to post in the independent sector. With 88% of heads in the study group having been deputies, it appears that the vast majority of independent sector governing bodies see time spent serving under a successful head in the sector (or for some perhaps in the maintained sector) as more valuable and contextually-relevant than the NPQH which is devised
and assessed from outside. This period as a deputy seems to take on increased significance as a period of professional learning because of the absence of a recognised and contextually-relevant external certification of competency.

The data suggests that most, if not all, of the most useful experiences used in the early years of headship were acquired immediately prior to taking up headship – in most cases as a deputy head. This period as a deputy headteacher is very highly valued by recently-appointed heads as the best means of acquiring the most relevant and powerful knowledge to inform their professional landscape. This period of apprenticeship almost always takes place in a very similar school to the head’s new school (often also an HMC or GSA school) and this is powerful in perpetuating the values and established protocols within the two professional associations and in ensuring the promotion of a high status, gender appropriate, academic elite (Walford 1984).

Prior to headship, a candidate will often spend a substantial period of socialisation as a senior teacher in another HMC or GSA school, often adding to time spent as a pupil in a similar type of school in the past. This contributes to several decades of structured building of cultural capital, acquired through experiencing independent schools as a pupil and then going on to teach and manage in these schools (all five of the case study heads had attended independent schools and spent their entire careers teaching in them). In terms of technical preparation for headship, a period of working as an apprentice whilst a deputy head seems crucial; part of this comprises learning through observation and then drawing on these experiences once a headteacher in their own right. As in the traditional crafts and trades which use apprenticeship (e.g. carpentry or
pottery) this may involve imitation - copying behaviours which have previously
observed once in post for oneself. A number of respondents talked about their
apprenticeship as approaching problem-solving alongside someone else; then tackling
these problems ‘solo’, but with the professional knowledge previously acquired
through earlier experiences as a deputy.

90% of headteachers felt that drawing on anecdotes of other heads was essential, very
important or important in gaining the professional knowledge to enable them to be
effective heads. This experiential form of learning can be converted into codified and
technical know-how or translated into general theory or ‘rules of thumb’ which are
gained from specific instances which have been encountered, but this knowledge is
often tacit and difficult to quantify. Much of the apprenticeship seems to entail
unconscious learning leading to tacit understandings and anecdotal knowledge, but
nonetheless this is an essential aspect of the path which moves professionals along the
path to expertise (Sternberg & Horvath 1999: x). This might be summarised in an
article by Jeff Bridges in *The Guardian* in which he refers to ‘the wisdom of the
fingernails’:

The wisdom that makes your hair and fingernails grow, your heart beat, your bowels move. There
are things that we know how to do, but we don’t necessarily know how to do them, yet we still do
them very well.

5.12 Conclusion

The evidence of the survey is that the independent sector has a less systematic
approach to headteachers’ professional knowledge gathering, with more ‘on the job’
training and less formalised knowledge transfer than can be seen in the NPQH or the
specificity of the National Standards for Headteachers. This more ad-hoc approach to
knowledge gathering might be identified in the number of recently-appointed heads who said they drew on experiences from MBA courses, Industrial Society leadership training, Army officer training or working in the City for a number of years. These headteachers felt that all these experiences contributed to their professional knowledge landscapes and they were able to draw on them in leading their schools effectively. In these cases such formative experiences also appear to have currency with governing bodies when making appointments.

These more ad-hoc methods of leadership preparation in the independent sector may also tally with the areas of weakness in the technical ‘know how’ of recently-appointed heads which emerge from the survey – educational and employment law, finance and budgeting. The suggestion being that these areas have not been adequately experienced in the apprentice-style learning environment. This may well represent a view within the independent sector which regards the gaining of codified or ‘public’ professional knowledge in a ‘packaged transmittable commodity’ (Eraut 1994:82) as less important for aspirant and recently-appointed headteachers than the dominating discourse of heightened emphasis on school leadership which has emerged from government in the recent decade. The independent schools surveyed here seem to regard the best input for the overall well-being of their schools as coming from within their own sector. This is accompanied with a feeling of some cynicism towards competency-based training and the specified national standards for headteachers (to which no independent school head made any reference in either the questionnaire or interview phase of the research).
It may well be that there is some sympathy for this position from within the educational research community as this approach has been criticised (Milliken 2002, Grace 2000, Bolden & Gosling 2006). Pring expresses this view powerfully when he argues that competency-based training of educators is disconnected from philosophical or educational values and this creates an impoverished view of the teaching profession and of the leadership to which it is entitled. For central government, seeking to control and reform schools under the perceived pressures of globalisation and the future needs of the economy, this ‘disconnection’ of values from policy is desirable as it prevents educators from rendering problematic what many policy-makers and politicians want to consider a formality (Pring 2007). Competency-based training and standards perpetuate this position and is indeed perhaps government’s ‘control masquerading as enlightenment’ (Milliken 2002:281).

In contrast to this, it is tempting to argue that independence from such a competency-based approach promotes consideration of fundamental educational and philosophical values, it places the importance of teacher and learner centered research above economic expediency and the central control of government over the education agenda. But this is perhaps not entirely a straightforward matter, particularly when considered in the light of the historical context of the competency movement.

Young (1958) in his important work on the ‘rise of the meritocracy’ argued that the professions would see a continuing decline in the opaque and ‘closed’ promotion of individuals to the top of organisations to form an elite. Britain’s need to vie with other nations in a competitive world meant that this would be replaced with a new vision of transparency, objectivity and meritocracy in the workplace. Attempting to codify the body of expert knowledge previously only known to the professions themselves and,
through this, establishing a set of basic competencies for professional knowledge, was an important counterbalance to the previous superiority and unassailable position of the professions.

In terms of school leadership, it might be argued that the NPQH and the closely-related National Standards for Headteachers offer a more open and fair system of judging readiness for headship and remove the mystery and elitism which previously surrounded the post. No longer could headteachers act as 'king-makers' themselves. Perhaps it is not surprising then that the small sector of the nation's schools which continue to perpetuate elitism in society through their very existence appear to be ambivalent in parts to the introduction of the competency-based qualifications and codified professional standards in the maintained sector. A number of responses in the survey demonstrate the importance of independence to the independent schools, and that they are naturally wary of anything centrally-prescribed or originating from a controlling government. The essence of the independent mind thinking and acting according to standards from within, not without seems to be a spirit which remains strong amongst the headteachers of independent schools today.
Part II: Sustaining headteachers’ professional knowledge: The perspective of the professional development officer of the HMC and GSA

5.13 Background and rationale behind training provision:

The two biggest professional heads’ associations in the independent sector, the HMC and GSA, have recently joined together to appoint a single professional development officer (PDO) who is responsible for the delivery of professional development and training to member headteachers. These are delivered to both associations through the auspices of Independent Professional Development (IPD) headed by the PDO. Courses are run either by the PDO or other experts from the field of education or beyond. Sixty eight courses were offered in the academic year 2005-2006, 40 in 2006-2007. There is a huge variety in content ranging from courses for newly-qualified teachers to planning for retirement courses for teachers at the end of their careers. Courses encompass a very broad range of areas, for example, subject-specific conferences, first promotion, preparing for headship, sport, pastoral work, professional review/appraisal, university applications and legal and media training. The training offered to aspirant and recently-appointed headteachers and the impact this had on their sense of professional knowledge was of particular interest in this research.

The overall impression is of a model of leadership development which is not yet fully established. The present PDO, appointed three years ago, was the first to take on the role who was not a retired headteacher from one of the professional associations. Appointing a senior teacher from the sector who had recently completed an EdD on teachers’ informal learning networks was a radical departure for the heads’
associations and seemingly signalled a determination to offer some training provision which had closer links with current educational research and theory. Commenting on the training offered to headteachers, the PDO explained:

It’s still very much in its infancy, up until 3 or 4 years ago, very little training was offered. When IPD was established in 2003, we felt we should offer a menu of courses still, but something which offered people the chance to develop a professional development portfolio, a coherent programme... so we produced the rationale that had been lacking in the past, but everything that is offered is entirely optional and it depends on individual schools’ resources as to whether people can actually attend the courses – that’s where we are at now – we are beginning to develop an overarching programme of leadership development that will be offered.

The rationale of training also provides insight into the thinking about professional knowledge generation from within the sector, particularly in considering whether there is an emphasis on learning from experience rather than theory in the training provision provided:

The way I think it works is that the theory comes first and the experiential learning by definition must come second once you’re in post... and so that technical input, most of that comes at the preparing for headship level, although alongside the technical training the major thing we are trying to develop with deputies is an awareness of the nature of the role of headship per se. We are trying to prepare people for the nature of the job not the process of applying and being interviewed...once in post heads are assigned a mentor and experiential learning takes over.

Again the emphasis on experiential learning is evident, although there would appear to be more emphasis on the theoretical here, as you might expect from a PDO who possesses a professional doctorate. Eraut’s concept of codified or ‘public knowledge’ is clearly evident, linked, as was the case above, with those areas of know-how which are not encountered as part of the apprentice phase of learning:

I think there are certain generic truths which can be codified and passed on to heads – for example, about working with governors and relationship with the chair, what the typical role of a bursar is and some outline understanding of a balance sheet – of income and expenditure, of issues such as depreciation of IT equipment and buildings. Such understandings are not necessarily passed on to aspiring heads, not necessarily picked up as one went along. The other thing we try to prepare new heads for is the fundamental change in the nature of their daily routine. There is undoubtedly a tremendous tension between the operational and the strategic in that, as a deputy, you still have a very significant operational role around the school in terms of contact with pupils and teachers. Increasingly heads are finding themselves drawn more and more into their offices and expected to deal with the vision, the strategy and the development planning...,many heads become frustrated and sometimes very depressed because they are failing to fulfil either role.
This picture is one of conflict between the different forms of professional knowledge which a head is expected to possess. Again using Eraut’s categories, the scenario described is evidence of tension between knowledge of people and situational knowledge needed for familiarity with pupils and staff, and the knowledge of educational practice required for strategic planning and vision.

Conflict too seems to exist in the idea of apprenticeship we have explored earlier. Although common place in the sector, all the headteachers interviewed and the PDO acknowledged that an effective deputy head does not necessarily make a good head, as quite different attributes, skills and persona may be required. This raises a weakness in the apprenticeship system of leadership preparation – the idea that not all deputies can go on to be effective heads is perhaps not given enough attention, although this notion is countered here by the suggestion that training in matters of vision and strategy, or at least ‘awareness training’ might solve any potential shortcomings:

I am not convinced that being a good operational deputy leading to being a good strategic head necessarily follows. Clearly the need to be visionary and strategic these days is becoming more and more of an issue, even the more traditional and successful schools can’t rest on their laurels and need to be looking at new and interesting ways of presenting themselves in a congested marketplace. Demographics means we are looking at a shrinking potential pool of customers in the future, so heads are having to look carefully at strategic planning issues. When one works entirely operationally (in a boarding house, as a busy deputy) it is rare to think beyond the ‘here and now’ to the ‘then and the there’, but increasingly heads are expected to look into their crystal balls.

The PDO is keen to stress that there is no particular agenda when it comes to promoting a specific leadership style, for which the NPQH and National College of School leadership has recently been heavily criticised (Wright 2001 and Johnson 2002):

We are trying to develop an understanding of the need for a range of leadership styles in one’s armoury and the most successful leaders are those who can move from one style to another as the constituency demands. We are focusing more and more on change management issues and looking at the human dimension of change...and how to take steps to defuse the potential for conflict through the use of
emotional intelligence. We’re certainly broadening the range of issues that we feel heads should know about when they enter a new scenario.

The emphasis placed on the fact that ‘outside’ the independent sector there is a great deal of talk about leadership is interesting, as it suggests significant variance with the dominating discourse in the maintained sector where leadership is portrayed as of crucial importance by the government. Eric Anderson, the former headmaster of Eton and a considerable figure in the independent school world, is said to have remarked that ‘leadership is something you do, not something you talk about’ and this is referred to in the PDO’s own leadership development literature. This seems to confirm a sense of reticence from within the HMC and GSA to accept an emphasis on the codified aspect of leadership which can be broken down into competencies, talked about, and passed on as technical knowledge to be carried out in the professional setting. This is made even more ironic by recent research findings which suggest that a change of headteacher rarely makes an impact on the performance of a school in the maintained sector (O’Shaughnessy 2007a), but may be of far more significance in independent schools (O’Shaughnessy 2007b).

5.14 Content of training provision:

All newly-appointed headteachers of HMC and GSA schools are obliged to attend part one training for new heads which takes place at Easter in the year prior to taking up post. In addition, they must attend part two which occurs in the following January after a term in post. It is obligatory to attend the annual conference and to have a mentor who is head of another HMC or GSA school on appointment for one year. Other than that, all forms of training and professional development are optional.
Intriguingly, the HMC (which is comprised of all-boys' schools or co-educational or partly co-educational schools that were formerly all-boys' schools) and the GSA (which are all girls' schools) insist on conducting all their training separately, even though they have appointed a joint professional development officer. The PDO explained:

It's a question of history. They are separate organisations, the operation I run is experimental in the sense that it is the first ever venture which seeks to bring together colleagues from across the divide. The GSA still holds fast to the belief that single sex girls' education is a superior form of educational experience. HMC has commissioned counter-research that claims otherwise. So east is east and west is west in those terms. I proposed three years ago joint conferences for deputies (if it couldn't work for heads) but the single-sex argument prevailed – they felt it would be impossible to cover things that were uniquely of interest in girls' schools at a joint event. And so that's the way it has been, I keep proposing it should be changed but the associations have held fast. The HMC is divided into 11 divisions and GSA into 10 regions, they broadly overlap geographically and on occasions they may meet at the same venue but they will meet separately in the morning and then might come together for a joint session on generic CPD that I might offer in the afternoon. So, to small degree, there is togetherness, but when it comes to the business of the organisation, they still meet separately.

These 'separated' training events for new heads carried an explanatory note in the publicity information: 'It is not, strictly speaking, a training course for new heads.'

This seemed like a potential indicator of a subtle and concealed rationale behind the programme, potentially throwing light on the additions to the professional knowledge base being offered. The PDO explained:

The event is designed to bring together that year's cohort, to introduce them to one another, to start developing a certain esprit de coeur, they will meet again next as a cohort at their first conference at the October conference where they have a new heads' dinner as a separate event and so it's designed to bring more people together to introduce them to the concept of headship, to congratulate them, to encourage them to bring their spouses along to share ideas about the past and the future. It's more designed for informal social interactions than technical input, although over the last three years that I've been involved the technical input has been increased... I think it is probably ill-advised to try and pack too much technical knowledge into their heads at that stage because they are, in some cases, quite terrified - if that's not too strong a word - about taking on what they are going to take on.

The emphasis on the socialisation aspect of the event is important and the previous work of the course leader on the significance of informal interactions between professionals in enhancing the operational knowledge base clearly comes through. Again we encounter caution about engaging in matters of practical and theoretical
knowledge, an aspect which, as we shall see in the case studies, causes frustration in some heads, but which is designed to build supportive structures between heads for the future. The nature of the GSA and HMC means that these links can be nationwide and even international, perhaps relevant to a recent report into isolated headteachers in the maintained sector which recommended the building of better networks of support for heads through inaugurating a national strategy (Flintham 2007).

However, there is also a practical ‘know-how’ element to initial training for recently-appointed heads:

Of all the things we do, the thing that new heads value most is the focus on case studies – a wide range involving a meningitis scare, an awkward member of staff or boys from the school involved in drugs and drinking and so on. So it’s sitting people down in groups and inviting them to comment on how they would deal with this – that’s what they find so useful – learning from each other in discussion groups.

An examination of the training format indicates that there are plenty of opportunities for sharing issues of concern with others and a panel of experts made up of senior or retired heads and professionals from outside education, such as lawyers. These forums seem to prove very effective:

I think they do work, and certainly feedback suggests that they are the most valued. My own research looked at how teachers learned from each other in the workplace and there is no doubt that the ad-hoc informal ‘collisions’ are often the things which stay with us most of all, we learn most from those sorts of opportunities. So I think it is quite right that we preserve those, because we need to strike the right balance between formal technical input and professional learning, and I don’t think that professional learning comes from a session on employment law, that’s technical learning. Professional learning comes from sharing experiences and the best way of doing that is to bring people together in a relaxed scenario where they can just open up.... there is also often a very lengthy lunch period where lots of this ad-hoc interaction goes on.

This seems to be an innovative approach for heads prior to taking up post or very newly ensconced. Traditionally, provision in the maintained sector tends to involve more technical and codified input at the outset, through the NPQH, moving to more informal peer-supported learning once heads are more experienced, for example in the
New Visions Programme available at the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) for heads who are in post and have completed the NPQH.

The ad-hoc nature of leadership development again comes over in recent research which the Professional Development Officer has conducted into regional HMC and GSA training. This takes place on an entirely ad-hoc basis, is not centrally organised, and has developed mostly according to historical circumstances where some decades ago a particularly keen individual thought it would be a good idea to have a group look at X, and it’s stayed the same since then:

In the past most of what has done on in the sector in terms of professional development has been entirely ad hoc, IPD is the first attempt to formalise, codify and develop a programme.

The idea of informal learning between mutually-supported professional colleagues sounds idyllic, but there were issues of confidentiality and integrity which were also evident:

There are issues of confidentiality and there is a certain guardedness about the people sharing in open forum things from their present school. That is why we have created a databank of case studies which have been drawn in from a variety of heads’ experiences. That’s very useful because, although people may have dealt with something similar, they are out of their own particular context and therefore are much more willing to share ideas about it. If you are encouraging heads to talk about bad things in their schools which they have specifically dealt with, they are perhaps less willing to do that.

In addition, there is a confidential facility on both HMC and GSA websites for heads to share ideas and questions electronically. The talk2learn NCSL network is also available to independent school heads, but HMC/GSA research shows that very few heads use it at all.

It think there is a sense that electronic communication… well… it’s not frowned upon, but it doesn’t come easily to many of our heads, and I think they prefer face to face contact. They meet termly in their divisions at HMC or GSA at one another’s school, so within a year, heads will meet up to four times.
Although the HMC and GSA heads' e-mail facility is confidential, a number of the heads interviewed commented that the issues which are discussed on-line are trivial and of no significance. Two different heads commented:

Very occasionally, I have entered stuff on it, but I don't think it's reached a tipping point. I think because it's under-used there is no incentive to use it. I think it would be even more useful if you could anonymise your questions, because no one is going to write saying we have a woefully inadequate system for x or y, does anyone have anything which at least passes muster because I've got an inspection next week? Because three of your inspectors are going to be reading it!

I go on-line and have a look at it (the HMC on-line forum) and there's nobody posting things up there of any real value, and I think the people who are posting things up there must just have time on their hands to waste - because they are really trivial issues.

5.15 The National College of School Leadership

As the survey indicated, there is some awareness of the work of the College amongst independent school heads, but few have had any direct contact with its provision.

HMC and GSA have approached the NCSL recently with a view to improving links and exploring possibilities for collaborative leadership development across independent and maintained sectors but there has been little progress:

The National College was rather frosty and stand-offish initially I think because it felt the independent sector was rather a privileged world and it didn't want much to do with us, but they did begrudgingly agree to have a HMC and GSA representative on their governing council, so the purpose of that person is to inform GSA and HMC's professional development committee of developments going on at the National College. But in terms of going beyond that...for example, the National College continues to deny us access to NPQH at no charge, and that's been an issue for some years...we are still not able to access other government-funded initiatives and so at the moment we are talking to each other, but it hasn't really gone beyond that.

Although an impasse seems to have been reached, it appears that the future will inevitably see more cooperation between the College and HMC/GSA. With increasing numbers of recently-appointed headteachers in the independent sector becoming more aware of the work of the NCSL and showing interest in the NPQH, the evidence suggests that over time a more fruitful relationship may yet develop. Recently, the PDO has run a HMC/GSA training event at the National College's site, because he felt it would be very useful for independent school heads to physically see the college.
5.16 Mentoring and improved access to professional guidance

The PDO was happy to admit that the compulsory mentoring arrangements for heads did not always work very well. Anecdotal evidence received by the HMC/GSA suggested that success depends entirely on the relationship of the two individuals concerned. When a new headteacher is appointed, he/she is encouraged to identify a mentor with whom he/she would like to work. Sometimes this is quite difficult because it makes sense to have a head from within the local geographical area, but for heads who are moving a long distance and don’t know anyone from within the new area this can be difficult, although the HMC/GSA does offer advice.

The arrangement is entirely ad-hoc, the mentor is meant to provide encouragement and support when the newly-appointed head might need it, they will meet socially, they will catch up at the annual conference and so on. I suspect it depends almost entirely on the nature of that particular relationship. A lot of new-appointed heads found it to be quite useless, others would say it was hugely useful because they reached a real problem, they picked up the phone, and there was an answer at the other end. They usually choose the head of a similar type of school to theirs.

But this can lead to problems because independent schools are, by their very nature, competing with each other for market share. This makes genuine mutual support very difficult, particularly at a local level, where schools are often competing for the same pupils. As one head explained:

We’re pretty chummy, but we’re not that chummy, I find it difficult keeping the competitive instinct under control, I don’t find it easy to have a lot of good to say about the other local schools and I have to be quite careful about what I say.

It is questionable whether this is likely to be the best context for sustaining and informing professional knowledge, although it certainly does not preclude the development of a supportive relationship.
In addition to the mentoring scheme, the professional heads’ associations also offer a telephone support service for headteachers via the Membership Secretary who is an experienced former head with over 30 years of experience in HMC/GSA schools.

If a new head has an issue, they will tend to ring the membership secretary first of all, his remit is to be that all-seeing, all-knowing support in the background and the membership secretary will seek out legal advice or advice from the unions. It’s fairly common, for example, (more common than you might imagine), for new heads to reach a real point of conflict with the chair of governors, and so the membership secretary in those circumstances would visit the school and seek to broker some sort of arrangement or agreement between the head and the governors. The nature of support is mainly technical assistance in those areas where there are legal or communication issues.

The evidence here is of a bespoke support service for heads in these two professional associations which is context-specific and responsive to their individual needs. Yet there is also evidence that the complexity of the professional knowledge base required by these new heads is increasing, so much so that the advice of a retired head on the end of a telephone may not be sufficient to cope with the levels of technical expertise required. For this, heads are increasingly turning to external professionals for input because the level of professional knowledge necessary cannot be provided by heads’ associations alone. The knowledge base is becoming diversified out of necessity.

The PDO illustrates:

The theory has changed because the role of head has become much more demanding in key areas like financial management and legal awareness, instead of sessions as part of longer courses, we are now providing stand-alone courses which have been very popular – and just as popular with deputies as heads – because it is clearly the case that, if one has been responsible for a good size budget in a school as a deputy (it might be the training budget for example) that being responsible for a turnover of 10-15 million pounds - which is not uncommon in our schools these days - is a different ball game altogether. Heads, as they are ultimately responsible nowadays, are no longer prepared to entrust everything to the Bursar, they do feel they need to ask the probing questions, marketing has become much more of a concern for modern heads and marketing and finance are inextricably linked, and so we are now providing technical training in areas like school marketing, working with the media, finance, and employment law.

Despite these developments, it is interesting to note that these stand-alone courses in technical codified knowledge have been less popular this year than they were last year. 48 courses were offered during 2006-07 as opposed to 60 in the previous year.
The explanation which the PDO offered for this shift in demand was that headteachers were increasingly turning to outside professionals to help them solve their problems: Certain legal outfits are offering schools 365-day cover for upfront payment. So schools, if they have issues, now pick up the phone much more readily. They are paying for that advice and they've got it, so fewer heads feel they have to come away on an overnight course to get that information they need, they can simply get it over the phone.

It seems this explanation does not fully take into account the significance of the heightened complexity of the technical knowledge that is required by the modern professional in such instances – a complexity that can be more readily accommodated by stand-alone professionals in marketing, accounting, public relations and the law than by a stand-alone day course run by the professional heads' associations. A view which was confirmed by a headteacher:

I'm a bit cynical about one day courses for heads, because what you're actually saying is that a head has to be an expert in everything, and I don't believe that... I think my job is to resource people in the school, but also to provide the relationship with the outside world, and so I shouldn't know everything about everything. I need to use people and out-source things or in-source them as appropriate.

It will be interesting to see whether this shift in the sourcing of professional advice will lead to a weakening of the influence of the professional heads' associations over their members, and whether the heads' associations will respond in any way to try and retain their previous supremacy in providing professional counsel for heads.

5.17 The future of independent sector leadership development

Probing the shape of future leadership development provision in the independent sector was considered significant because of the insights this gave into how the current level of provision was regarded by the training providers. It also enabled an assessment as to whether there were commonalities between the perceptions of the heads' associations and the heads themselves in this regard. The Professional
Development Officer (PDO) acknowledged that the task of sustaining the professional knowledge of headteachers was a matter of listening to, and responding to, their needs. These were likely to be ever-changing as a result of the complexities of modern professional life.

There was a salient feeling that a large knowledge resource existed ‘out there’ which could be very useful to recently-appointed heads in particular, but which was largely untapped at present. As we have seen, a number of recently-appointed heads commented in the survey that they felt the professional associations could take more of an active role in linking them with recently-retired heads who possess a great deal of wisdom, but who are usually completely forgotten once they leave post (the current HMC on-line community list of members features only one retired head). A new initiative involving setting up a consultancy service utilising such expertise was explained by the PDO:

In fact we are just about to launch a new initiative. We received an approach from a company who offer an educational consultancy service. They are keen to work with us to appoint former HMC/GSA heads and deputies as consultants. But we feel this is something we should be doing on our own account anyway... rather like the consultant headship scheme offered by the national college. We will develop a team of experienced senior teachers who can go into schools and do on-site consultancy work in areas such as governance and management...It makes an awful lot of sense because there you have this huge reservoir of experience that could be used to the advantage of the sector. It could also useful for the heads’ appraisal. Only four or five existing or retired heads are properly trained at the moment in this capacity.

The richness of this response is that it suggests one particular way in which the heads’ associations will be responding to the out-sourcing by heads of other professional services with which they have previously been involved. By concentrating on ‘educational’ matters – those concerning pedagogy and on-site management and leadership - the risk of losing out to external competition becomes negligible. Importantly too, the scheme makes genuine attempts to tap into a hitherto under-utilised knowledge base rich in experience – that of retired heads and deputies. It is
also interesting to note that the National College of School Leadership is cited as an illustrative tool - further evidence that its influence is extending beyond the maintained sector and perhaps promising some sort of collaboration in the future. But what about the diversity of the professional knowledge base expected of independent school heads in the future?

I think there will be a greater expectation on the part of governing bodies that people presenting themselves for headship interviews will have jumped through certain hoops, although this is not to say that they will necessarily have paper qualifications. But they will have evidence of legal and financial awareness - more so than deputies have at the moment perhaps. They will need to shadow their present heads or heads at other schools, spend more time than they would routinely do talking to bursars and to school lawyers and alike, becoming much better informed...They will need more variety of experience across the whole school context – the academic, the pastoral - and also having looked outside the rather narrow world we exist in - a deeper understanding of market issues, demographics, of the media, of outreach of working within the local community, of public benefit or fund-raising.

This commentary links closely with the findings of the survey where finance and law are the areas in which heads felt least prepared, and it also points again to the ever-increasing complexity of the professional landscape that headteachers will be expected to occupy. In the future the nature of this knowledge will be further diversified and will incorporate an even broader knowledge base.
Part III: Three Cases of recently-appointed heads

5:18 The Case Study Heads

Table 5.16 Background information on case study headteachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Headteacher</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Time as a head</th>
<th>Previous posts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Girls' Church of England</td>
<td>474 pupils (5-18)</td>
<td>Academically selective, day and boarding pupils. Rural location, close to town.</td>
<td>Started 2006</td>
<td>• Deputy Head (5 years)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Senior Teacher (5 years)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Classroom teacher (12 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mixed Church of England</td>
<td>335 pupils (13-18) Pre-prep (2-7) and prep (7-13) - under separate head</td>
<td>Academically selective, day and boarding pupils. Rural location, close to city.</td>
<td>Started 2005</td>
<td>• Housemaster (5 years) concurrent with:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Head of Department &amp; Faculty (9 years)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Classroom teacher (6 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mixed Methodist</td>
<td>350 pupils (11-18) Pre-prep (2-7) &amp; prep (7-11) - under separate head</td>
<td>Academically selective, day and boarding. Rural location, close to town.</td>
<td>Started 2004</td>
<td>• Deputy Head (5 years)</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Housemaster (5 years)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Classroom teacher (8 years)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is clear from the three headteachers’ career paths is that they have all experienced a variety of different posts, without spending a substantial time in any one post or school. Two of the heads had worked in two previous schools prior to becoming a headteacher and one had worked in four previous schools. All of the heads regarded the experiences gained in these different positions as vital in their
present roles. All of them felt strongly that the most valuable experiences had been in
the post immediately prior to their appointment; this is where professional knowledge
was acquired which had direct relevance to fulfilling the role of headteacher. In most
of their cases this involved being ‘one step away’ from a head, in all working in close
proximity to one. All three heads had attended independent schools themselves, one
was a boarding school, one a day school and one had boarding and day pupils. Thus
all three heads had built up decades of cultural capital for their teaching and
headteacher careers. All conceded that a general understanding of the ethos of
independent education and of boarding had been acquired as a result of the
experiences of their own education.

5.19 Initiating the quest for headship: Inspiration from others leading to ambition for
leadership

All three headteachers cited an inspirational figure or a particular observational
moment which convinced them of their desire to lead. This motivation had stayed with
them, and there was a strong sense in all cases that they did not want to forget the
reasons they had got into the job of headteacher in the first place:

My ambition to move out of the classroom hit me fairly late – I’d been teaching 12 years and I was
firmly of the conviction that ‘this is where it is… this is the coalface… this is what matters, the teaching
is what is important,’ and then I had a Damascen moment, it really was, I thought, well I can run a
Department better than this, I know what I would want to do, I can do this, I’m up for this. And then
once that happened, and I got to run my own department and run my own head of year, I realised that
the pastoral area was one I wanted to pursue more, and when I went for my first interview to be deputy
head, I didn’t get the job, but my head asked me “do you see yourself as a head in 5 or 10 years time?”
and I said, “no, I’ve never had that thought.” “You will” she replied.

(head A)

Here the observation that ‘I can do this job’ better than it is being done at the moment
was important, as was the head who encouraged her to think of future career
directions and was positive in suggesting the possibility of further promotion. This
inspirational character appears again in another head’s story:
I was offered two jobs (at the start of my teaching career) and, at that stage, I thought I would be a classroom teacher for 38 years, but my head of department was the first person to say to me, “you could be a headmaster and you need to bear that in mind.” It wasn’t in fact until two-and-a-half years later when a colleague of mine said “if you don’t apply for a head of department in the next three or four years, windows will start closing and you’ll be too old for the next jobs and there will be no opening for you” that I started looking round.

(head B)

In this case, being singled out as a potential head within three years of starting a teaching career was significant, as was advice about moving posts and acquiring a variety of experiences before headship. For the third head, as with the first, there is evidence that seeing practice in schools which he didn’t regard as professionally satisfactory was a motivation to seek improvement and promotion themselves:

When I started my teaching, the culture of the school was not of classroom observation. People were there who had never been observed. I remember asking my head of department to observe me in my first year and him saying effectively “no I’m sure you’re doing fine.” He couldn’t be bothered to do it. So there were things you picked up, but I think it was done in those days in a very sloppy way and a very inefficient way, because you effectively learned through your mistakes impacting on pupils and then you tried to get it better next time. I think my teaching in that first year was poor... I actually think my classroom practice was very ordinary at best, and it took a number of years to get better than that. It wasn’t remarkably woeful, it was just par for the course back in the late 80s when people were still drinking sherry in the bar and going back to teach after lunch. (head Q)

My first head... I learned some things by negation if you like, I remember him saying to me once “well if you don’t hear from me you’re doing a good job” I thought that was crap and I still do. (head B)

As well as clearly feeling that this was not a satisfactory state of affairs which needed improving, it was a feeling of what might become of him if he didn’t get promoted which also seemed to be a motivational factor:

You either get on or you become the old fart in the corner of the common room. I’ve got lots of opinions, I like to get things moving, and I like to see things change. To be honest, being 45 and dead for 15 years was a long time to look at, so I didn’t want to stay there and go backwards... I think you’re a poor teacher if you’re not still intellectually curious yourself... while I was a deputy head, I decided to do an MBA, partly out of ambition... partly just out of academic curiosity. (head C)

5.20 Leadership styles

Experiences of being led were important in forming the leadership styles of the three heads:
I can remember the frustration of not being listened to, not being allowed to get on with things. It's always important to remember how liberating it is when you are allowed to get on and do things and how good it is for your own personal and professional development.

(head A)

This memory was important in the way she used her power and influence as a head with staff:

One of the things is the way that you listen to people who are actually at the bottom of the hierarchy in terms of the teaching staff; you need to empower your teachers. I really firmly believe that, I've only recently heard the jargon phrase for it – delegated leadership – but it matters, it matters and you need to make sure your staff are trained enough and that there is enough critical support that goes on, and enough trust and confidence that they can fly at all levels, that they can get on and do it, and that they know they are listened to. I don't mean complete democracy – it's not that, but they do know that their voices are heard, it can't be top-heavy.

(head A)

In a similar way, another head acknowledged that experience as a head of department and faculty had been important because of the people-leading aspects of the role.

Awareness is shown that different styles of leadership are appropriate for different types of people, and that motivating staff and 'bringing them with you' is an essential skill.

Middle management was the first job where I was responsible for leading people - and I specifically use the word lead (interviewee emphasis) there - you don’t manage people, you lead people and you manage things….it was not just prioritising the different styles of leadership…but also the people politics and the ability to defuse things and the importance of taking people with you, and how you can achieve that even if they don’t really want to go, or even if they don’t think they want to go.

(head B)

A growing sense of self-knowledge or ‘control knowledge’ (Eraut 1994:76-79) was also evident. This is knowledge about one’s strengths and weaknesses and how personality impacts on the way leadership is perceived by those following.

Experience as a middle manager is predominantly working with other people and there are always little tit bits you can take away….I've also been very lucky because I am a passionate believer in being honest and open with people – kids as well as peers…. There are certain personality traits which you have, which of course you are not aware of at the time at all, and I think that being passionate about what you do counts, and you tell whether people are or not.

(head A)
This self-knowledge is important because it is one of the basic principles of good leadership that you know your personal strengths and weaknesses and acquire emotional intelligence before appreciating the leadership of others. Two heads and the HMC/GSA professional development officer spoke of using the Belbin test for assessing team roles as having influenced their self-perception. One head had used a governor with experience in human resources work to assess each of his senior colleagues, helping him to understand their personalities and work better with them in the future.

Again, the significance of negative experiences working under previous heads was important in acquiring professional knowledge and understanding of leadership issues.

The head that succeeded my very first head - personally I didn’t get on with, but I learned something from him about powering through things and initiating dynamic change. I also learned quite a lot by negative means about the unkindness that can sometimes go along with that and actually for me it showed the necessity for actually dealing with things in a much more human fashion, even if you are in the end going to wield the knife. (head C)

5.21 Distributed leadership as a source of professional knowledge

Two of the heads demonstrated that distributing aspects of leadership to middle managers was a culture change they were keen to bring about. Significantly, they saw this as an opportunity to inform and develop their own knowledge of their schools and contribute to an improved understanding of the professional context in which they operated. The area in which this process was most frequently used was in contributing to a shared strategic vision for the school, often with a ‘fact-finding’ element at the start of the new head’s tenure.

One of the first things I did...I handed out questionnaires to all staff, not just teaching staff. I didn’t ask for names I just wanted to know whether they were prep, senior or support staff. There were three questions: What are the best and worst things about the school? What do you see as key areas for development? I was delighted with their responses. Their biggest concerns were areas for development.
You take all that and feed that into your development plan. (head A)

I’ve got a fairly solid team of heads of department and one of the things I’ve had to do is to kick them into thinking about being leaders, not managers. I would describe transformational leadership as the kind that devolves powers and opens up a whole plurality of debate around specific issues. It doesn’t always say “I know where we’re going” or “I know how we’re getting there”, it says “we’re going to be successful, let’s define what we think success is to us as a school.” It’s not just up to me…it’s not top down planning, it’s got bottom up input to it…otherwise you get one person working 24/7 and providing leadership instead of having 60 people working on leadership. (head C)

Through such techniques these heads inform themselves of the vision of their departments and their staff and become closely in-touch with ‘grass roots’ opinion – essential to sustaining a healthy operating knowledge of their workforce. The value of incorporating the development planning of individual departments into whole-school strategic planning speaks for itself.

Distributing aspects of leadership to help inform heads’ professional knowledge is a technique which was also recognised by the HMC/GSA professional development officer:

Increasingly, heads are shifting responsibility for development planning down to heads of departments and housemasters which requires strategic awareness and vision. So we’ve shifted the emphasis of leadership development down to the middle levels…It’s all very well for heads to design grand plans for the strategic development of the school in the future, but it’s not the head that will actually make it happen…the aim is to use leadership language in the training of our staff at all levels… Our concern is to safeguard the future of leadership in the sector. (PDO)

5.22 The Apprenticeship model of acquiring professional knowledge

The case studies all confirmed the significance of a period of apprenticeship under a successful headteacher, by definition occurring prior to taking up post. There were also indications that learning as an apprentice under a head who was perceived to have
certain weaknesses was also a valuable experience as this gave them more of an
opportunity to take on roles normally associated with headship.

Watching and working closely with a really good head, the way that he dealt with difficult parents, the
way that he dealt with issues, the moral courage he showed, that was a very, very important learning
experience. (head A)

The nature of this experience was not all tacit, and there were specific instances of
'know how' which could be drawn from working closely with a head. Such
recollections rolled off the tongue as if they had never been consciously considered
before, but now an interview was taking place, such issues were coming into focus.

You don't always give your difficult things to a deputy and keep all the nice things for yourself and
even the advice he gave about seeking others' advice and never doing things in isolation, not doing
things alone, and the timings of things - why the end of terms is a good time to do some things and a
very bad time to do other things - stuff that you really think "of course it's obvious, but it's so easy to
lose sight of when you are in the middle of a busy school day." (head A)

The final observation here suggests that a period of time as an apprentice also seems
to have been the catalyst for bringing into conscious focus some general
understandings which were previously known but not used. Through experiencing
them through someone else's actions they become reactivated for practical use in the
professional workplace.

Other experiences of the apprenticeship were less practical and more anecdotal, but
they were no less significant in the eyes of the head for that:

I think the biggest influence on me was my previous head talking about the psychological contract,
which apparently is an Aegean shipyard thing. There the people worked overtime in the summer and
went home early in the winter without anyone telling them to do this, without it ever being formalised.
They just understood that they could work harder in the summer because that's when ships are being
delivered, and it was hard to get much work done in winter... it helps me to understand why my staff
do what they do. (head B)
Other anecdotal stories were cited from which the heads had learnt things such as the significance of confidentiality in dealing with disciplinary matters, the nature of leadership, dealing with nerves or the importance of good business sense.

There were lots of informal occasions when you could just ask him a little question which would throw up an interesting insight...the best piece of advice I received was something that surprised me: in leadership you cannot try to be understood.

(head B)

5.23 The nature of apprenticeship

All the heads explained that they felt that the raison-d’etre for deputy headship was brief exposure to as many aspect of professional life as possible which would subsequently be valuable for taking up a headship.

It’s right to give a deputy who you know is good enough and could go on to be a good head, you actually should give them some of the difficult things to do for the experience of it, because what you do not want to do is become a head when you’re not ready for it. So you need to have a go at the difficult things as a deputy.

(head A)

So I got a deputy headship, a joint deputyship, and we shared everything. We rotated functions either when we got fed up... I mean... health and safety, we would rotate, big school events we changed around doing, after a couple of years, I’d do something she’d do something.

(head C)

One head had been asked at deputyship interview where he saw himself in five years. He felt strongly that the right answer was to say “leaving here for my first headship”, and he got the job. The time spent as a deputy was tailor-made to ensure that experience of all the major parts of a school’s operation necessary for being a successful starting head had been experienced.

My head was brilliant... he was very keen to progress me. At appraisal every year, we’d sit down and ask what have you done this year? I’ve done health and safety so that’s a box ticked, what you haven’t had is experience of finance, perhaps we should get you more involved in that so where can we give you a big budget to play with? So I wound up in charge of a fairly decent sized budget and he said right go off and see if you can save us 10% out of all that then, and that was a useful thing to do, but it was indicative of his desire to find me things where he thought I needed extra experience. He also gave me the opportunity to get involved with the governing body.

(head C)

All three heads had received this kind of support from their previous heads, being specifically guided through experiencing a variety of aspects of school leadership and
management as a deputy. Possibly these previous heads saw themselves as having a responsibility for producing future leaders from within their own schools, and part of their job was to identify the talent and ensure they were adequately prepared when it came to application. But it is important to note that this entitlement to headship preparation does not come automatically and a head may not enable a deputy to prepare for headship in such a systematic way. The benefits of a heads’ apprenticeship appear to be discretionary:

Even being a member of the senior management team does not prepare you enough (for headship). I think only deputy headship gets you close, and then it only gets you close if you have a head who is willing to share, not just give you crumbs off the desk to deal with. (head C)

It would be a simplification to represent all the heads as having a harmonious relationship with the head under whom they were learning as a deputy. Tension and personality differences were evident, and seem to have been used to positive effect in developing self-awareness and professional knowledge for the future:

We were chalk and cheese, and it was a very good springboard. I am impetuous where he is cautious, I am determined where he is more able to see shades of grey. I take the short term view, he takes the longer picture and in all those sorts of areas, that kind of working tension was a good one, and it was very good for me to learn. (head C)

The net result of this informal and ad-hoc apprenticeship system is an individualised approach to learning for headship and developing leadership skills in the sector. In the absence of a formalised and widely accessible programme, there is little opportunity for some senior teachers to develop the skills necessary to take on a headship, either because they have not been in a position from which to pick up this knowledge and skill as a willing apprentice, or because a particular headteacher denies such an opportunity to his/her deputy, intentionally or otherwise.
It is perhaps not surprising that such a system of leadership development should have arisen in the independent sector which does not have the centralising force of government seeking to exert influence and control over school leaders from without. With no pressure for a standardised and formalised system of leadership development and a recognised certification of competence, an ad-hoc and organic system has evolved and will continue to develop within the independent sector. Whilst the advantage of this is a system which is independent, flexible and personalised, at the same time it is not transparent and is arguably open to abuse. This may be more likely to produce candidates who are under-prepared for headship because of the variation in their apprenticeship and potential weaknesses in their professional knowledge base.

5.24 Externally-delivered Professional knowledge

As was the case with the apprenticeship aspect of professional knowledge acquisition prior to taking up headship, the externally-delivered training which impacted most significantly on recently-appointed heads also tended to have been picked up before becoming a headteacher. This might be explained by the comparative ease that an experienced deputy head has in attending multiple external training events in comparison with a headteacher new to post who may feel less inclined to be absent from school.
5.25 The Influence of Business theory

Two of the three heads spoke at length about the importance of business theory in their current professional practice. One had completed an MBA whilst a deputy head, the other had a degree in Economics and was making daily links between practical workplace situations and business and organisational theory. Both heads were successfully transferring this conceptual knowledge to practical advantage as beginning headteachers.

I draw on the MBA all the time in terms of finance, marketing, HR. When I did the course there were a number of components - accountancy was one, quantitative methods was another, HR, Marketing, Organisational behaviour – I would say all of those things are absolutely key....In some areas it took a long time to see the connections, but now when I look at regression analysis with a head of department and a director of studies, the fact that I did all that stuff about machines failing, mean times to fail and statistical process charts, means that a regression chart can look at a department's results and a statistical process charts can centre around pupil's performance, just as it would look at a machine's performance. All of that was really quite exciting when the lights switched on at the first head of department's meeting I went to as a deputy head. I thought, “oh hang on, I get this and I get why.” (head Q)

Use of phrases such as ‘see the connections’ and ‘the lights switched on’ clearly demonstrates this linkage between conceptual knowledge and providing insights into the practical everyday world of educational management and leadership. Hatsopoulos & Hatsopoulos (1999:151) refer to this process as ‘analogical inference’ – in this case using analogies between business processes and educational ones.

The other head charted the influence in a different, though no less significant way:

I learnt an immense amount from my previous head, partly because my background is in Economics and partly because he had done three months in INSEAD business school. He constantly talked in terms of business theory and read the Harvard Business Review. The two years I spent on the SMT were two hour meetings and a mixture between fire-fighting and advanced business studies tutorials. He would just hook a piece of theory and say, “of course, one of the things they teach you in business school is... and it is applied here in this way”, and I find myself using these things all the time. I am running the school as a business because I know that if I don’t I won’t be able to do the educational things I want to do. In a school like this, if you don’t run it like a business you won’t be running it at all. (head B)
The influence of business literature and theory was also seen as an innovating factor in one school, stimulating new ideas and cross-fertilising concepts and theories which might bring about whole-school improvements:

I actually read a lot of management-style books, more general business ones, some education – I read a very good book about creating excellence in the state sector and this is what led me to set up a whole bunch of working parties into creating excellence in the school because the contention of the book was talking about kite marks and going for ‘Investor in People’ status. My contention was that if we’re good enough for parents to throw money at us, you should be able to benchmark excellence in all areas, so we set up working parties to describe what my colleagues felt excellence would look like in, for example, modern languages or mathematics and science, and that could be excellence in facilities, excellence in teaching...

(head C)

5.26 HMC/GSA Courses

All of the heads had attended the compulsory aspect of headship training and one or two day courses for deputy heads offered by the two professional heads’ associations (GSA and HMC). Opinions were very different about the value of such courses:

The one course that was very good was the GSA new heads course that was brilliant, brilliant. It was so very focused – every single one of us there was doing the same things, we are new heads and every single part of the course was geared to us for that purpose and they covered all the key tricky issues for headship – dealing with governors, dealing with your bursar, dealing with your senior staff, recent legal changes and things you are likely to face, imminent things in the offing, key financial issues and marketing – all the biggies and they are focused at you and at your level as well and again, because everyone at the conference is your peer.

(head A)

I did do the HMC deputies course a long time ago, as an Assistant Head. I remember someone talking about appraisal and thinking, that all sounds very impressive, but I can’t imagine making it work which I think is a fairly common reaction to hearing people talking about appraisal. I can remember his shirt and tie combination and that’s about all I can remember from that conference.

(head B)

I didn’t do the HMC day courses, for example the one on finance – well I didn’t do it because having done accountancy for a year (as part of a MBA) it didn’t seem worthwhile.

(head C)

Part two of the HMC course was not helpful at all. There was quite a good thing on A levels, but frankly that’s what I expect my Director of Studies to know, so it was a detailed briefing on academic policy which I would rather was filtered by my Director of Studies... There were one or two other sessions, none of which were more than very tangentially useful, and I thought the whole thing was a colossal waste of time, apart from sitting in the bar where there were some useful interactions.

(head B)
They are completely unhelpful as far as I'm concerned, not deliberately so ... I went on the day course and it was just full of puff. There was one guy getting up and talking about leadership, I’d just spent three years doing an MBA and working on my thesis on transformational leadership in independent schools so I really did not need another hour of somebody telling me that leadership is all about having a vision. (head C)

Headteacher A had a particularly interesting perspective; having worked in a HMC school and now leading a GSA school, she had attended courses only open to HMC schools as a deputy, and subsequently GSA training as a head. She commented that there was a noticeable difference in atmosphere between the male-dominated HMC gatherings and the female-dominated GSA conferences, the former being less supportive and open to genuine problem-sharing.

GSA courses are much more gentlemanly, they are much more open and much less cliquey, there is still a clique but it is not as marked. (head A)

This is supported by an observation from an HMC head that has a close friend as an HMC colleague:

We try and get away from the conference for a chat, and we are real enough with each other that we are not part of this macho “I can manage anything” culture. We can actually say to each other “I actually really struggle with this.”

One head particularly identified the main purpose of such conferences as networking and making supportive contacts with other heads just as the HMC/GSA professional development officer had done:

You can learn a lot through courses, and what you learn is not primarily what is being delivered to you, it’s from talking to other people at the same level of you who have maybe had more experience - that I still find, as a head, the most useful thing. On our GSA courses, talking to other heads - your peers - who have had different experiences, maybe not necessarily more, but certainly different and as a young head, most of them have had more experience. We have a great regional support network now, where seven of us meet termly - it’s terrific.

5.27 Codified ‘public’ knowledge

As Eraut and others have demonstrated a headteacher’s professional knowledge landscape comprises much complexity in ‘know how’ and ‘know that’ skills. For
some of the heads, despite some negative comments about the GSA/HMC courses, some significant technical ‘know how’ was obtained there. Examples cited were in areas such as legal matters, financial awareness, child protection, office management and working with a PA, and they were regarded positively. There was an unsurprising acceptance of the necessity of codified technical knowledge within the immediate educational sphere, but also from less obvious sources, for example financial acumen and emotional intelligence:

I think there are some things that heads ought to know... I managed to avoid asking what the SOFA was until someone told me it stands for statement of financial accounts, and so on. But, there are lots of holes (in knowledge), lots of occasions when you can put your foot firmly in it... When I went to a meeting with our bankers it wasn’t until I asked them about whether they were happy with the predicted yield on the interest rate graph that they sat up and took me seriously. Now I can do that because I’ve got a degree in Economics and a background in teaching it. But what heads need to to a certain degree is enough subject-based knowledge to get the attention of people who think that, without that, you cannot manage big organisations. I think heads also need some knowledge of human behaviour, to be better at understanding how to use other people’s strengths to compensate for your own weaknesses. (head B)

The great thing about the MBA is that when someone walks in and starts bluffing you about “this is what your market is” and “you need this and you need that”, you can just go “hang on a minute, you’re pitching me a product, you’re trying to sell me something which is not right for our school.” Otherwise we get swept up with just buying in gurus who tell us how to do things. (head C)

For the most part though, such technical knowledge was referred to in terms of necessity rather than enthusiasm, as it is ‘all the stuff you need to know about usually’ (head A). The disappointment in the courses, in particular those provided by the HMC, is perhaps partly explained by the tension between these two aspects of knowledge – the codified and technical, and the personalised, tacit and anecdotal. While the former is perceived as mundane and dull, even as detail more suitable for deputies (though this does not necessarily diminish its importance), the latter is perceived as insightful wisdom and is what heads would like to receive at such courses. However, due to the tacit and often ‘uncodified’ or ‘uncodifiable’ nature of
such knowledge, they are going to be disappointed. As Proust demonstrates, ‘we do not receive wisdom, we must discover it for ourselves’ (cited by Horvath 1999: ix).

The process of acquiring technical knowledge was straightforward enough, but a number of examples suggested that in reality when contextual factors were at work, the technical knowledge alone was not enough for a head to operate effectively. In such instances, technical codified knowledge must be augmented by situational knowledge, and understanding of people and local processes as well as self-awareness.

There is definitely a limit to knowledge that can be passed down in codified form to someone from outside, not just because you can’t possibly anticipate the things that are going to happen, you can’t cover it, you think you’ve been there, seen that, but you cannot teach anyone or coach anyone in exactly what combination of personalities you are going to be dealing with. So that which works in one set of circumstances with the same issue is not going to work with different people. (head A)

Another head found such contextual variations challenging when approaching strategic planning:

When you’re working theoretically, you can set the vision on a budgetary basis that is known, whereas in this school the budgetary basis for the future is completely unknown. So if I produce a document saying in three years time I will do this, I will essentially be making a promise that I know there is only a 50% likelihood that I can deliver on, and that’s very difficult and that’s where I find the whole strategic planning things so difficult. (head B)

The third head experienced challenge in transferring the theory of instigating organisational change into practice because this involved emotions and real people:

It goes with the turf, if you think you’re going to be a head, I think you have to accept that there is going to be a time when you have to say to someone something unpleasant or do something unpleasant to someone... you can’t necessarily be prepared for that... for the difficult discussion, because it is all going pear-shaped in a department or learning how to control a strong bursar who wants to keep all his cards close to his chest so he can be allowed to get on with running this and running that. (head C)
5.28 Networking & Mentoring

All of the heads had considerable resources at their disposal in terms of support and advice. As we have seen, the apprenticeship aspect of professional knowledge acquisition occurs prior to taking up headship, and take-up of externally-delivered training is also prevalent during this period (although its full impact may not be realised until well into headship). In contrast, the role of networking and mentoring to sustain this professional knowledge base appears to become more significant once heads are in post. This might be explained by the position they now find themselves in – more exposed and on their own at the top, with less support to call upon within the school, hence more often turning for support from outside the institution.

The HMC telephone advice service was cited as being extremely helpful as was the GSA system of putting heads in touch with each other over specific issues.

It’s important to be part of that GSA network…. We have a buddy system and a whole pack of assistance under titles, a whole host of heads who have dealt with a certain issue have given GSA their phone numbers and said “if anyone is facing this, then pick up the phone and talk to me” so we’ve got that great knowledge bank – members for members –and there is an email network ranging from “help, my physics teacher has just broken a leg and won’t be in for a month, do you know anyone who could cover?” to policy issues….Peer contact is the most important source for informing my professional practice. (head A)

There are times when I share some concerns. I remember sharing my concerns with another head saying that an incredible amount of my time is spent just going out and finding pupils, and he said it’s true of many others as well. So there have been times when people have said – yes we’re going through the same things and that’s been an encouragement. (head B)

I pick the phone up if I want to speak to the head (of a local school), to get some advice about something I just ask him. (head C)

The HMC/GSA mentoring system is particularly significant for the professional knowledge of recently-appointed heads in the independent sector because, along with
the part 1 and part 2 induction courses, it is the only compulsory aspect of professional
development within the professional association. The professional development
officer conceded in interview that the system was not always successful and this is
borne out in the evidence from the survey and case studies. There are three specific
issues which seem to contribute to the hit-and-miss nature of success. Firstly, the
difficulty for new heads to find an existing head who is going to be a good mentor.
Secondly, a conflict between support at a local level and the realities of the
marketplace where schools compete for pupils and thirdly, the pressure of time on
both heads:

I haven’t used my mentor very much at all, but the GSA recommends people in similar schools but not
immediately around you so as it might be a competitor or anything like that. I spoke to her at
conference and spoke about one other thing with her. (head A)

I chose my HMC mentor but I didn’t ask his advice about anything. I had a nice dinner with him, and
he was generally encouraging, I didn’t need it, but I knew I could pick up the phone... this year, when I
do need him and we’re no longer in touch, I thought it’s a shame that I’m not officially being mentored.
(head B)

I was given a mentor, and I saw him once at HMC to say hello to and he was no help whatsoever. I
mean I was so busy I certainly wasn’t going to find the time to pick the phone up and say to this guy
that I had never met, “oh, by the way, I need to sack this person, how do I do it?” I just got on with
finding out how I did it for myself and getting on with it, and equally clearly he (interviewee emphasis)
didn’t find the time to pick up the phone and ask me “just thought I’d like to check base with you” so,
no, I didn’t find it very helpful. (head C)

The competitive element between independent schools is evident in a number of
comments and may well be a significant factor in some of the less successful
mentoring relationships.

There is a sort of false collegiality about HMC which sometimes I find a bit jarring because the truth is
I’m in competition and I’d like to see a local school go out of boarding, I’d like to see it...leave me the
market, although we can still be pleasant to each other. (head C)

This atmosphere may also restrict the flow of some good information between heads:

I think there is a real temptation to go to the conference and crow about your best ideas, which means
that everyone else gets them. So I go and try and say as little as possible about what I think my good
ideas are. I've mentioned one or two of them at meetings where by and large I don't think we are competing with the others, but generally I try and listen. If I said conference was an opportunity to spy on other schools that would be putting it a bit strongly. (head B)

It is not possible to say whether or not this a problem which is more acute in the independent sector when compared with maintained schools

5.29 Informing contextual knowledge: The acquisition of ‘people’ and ‘situation’ knowledge prior to taking up post

The period of time between appointment and taking up post was important to all of the heads who spent a deal of time acquiring important information about their new workplace before arriving. The former headteachers were closely involved in this process as was the chair of governors and the governing body. All heads met parents and staff socially before formally taking up post and spoke about how useful this had been in forming some initial impressions:

I came down and had a couple of chats with the outgoing head, fairly informally. I also had a couple of very good in-depth sessions with my deputy to be, off-site, informally. That was important. (head A)

I think I made about 25 trips down here in 15 months. They weren't all entirely school-based, for example, I came down to choose the house. I came down for two governors' board meetings and two or three finance committee meetings. I asked my predecessor if he was prepared to let me sit in on a day of interviews for a post, so I could see what he did, so I literally sat in the room and took notes which were very useful and he was very nice to me. I made two or three trips just to the Prep school. We had a 12 hour handover meeting. (head B)

I had a couple of handover meetings with the previous head... he talked me through his senior team and it was saying “x is quite ‘grippy’, y is a nice person, but there is a good core in there”... it was that sort of thing. I had lunch with the chair of the governors in which he set down for me what he thought the problems of the school were and what they wanted me to sort out. It was helpful but not particularly clear - just things such as “sort out the prep school” - it was fairly general. (head C)
All of the heads felt that they had been given good contextual knowledge by the appointment committee and chair of governors, including negative aspects which may have been more difficult to talk about:

There were no black holes...there was nothing hidden. There was a particularly difficult staff issue going on, but I was told about that. (head B)

The appointment procedure was extraordinarily well managed... they sat me down with all the chairs of the GB sub-committees and said “ok, this is our agenda – what’s your agenda?” and at that stage they really opened the history books and told me all sorts of things...they got every skeleton out of the cupboard at that stage which was enormously useful. So it was ‘eyes open.’ (head B)

5.30 Control knowledge and knowing oneself: Feedback on performance

A surprising aspect of the research was the performance review or appraisal systems to which the three case heads had access. These are of particular interest to the study because an effective professional knowledge landscape must be sustained by feedback and continual review. This is perhaps particularly relevant in the headteacher position, where informal feedback is very rare. One head remarked that nobody is going to say you’re doing a good job on a day-to-day basis except perhaps your wife.

In two cases, heads had been required to design their own system, either because no current system was in place or they wanted to bring in a new system for themselves. One head had not been appraised yet because there was no system, but a plan was in place to introduce one:

There is no formal appraisal system at present. I do get feedback from individual governors which is very useful, but I’m not entirely sure where they get their information from. I do get feedback from senior staff, I say “Talk to me, tell me, give me feedback” and they do. I am certain that most of them are honest, I’m not certain that all of them are...I would like to establish a more formal appraisal system for me. We haven’t got that, but it would be very useful. One of my teachers is an ex-head and an inspector. He’s been invited by another school to do this and, if it works, I will present to my Chair of governors and ask for a similar system. (head A)
My appraisal was a real screw-up, being blunt, the governors hadn’t really done one before in that way, I said you’ve got to appraise me, they then put into place a monstrous number of interviews with colleagues and things like that ate up so much of their time, I knew they wouldn’t get through it all, it took them six months from start to finish, by the time they were saying to me some colleagues feel this or that, the issue had long since been resolved. I’m all for a plurality of voices, but I think they interviewed 24 people; they could have got the same from about 12 people.

(head C)

I designed an appraisal for myself; the chair of governors did it. A form which was left in the staff room and in the support staff areas which they could send to the chair of governors… the house parents picked two current parents each and the forms were sent to them and we got a 90% return rate.

(head B)

The feedback from this review process was clearly very helpful to the head and will form an essential part of formulating strategies and actions for the coming year:

I was told: “This is where you score good marks; this is where you score less good marks.” I recognised myself…I knew what my weaknesses were and it told me, now I’ve refocused on these… It gave me one or two pointers for staff who needed more nurturing – extremely helpful… I don’t believe in the sort of appraisal which involves getting another head to come in, paying him £500 to come in and chat to people and then say “well old chap… I think it’s going jolly well” and then get back in his car and go home.

(head B)

Another head reported a similarly open and honest transfer of ideas which had a direct bearing on his professional knowledge and plans for the future:

I’ve just done best company survey… where every employee in the organisation gets a questionnaire to do… leadership is one area, my team, my workplace, my colleagues, my line manager and that sort of thing… I reported back openly to the governors about how good the leadership was and I reported it openly to the common room last week, including the one comment that came back from somebody saying this school needs a new headmaster. I’ve got to take that on the chin because I’m really passionate about having open debate… it was a massively positive experience, it was good.

(head C)

The informative effect of the feedback was clearly something that he had thought about and that would be influencing future professional practice:

There are some specifics that I’ve have learned from this. Communication particularly where colleagues sometimes felt there was so much change happening that we don’t understand it, we don’t know why it’s happening, we don’t quite get it. We took all those comments away as a senior team and worked on them.

(head C)

It is perhaps surprising that three heads encountered in the study had such unstructured and ad-hoc appraisal and review arrangements. It is not possible to say whether this is a widespread issue in the sector as a whole, but it is compatible with
the strong sense of independence in the sector, an ethos of each school doing things differently, and the state of leadership development in general which we have identified as ad-hoc, non-standardised and informal.

5.31 Professional knowledge acquired in personal biography: The impact of headteachers’ own educational background and moral-religious viewpoints

The close relationship between teachers’ life stories and their professional knowledge was discussed in Chapter 4. Gronn & Ribbins (1996), in exploring links between biography and leadership showed the importance of life histories and their impact on leadership style. This link was also encountered in the three case study heads who all felt that their professional knowledge landscapes were shaped by their own experiences of school and religious or moral convictions. All three heads had attended independent school themselves which earlier I suggested enabled them to build up considerable cultural capital in approaching the role of headteacher. As was the case with headteachers they had formerly worked under, both positive and negative experiences in their own schooling proved to be significant influences (a finding which confirms the earlier work of Parker 2002). All the heads were able to make clear links with their own experiences and the ethos they sought to promote in their school.

I grew up in Belfast in the troubles, and I became a history teacher in large part because I was convinced that if history was to work properly in Northern Ireland you wouldn’t have any troubles. Now I know that’s naïve but there is still a core of truth in it, so that is how fundamentally important education is, and by education I don’t mean exams, exams matter because they give people choices and that’s all they matter for. Education should be a moral context, about opening people’s minds, and that’s hugely important. That drives me and it’s also where I am intolerant of the intolerant… I believe schools should be about giving young people the moral context as well – yes, and as a Head I want my school to be about that.

(head A)

In terms of my own education, I was very small and I was bullied and it was very anti-academic when I was there, and I loathed boarding for quite a long time and so this has had an influence on me. I am
determined now to reward pupils who achieve in the classroom, on the stage, in the music department, in the CCF, whatever, and I try to make sure the things I dish out represent all the different areas of school life, so that no one is neglected. I suppose if I look back at my school, one of the reasons why I think it was so anti-academic is that the only prizes given out by staff were for academic things, so the standard teenage rebel position was well if you’re valuing it, we won’t, so academic things were of no consequence, only sport was, so I try to reward pupil performance in every area of school life to get away from that blinkered meritocracy.

(head B)

I hated my housemaster and was the most beaten boy at prep school. I enjoyed boarding and didn’t like the people who surrounded me. One of the things that at my school I was perpetually told was “if you don’t like it here, you can always leave”, and one of the questions I always asked was “why?” “Why do I have to wear black shoes not brown?” “Why have I got to have a haircut? ...” Why can’t I wear an earring?” I think a pathetic response to give any child is “well if you don’t like it you can always leave”, so I’m forever telling pupils that we do have rules but there are values underlying every rule, and if there isn’t a value underlying that rule, then we need to get rid of it.

(head C)

It is interesting that in all three cases the strongest motivational factor was reacting against a situation which they perceived to be wrong whilst pupils themselves. This feeling remained with the heads throughout their earlier careers. It seems that the opportunity and freedom to express their own educational values which headship provided meant that they drew on these vivid experiences of their own schooling to inform their professional judgements in establishing their own school’s ethos and educational philosophy.

Moral-religious perspectives were also probed, and care was taken to make it clear that this did not necessarily depend on any religious belief. As it happens, all three heads willingly identified themselves a Christian. Again, as you would expect from the heads of three denominational faith schools, these beliefs had an impact on professional practice. Both the heads who talked about this in detail chose to refer in their answers to difficult staffing issues, clearly weighing heavy on their minds. It is perhaps surprising more mention was not made of interactions between pupils and values underlying their behaviour:
Moral and spiritual considerations are hugely important... my own religious beliefs probably do affect my interactions with other staff too... I think it also impacts in terms of school discipline, although I think I would often come to the same conclusion as many of my colleague heads. I would certainly believe in general in giving people a second chance because of the New Testament angle, I'd be pretty unhappy with a one strike and you're out policy. (head B)

Faith comes through in the things I do, that's why when I talk about if you're going to sack someone, you've got to find the most Christian way possible. I made six people redundant in my first year, I could equally have dismissed any of them for incompetency, but it was a softer process to go through redundancy because we happened to have plummeting pupil numbers, so I was able to make the argument that we don't need you, and I was able to find a way of saying we don't need you. (head C)

5.32 The future of leadership development in the independent sector

In line with the stated intention of the research project to make some recommendations for future policy directions and as a piece of practitioner-research, headteachers were asked about the future of leadership development in the sector. All three heads were familiar with the work of the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) and the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) but none had attended the College or completed NPQH. Discussion centered around whether it was necessary to improve the training route to headship in the sector, and whether there were enough opportunities for aspirant headteachers to acquire the necessary professional knowledge base for headship. A summary of their responses follows:

- More thought should be given to encouraging development of leadership at a middle management level and developing staff at this level should be an important matter for senior managers.

- Aspirant heads need to have more formalised opportunities to encounter aspects of headship (e.g. marketing, organisational theory) which they would not normally have experience of prior to taking up headship. One day courses are unlikely to be sufficient for this purpose.

- As two small professional heads’ associations with less than 500 schools between them, the GSA and HMC have limited resources available for the requirements that member schools have. Forming a centralised body which represented all
independent schools would provide more opportunity for enhancing leadership development programmes.

- A formalised programme of shadowing heads for a number of days or a week available to aspirant heads was strongly endorsed.

- All three heads were strongly opposed to introducing a compulsory qualification for headship in the independent sector. Reasons cited were concerns over declining numbers of applicants for headship, keeping flexibility for those who want become heads from outside education and those mavericks who might not want to do a qualification or pass it, a need to keep the headship pool wide.

- Two heads were keen to point out the deficiency of competency-based qualifications in determining whether that necessarily makes for a good headteacher:

  Remember not everyone who has a PGCE is a good teacher, and not everyone without a PGCE is a bad one.  
  (head A)

  Put a red pheasant and a monkey together and it's still not an organ grinder.  
  (head C)

Again we encounter a less than enthusiastic response to competency-based training validated from outside the independent sector, but a willingness to consider the broader picture, beyond their own schools, for improving leadership development within the sector, particularly their own niche within it.
Part IV: Perspectives of two experienced heads

Interviewing two more experienced heads as part of the research design enabled a further perspective to be examined, and provided additional weight to the case for adequate triangulation of findings between recently-appointed and experienced headteachers and the professional heads’ association’s Professional Development Officer. It also provided an opportunity to explore the previous analysis within an historical context and to consider the implications should substantial shifting trends be identified. Table 5.22 summarises the characteristics of the two headteachers involved.

Table 5.17 Characteristics of experienced heads contributing to the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head teacher</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>School Characteristics</th>
<th>Time as a head</th>
<th>Previous posts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| D            | M   | Co-educational Selective Church of England | 752 pupils (13-18) | Academically selective, day and boarding pupils. Rural location, close to town | Started 1997 | Senior Teacher (9 years)  
Senior post outside education (4 years)  
Classroom teacher (11 years) |
| E            | M   | Co-educational Selective Church of England | 735 pupils (11-18) | Academically selective, day and boarding pupils. City centre location | Started 1993 | Head of Department & Faculty (12 years)  
Classroom teacher (18 years)  
Job outside education (3 years) |

There were many commonalities and some important differences which emerged from interviews with experienced heads when analysed alongside those of their recently-appointed colleagues. The most significant variation was that neither had been deputy headteachers immediately prior to headship. As with the group of recently-appointed heads, both experienced heads had been educated in the independent sector.
themselves and had built up cultural capital in the operational nuances of independent schools even before commencing their teaching career. Additionally, as with the recently-appointed group, both headteachers had spent all their teaching careers in independent schools.

5.33 Commonalities between experienced and recently-appointed heads

For both heads, their own educational experience was significant in their approach to leadership. One spoke with enthusiasm about remaining in school for an additional year before going up to university during which time he acted as a quasi-teacher, running much of the school’s music:

So I did a third year in the sixth form, virtually running the school’s music for its sadly idle and miserable director of music, and wasting time productively and enjoyably. This proved excellent training. Leadership in music is splendid experience, it is so multi-faceted. (head E)

The other head also stressed that his own schooling was important. Attending a highly academic day school (“top of the A level tables”) instilled a strong sense of academic priority:

I couldn’t understand why a school wouldn’t want to give this top priority. I was not interested in sport, and I remember not enjoying it and not finding it that interesting. This is the way I regard sport here I suppose. I always loved history. (head D)

Now head of a large boarding school, he commented:

As a school boy, I also wished I could have boarded, I know I would have got on better with my parents if I had not been on top of them all the time….so I’m a fan of boarding and strongly committed to its ethos.

As with some of the more recent headteachers, negative experiences at school contributed to a desire to go into teaching:

I wanted to become a teacher because of my experiences…He (the teacher) was not engaging or effective and I thought “I can do better than this; I want to do better than this.” (head D)
Both heads talked at length about their earlier career experiences and how these contributed to their professional knowledge base when they became headteachers.

One talked about experience of administration, paperwork and good communication in the CEO’s office in a major national corporation, and of experience of strategic planning and finance as chairman of the governing body of a preparatory school. As a senior teacher he had also had experience of thinking through whole-school issues beyond those of an individual department or boarding house.

The other had spent time as an instructor in the armed forces and referred to the three science departments he had run as ‘mini-schools’, suggesting that the size and scope of the role, made the step from this to headship more manageable.

Both experienced heads confirmed the suggestion made after the findings of the earlier interviews that the purpose of HMC/GSA induction courses was primarily to set-up networking and future support opportunities rather than pass on detailed codified and technical knowledge to heads:

The induction course for new heads is excellent. Most importantly it introduces them to their contemporary beginners and to key people in HMC who will be a great support later. They also run refresher courses which have the same advantages.

(head E)

An example of this supportive network was seen in action too:

With my experience, not wanting to blow my own trumpet too much, I have become a bit of a leader of headteachers. They are increasingly coming to me about issues and asking for advice. There is one particular issue (protected)... which I am known as a national expert on.

(head D)
But there was also evidence, as with the recently-appointed heads, that with the increasing complexity of professional knowledge required by headteachers they can no longer rely solely on the professional heads’ association for advice but increasingly need to turn to outside experts and professionals. The small size of the associations was again cited as a concern and a factor which contributes to its inability to serve all the needs of its members:

I don’t need to pick up crumbs from HMC cluster groups; I’ll phone the school’s lawyers or the school’s PR agency. HMC does not adequately cover our issues... for issues such as public benefit and development I get input from other professionals... The HMC was originally set up by a very small number of schools but now it’s far too large to meet all our needs. It used to be a handful, but now it’s nearly 300. You can’t just go around doing courses and expecting that they will give you what you need to lead. I went on the New Heads' course, it was a complete joke. (head D)

5.34 Differences between experienced and recently-appointed heads

The concept of apprenticeship, which we have seen forms a significant aspect of leadership development in the independent sector, was also encountered in the careers of more experienced heads. However, in both cases cited, this was not as deputy headteachers (neither had been deputies immediately prior to headship), but as identified ‘confidants’ of the then headteacher or as vigilant observers of leadership from below:

I made myself a critical student of headmasters' strengths and weaknesses. The first was very nice but dozy and more or less let some of us future heads run the school by turns. My second was brilliant and exciting but had new ideas every time the bell struck and never let any of them work through to be assessable. My third was a genius. (head E)

The critical observation of headteachers that have been worked under and the importance of perceived leadership weaknesses as well as strengths in this process are similar to the observations made of the recently-appointed headteachers. The idea of ‘future heads’ taking turns running the school suggests that this particular head had
been identified as a future leader and confidant of the head some time before he took on the mantel of headship himself. The other head had the opportunity to work closely with the head of his previous school in a relatively senior role. He took from him a strong sense that he was good enough to become a head himself, which he described as a very important motivational and confidence-boasting influence not only at the time of application but also during his early years as a head.

But there seems to be an important difference in the experiences of these two heads, perhaps related because neither were deputy headteachers prior to taking up headships—a different attitude to the role of deputy head itself. Both saw the deputy headteacher as an important operational and procedural role in itself suiting a particular type of personality, rather than a means to an end—a short stop on the way to headship. One head effectively characterises this difference in terms of the distinction between managers and leaders:

I worked in the days when a deputy head was a loyal long-serving (not necessarily old) enabler and trouble shooter before trouble happened. But that was before clipboards, databases and other irrelevant tasks keeping Senior Management Teams in offices, on the phone and out of classrooms. If a deputy head took the job on because he was a good potential head, may he soon move on and flourish. I believe that someone who has taught, run a great many things and kept away from admin would be a better bet, but I know that I am living in cloud-cuckoo land. (head E)

If I appoint a deputy, it's because he will make a good deputy, not necessarily a good head. HMC heads, because they are mostly ex-deputies, are obsessed with detail, worrying about every little thing. Frankly they are managers, not leaders; they worry and obsess about the little things. I'm not so interested in the detail—if I need the detail, I'll get someone in to tell me about it... I think there is too much emphasis on courses and certificates and not enough on talent. They are all about management and not leadership. (head D)

This is a significant point, because anecdotal evidence suggests that in the last decade or so, more newly-appointed headteachers in independent schools have previously been deputy heads than used to be the case when headteachers were appointed from a
broader variety of senior positions within schools. It may be that the response of independent schools to the introduction of NPQH and the increasing standardisation of leadership development in the maintained sector has been to narrow the field of new headteachers to those who have had close-hand experience of the role as deputy beforehand. This development may help governing bodies to reduce some of the risk involved in appointing a headteacher from positions other than deputy head. It should be pointed out however that no specific data is available on the number of independent school headteachers who had been deputy head immediately prior to taking up post ten or more years ago for comparison with the present situation and to support this anecdotal evidence. Nevertheless, the two experienced heads, the three recently-appointed heads and the HMC/GSA professional development officer all felt that the current figure of 80% (in this current research) represented a growing trend in the appointments to independent schools that they knew about.
Chapter 6: Summary

The original problem at the heart of this research project was the growing dichotomy which appears to have emerged between maintained and independent sector schools in how recently-appointed headteachers construct their professional knowledge. This disparity has been emphasised by the introduction of the compulsory National Qualification for Headship (NPQH), the National College of School Leaders (NCSL) and National Standards for Headteachers, all of which have had a significant effect on educational leadership in maintained schools. But the historical and policy context affecting independent schools is radically different, and the NPQH and National Standards for Headteachers do not apply. This study has therefore sought to establish what is informing and sustaining the professional knowledge base of independent school leaders and to investigate its role in enabling educational leadership.

In a sector barely investigated by professional researchers in the past, this research has found a broad range of processes by which independent school heads acquire their professional knowledge base, some of which are entirely consistent with their maintained sector colleagues, others which vary considerably, either in emphasis or more fundamentally. This research project surveyed all the recently-appointed headteachers (who had been five years or less in post) who are members of the two largest professional heads’ associations in the independent sector, the Girls’ Schools Association (GSA) and the Headmasters’ and Headmistresses’ Conference (HMC). Follow-up interviews were then conducted with the professional development officer of both heads’ associations, three case study heads from the survey study group, and
two experienced headteachers. Although the findings of this research are representative of more recent heads to have joined the HMC and GSA, it does not purport to represent all school leaders within the two associations or those independent school heads who are members of the three other smaller professional heads' associations. The independent schools are far from being a homogenous group, and GSA/HMC schools are not necessarily representative of the independent sector as a whole.

6.1 Main findings

- Over 35% of recently-appointed HMC and GSA heads said they felt under-prepared in some areas for headship. In particular these were:

  Knowledge of employment law 42.5%
  Competency proceedings against staff 34%
  Budgeting and finance 28.7%
  Knowledge of education law 22.8%
  School Marketing 12.9%
  Crisis-management 8.9%

  (% of respondents saying they were ‘not prepared at all’ (5) or (4) on the attitude scale)

- These figures were broadly similar to previous research into the independent and maintained sector, despite the introduction of NPQH.

- Heads feel most comfortable in:

  Pastoral management 93%
  Dealing with parents 91.3%
  Appointing and interviewing staff 83.2%
  Managing staff appraisal 80.2%
  Administration and organisation 88%

  (% of respondents saying they were ‘very prepared’ (1) or (2) on the attitude scale)

- Those who had not been a deputy or assistant head immediately prior to headship were more likely to be less well-prepared for headship (58%) compared with those who had (32%).

- Both Masters level study in Education or Management and the NPQH lead to an equal state of preparedness for headship. Heads that had done either of these before headship were better prepared than those who only pursued the compulsory professional association training.
- The use of mentoring and networking is strongly encouraged within the HMC and GSA. The data suggests that it is used more than in the maintained sector and, in some instances it may be acting as a useful substitution for the type of support offered by the LEA or other bodies in the maintained sector.

- 17% of heads wanted to see a more formal mentoring system, 13% more support from the professional heads' associations.

- 49% of heads disagreed or strongly disagreed that development opportunities for GSA and HMC heads were limited.

- A significant minority of heads (16.5%) felt that education or management-related books were not useful at all, 10% felt the same about educational research.

- There is great variation in which journals, websites, and other sources of educational research heads encounter. There is no apparent single dominant source of professional input for independent sector heads from within their own sector.

- 49% of the heads agreed or strongly agreed that they were familiar with the NCSL, suggesting the College has a growing profile in the independent sector. Earley and Evans (2002) found that 28% of independent school heads were not aware of the NCSL at all.

- 54% of heads disagreed or strongly disagreed that leadership development programmes predominantly designed for the maintained sector were irrelevant to the independent sector.

- Many respondents showed enthusiasm for increased links across the maintained/independent sector divide in terms of leadership development. A number of heads suggested that the maintained sector is more advanced in terms of researched-informed practice and effective monitoring of teaching and learning and the independent sector could learn from this.

- The research indicated that recently-appointed GSA and HMC heads see learning themselves and from each other as a very important aspect of their professional knowledge.

- There was evidence that some heads were adopting a distributed style of leadership to facilitate apprentice-style training of deputy heads who were aspirant headteachers.

- Middle management can provide important experience of leading people and personal self-knowledge.

- Deputy headship can provide important experience of observing the work of a head at close quarters.
There was some evidence, subsequently supported by the professional associations' own professional development officer, that there was a lack of leadership development opportunities for those heads who felt more established in post, along the lines of the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) offered by the NCSL.

There is considerable variation in the support that chairs of governors give their heads. Some are evidently supportive and create opportunities for professional development, but over half of heads (53.4%) do not see their chair as 'very useful' or 'useful' in supporting their professional development.

The headteacher on-line support services provided by HMC and GSA are not widely used and few subjects of serious importance are posted there, probably due to a lack of anonymity.

Headteachers appear to be increasingly out-sourcing professional advice to external professionals (e.g. lawyers and marketing experts) due to the increasing complexity of the professional knowledge required in the modern workplace. This is leading to a reduction in the provision of the professional heads' associations.

For those heads who were interviewed, their own educational background played an important formative role in their leadership style and the values they promoted in their school.

An inspirational teacher from school or observing an unsatisfactory state of affairs as a pupil or younger teacher can spark the ambition to become a teacher or school leader.

The case studies confirmed the significance of a period of apprenticeship under a successful headteacher. There were also indications that learning as an apprentice of a head who was perceived to have certain weaknesses was also a valuable experience.

The apprenticeship aspect of professional knowledge acquisition occurs prior to taking up headship. Take-up of externally-delivered training is also prevalent during this period, although its full impact may be realised well into headship itself. In contrast, the role of networking and mentoring to sustain the professional knowledge base may become more significant once headteachers are in post.

Apprentice-style learning is by definition individualised, informal, ad-hoc and non-standardised. This contrasts with the competency-based, externally-certificated aspect of leadership development found in the maintained sector.

Heads may be underestimating the importance of networking for future support at professional heads' association events – a process which the organisers think is the most important aspect of such events.

Financial competition between local schools may sometimes impact adversely on the flow of professional knowledge between heads.
Business theory had a significant impact on the leadership styles of two of the headteachers who were interviewed, and accordingly on some of the school’s systems and structures.

The experienced of those heads who were interviewed suggested that appraisal and review systems for headteachers are variable, despite their importance as a source of professional and self-knowledge. At present they are ad-hoc and non-standardised in the independent sector.

More experienced heads that were interviewed saw the deputy headteacher as an important operational and procedural role in itself, suiting a particular type of personality, rather than a means to an end – a short stop on the way to headship.
Chapter 7: Conclusion & Recommendations

This study has investigated the rather different model of leadership development and professional knowledge acquisition which exists in some of the independent schools in England & Wales; differences which have been highlighted by significant recent developments in maintained sector educational leadership training and support since the labour government took power in 1997.

The value of the study is the attention that it draws to the independent sector. With 7% of all children in the UK attending its schools, it has been under-researched and has very rarely been considered by professional researchers at all. Yet government increasingly refers to independence for schools as a positive force for raising standards, and has even suggested that maintained sector schools might benefit from drawing on independent school practice. To focus on school leadership in the sector then seems logical; partly because the independent sector is being held up by some as a model of excellence, and partly because this is what successive governments have been doing in the maintained sector in recent decades.

The study offers a modest addition to the knowledge base because of the context of the study and the lack of previous research into the sector. That said, it builds on the only large scale survey of independent school leaders conducted by professional researchers to date, that of Earley & Evans (2002), although only 22% of their 176 responses were from senior school headteachers. This study also gives more coverage to the specific issue of building on the existing knowledge base.
The study has indicated that there are multiple sources for aspirant and newly-appointed headteachers' professional knowledge in the independent sector, (summarised in tables 7.1. and 7.2 respectively). Such a diversity of professional knowledge sources are found amongst heads in all types of schools, but in the independent sector there is an increased emphasis on apprenticeship learning (prior to headship) and mentoring, networking and peer support (after appointment). To a certain extent these aspects of sustaining professional knowledge may paradoxically be stronger in the independent schools encountered as a result of the absence of LEA support and the knowledge base propagated by the NPQH and NCSL. The significance of both of these seems to be increasing in the independent sector, despite it being designed, administered and validated from beyond the independent sector.
Figure 7.1 A model of professional knowledge acquisition by aspiring headteachers in HMC/GSA schools

INFORMAL APPRENTICESHIP
Facilitated by distributed leadership

- Budgeting and finance
- Problem-solving
- Autonomous project management
- Whole-school planning and strategy
- Deputizing for the headteacher
- Reporting to the governing body

‘Know-how’ knowledge, some tacit

LIFE HISTORY

- Educational Background
- Cultural capital
- Moral-religious perspective

Learning is often tacit in nature

ASPIRANT HEADTEACHER

PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

- Memories of early teaching career
- Human resource management as a middle manager
- Leadership role models

Learning is often tacit in nature

FORMALISED LEARNING
Often codified ‘know-that’ knowledge

- M level study
- NPQH
- Professional Associations’ training (e.g. law, finance, marketing, leadership)
  Often leading to heightened personal reflexivity and theoretical awareness

- Other leadership development experiences (e.g. Armed Forces, Industrial Society, The City of London)

‘Know-that’ and theoretical knowledge, some tacit
**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH HEADTEACHERS’ ASSOCIATIONS (HMC/GSA)**

- Networking
- Compulsory Mentoring
- Full-time Membership Secretary’s (retired head) telephone support
- ‘Head to Head’ on-line forum
- Former headteachers available as consultants (planned)

‘Know-how’ knowledge in an abstract ‘community’ of headteachers

---

**LIFE HISTORY & PROFESSIONAL HISTORY**

- As for aspirant heads and carried forward into beginning headship

  *Knowledge often tacit*

---

**HEADTEACHER**

---

**FORMALISED LEARNING**

- Often through external professionals e.g. lawyers, bankers, PR and marketing consultants (purchased)

- Additionally, Professional Associations’ training (e.g. law, finance, marketing, leadership) delivered through independent professional development (IPD)

---

**SCHOOL-BASED LEARNING**

- Appraisal
- Consultation on and input into school development plan
- SMT Feedback
- Detailed handover procedures involving previous head, staff and governing body

---

**PUBLICATIONS/MEDIA**

- Literature – often management or educational theory
- Internet
- National Press
- Educational Journals
- Educational research
Leadership development provision in the independent sector seems to be at a
crossroads. It has not responded to the introduction of a compulsory qualification for
headship and a national college for school leadership by following suit or working
officially alongside these initiatives, but it is increasingly taking note of the
developments they have brought in the maintained sector. Both professional heads’
associations continue to seek improvements to their leadership training and
development but their small size and relative lack of resources makes any overarching
scheme (as seen in the maintained sector), which is applicable to all its members,
difficult to deliver. There is also a determination amongst many independent schools
to remain independent, as they feel it is in their very nature to do so. There is also a
natural reluctance to embrace any form of compulsory qualification or universal
competency-based model of good leadership. There are no easy answers as to how
leadership development and provision will develop amongst the independent schools,
but a number of important points emerge from this research from which some policy
recommendations may be drawn. Again, it is important to emphasise that the
independent sector is not a homogenous group of schools, and this research only
analysed the two largest professional heads’ associations, the HMC and GSA. Thus
recommendations may only be relevant then to schools from these particular
associations.

7.1 Policy recommendations:

- With an overall figure of over 35% of recently-appointed HMC and GSA
  heads saying they felt under-prepared for headship, further consideration
  should be given to how training and professional development provision can
  be improved for aspirant heads.

- In addition, thought should be given to encouraging more experienced heads
to delegate and distribute certain financial and legally-orientated tasks (such as
consultation on policies or staff disciplinary issues) to aspirant heads on their staff.

- HMC and GSA training providers should consider increasing the training available on employment and education law, competency proceedings, budgeting and finance, marketing, and crisis management. Clear features of these elements should be incorporated into their training for deputy heads and preparing for headship courses. Recently-appointed heads may also be interested, but increasingly heads are turning to specific professionals themselves for advice and once in post they are more likely to do this.

- Thought should be given to improving the rather hit-and-miss nature of the present compulsory mentoring system for new heads, perhaps by more central involvement in the choice of an appropriate mentor and monitoring effectiveness through a follow-up process. This may be particularly necessary in localities where schools are stiffly competing with each other. Interestingly building better support networks for heads through inaugurating a national strategy has been recommended in very recent research into maintained sector headteachers (Flintham 2007).

- The professional headteacher associations in the independent sector might consider how to promote amongst its members the potential value of education or management-related books, articles or school-based research for improving professional practice.

- These professional associations might also consider pooling resources to produce a single dominant source of professional input for heads to counter the lack of coherence in the current use of journals, magazines and websites. This would be more in line with practice in the legal, medical or nursing professions. No specific mention was made in any of the responses to ‘Conference and common room’ the quarterly journal produced by the HMC which refers to itself as ‘the magazine for leading independent schools.’ This suggests that there is a lack of coherence and focus to the information new heads are getting and may mean that they are not able to access the sort of context-specific information, advice, news and research which would inform and sustain them better in their role.

- Aspirant headteachers who seek to give themselves the best chance of being prepared for the headship of an independent school should pursue either Masters level study in education or management or the NPQH, or both. Those who do are more likely to feel prepared than those only following the professional associations’ training.
• The professional heads’ associations should renew their efforts to launch a joint venture with the NCSL at some stage in the future. This should seek to build on the increasing awareness and influence of the NCSL amongst recently-appointed heads and some enthusiasm for the potential mutual benefits of links between maintained sector and independent school in leadership development.

• The professional heads’ associations should think about how to enhance the leadership development they offer to heads that are established in post, a concern which was voiced by the professional development officer at interview.

• Further consideration might be given by the Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools (AGBIS) to the findings that over half of the heads surveyed did not see their chair of governors as ‘very useful’ or ‘useful’ in supporting their professional development.

• Consideration should be given by the HMC to introducing a scheme for aspirant heads to shadow existing heads, such as the one launched by the chair of the GSA in 2006.

• The Association of School and College leaders (ASCL) to which all members of HMC and GSA belong, should consider introducing some professional development opportunities specifically designed for independent school leaders. There is no current provision.

• The on-line ‘head to head’ support service should be anonymised to provide a safe environment for headteacher colleagues to share views and policies frankly without fear of feeling exposed.

• The professional heads’ associations should not seek to devise and introduce a compulsory qualification for headship in the independent sector. The strong independent, ad-hoc and informal apprenticeship system should be strengthened and maintained, perhaps by introducing a more formal element.

• Training providers should take every opportunity to emphasise that training events are not predominantly about the passing on of technical ‘know-that’ knowledge, but about investing in networking and setting up potential support networks for future challenges. Introducing heads to different types of professional knowledge such as tacit knowledge, the role of experiential learning and codified knowledge acquisition may be extremely valuable in helping them construct their own professional knowledge base in the future.
The professional heads' associations should continue to promote training on delivering effective appraisal and review to headteachers as it is a crucial source of self-knowledge for heads.

7.2 Personal implications

The impact of the study has been significant for the researcher's own professional development, widening the knowledge base of the issues and challenges facing beginning headteachers in independent schools today. Developing further research methods skills whilst broadening an understanding of career progression within the independent sector have also been valuable learning experiences. I have been asked to present a paper to the HMC and GSA on this research which may have positive implications for some of the policy recommendations, and I will be working further with the professional development officer of the two heads' associations.

7.3 Suggestions for future research

A number of issues were raised in this research which were not its major focus, but which suggested interesting avenues for further research. The impact of educational background on independent school leaders, and in particular the recurring issue of cultural capital warrants further attention, as would a more detailed observational study of the apprentice-style leadership development model at work. This could usefully be contrasted with apprenticeship in other professional fields such as medicine and law where it is a very significant professional learning process. Finally, the trend towards the increasing influence of the NCSL and NPQH in the independent sector and the potential link between maintained and independent schools over leadership development warrants further study as time progresses, particularly if any
impact on the existing style or effectiveness of leadership in the independent sector can be identified as a result.
Appendices
I am writing to ask for your contribution to a survey I am conducting as part of a doctoral research project at the University of Surrey, with the backing of the GSA and HMC.

The enclosed questionnaire is designed to obtain your experiences and views on the issues surrounding heads’ professional development and the initial challenges faced once in post.

You are part of a very small group of heads selected for the study, having been in your present post for five years or less. The relatively specialised nature of the study and the small number of selected participants means that your participation would be particularly valued and enormously important to the success of the project and its findings. Your responses will be confidential to this research project and will be completely anonymous. There is no identifying information at all contained on the questionnaire form itself.

I know how precious time is, but I would be immensely grateful if you could find 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed stamped-addressed envelope by Friday 24th November. Your response will form a crucial part of the research data and will feed into on-going discussions about the development of leadership training within the GSA and HMC.

If you have any questions about any aspect of the survey or your participation in it, please do feel free to get in touch with me.

Yours sincerely
PREPARATION FOR LEADERSHIP OF HMC/GSA SCHOOLS

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADS & CODING MASTER

1. Background Information

Please circle:

1a. GENDER: 1 2
   M / F

1b. AGE GROUP: 1 2 3 4 5
   1. 30 and under
   2. 31 to 35
   3. 36 to 40
   4. 41 to 45
   5. 46 to 50
   6. 51 to 55
   7. over 60

1c. Number of years as head in current school? [ ] years

2. Previous Post

2a. Prior to your present post, please indicate the number of years you held any of these positions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>number of years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deputy/Assistant Head</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Academic Department</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housemaster/Houseparent</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other senior management team member</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head in another school</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior role elsewhere (please give details)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2b. What post did you hold immediately before becoming a head?

1=Head 2=Deputy or Assistant Head 3=Head of Department 4=Housemaster 5=Senior Management Team 6=Senior role elsewhere

2c. Which particular aspects of this job provided the most useful experiences to take into a headship?

1= Administration experience
2= Managing staff/appraisal/HR
3= Finance & budgeting
4= Strategic planning/whole school issues
5= Admissions/dealing with parents
6= Involvement with governing body
7= Marketing
8= Deputizing for the Head
9= Project management for new facilities
10= Other
2d. Do you agree that deputy headship provides the best possible preparation for a headship?  
YES/NO

2e. Please comment on your choice above:

1= Depends on kind of head required  
2= Deputyship is the best role for understanding headship  
3= Deputy and Headship are very different roles  
4= Deputyship is the best preparation in a day school, not necessarily in boarding

2f. Which attributes do you think are more important in a head than in a deputy or other senior teacher?

1= Whole school strategic vision  
2= Charisma/leadership qualities  
3= Ability to accept ultimate responsibility  
4= Financial awareness  
5= Marketing/PR  
6= Diplomacy  
7= Ability in recruitment of staff  
8= Ability to deal with the governing body  
9= Awareness of general educational issues

3. Professional Knowledge and its Development

Thinking about your early years of headship, please indicate by circling on the scale below:

3a. Overall how prepared you felt on taking up your new position:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>very prepared</th>
<th>not prepared at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3b. Specifically how prepared you felt in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administration &amp; organisation</th>
<th>very prepared</th>
<th>not prepared at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting &amp; finance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing and appointing staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency proceedings against staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of employment law</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of education law</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing staff appraisal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3c. Please comment on any aspect of the above as you like:
1. New heads have little or no understanding of finance
2. Employment law/legal issues training is important
3. Shadowing could be helpful

3d. How often do you use mentoring or networking with heads from other schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>very regularly</th>
<th>often</th>
<th>occasionally</th>
<th>rarely</th>
<th>not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3e. In what areas have mentoring, networking or contact with other heads been most useful to you?

1. Sharing practice/comparing problems
2. Establishing links with other heads
3. Encouragement
4. Legal queries
5. Staffing difficulties
6. Financial issues
7. Curriculum issues
8. Other

3f. Do you agree that heads would benefit from more readily available support from outside the school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3g. If you agree, what sort of support would you like to see?

1. Sharing good practice
2. Sharing curriculum
3. Legal advice/employment law
4. More support from HMC/GSA
5. Financial expertise from businesses
6. More formal mentoring system
7. Existing support is satisfactory
8. Other

3h. How much of a role do you think the Chair of Governors should take as a source of professional support for heads?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>major role</th>
<th>no role at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3i. How useful have the following proved in sustaining your professional development as a head?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The chair of governors</th>
<th>very useful</th>
<th>not at all useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from other members of your SMT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The national press</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3j. Please comment on any of these if you wish:

1 = Lack of time

3k. Who might be responsible for identifying the head’s professional development needs in your school?

please tick:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The head him/herself</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The chair of governors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other governors</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other school staff (please specify)</td>
<td>4 = senior staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside advisors (please specify)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other (please specify)</th>
<th>1 = GDST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = ISI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 = Appraisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 = Deputies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 = Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 = Bursar/marketing director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4a. Did you undertake any of the following training prior to or soon after taking up a headship?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Type</th>
<th>YES/NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management-related Masters Degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education-related Masters Degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionally-based Doctorate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPQH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMC/GSA leadership training <strong>Please give details:</strong></td>
<td>YES/NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you specified other leadership training, please specify:

**4b. Which of the above proved most useful/useless and why?**

1= Legal issues/employment law
2= HMC/GSA courses useful
3= Visiting other heads
4= HMC/GSA course not hugely useful
5= MBA/Masters useful
6= NPQH useful
7= GSA/HMC website useful
8= Contact with professionals from outside education

**5. Other Sources of Professional Knowledge**

**5a. How important do you think the following alternative means of gaining professional knowledge are?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Knowledge</th>
<th>essential</th>
<th>very important</th>
<th>important</th>
<th>quite important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on your job with a mentor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping a reflective journal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing on your experiences or anecdotal stories of other heads</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping in touch with former colleagues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing on significant events in your own personal biography</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please specify:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5b. If you have used any of the above in helping to improve your professional practice, please give details:**

1= SMT Training/brainstorming
2= Contact with other heads
5c. Please indicate by circling a number your views on the statements below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional knowledge for heads is best acquired 'on the job'</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional knowledge is best acquired through contact with other heads</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional knowledge is best acquired through externally-delivered training</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am familiar with the work of the National College of School Leadership</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am familiar with the content of the National Professional Qualification for Headship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The NPQH should be made compulsory in the independent sector as it is in maintained schools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The headship training available in the maintained sector is irrelevant in the independent sector</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for independent school heads to extend their professional knowledge are limited</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSA/HMC should introduce a compulsory qualification for new heads in the independent sector</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5d. Comment if you would like on any of your choices above:
1= Qualifications should be voluntary
2= Good headship is not just about good training
3= Concern over decline in number of headship applicants
4= An adapted NPQH would be of value

5e. Why do you think there are differences between the maintained and independent sectors in the training of headteachers?

Please tick here if you feel unable to comment on this:  
1= Lack of communication
2= Independent sector has something to learn from maintained sector leadership training
3= Independent sector has little to learn from maintained sector leadership training
4= Emphasis on the differences in the nature of headship in the two sectors
9= Unable to comment
5f. Do you see any value in bringing the independent and maintained sectors closer together in this regard? Please circle YES NO DON'T KNOW

5g. Please comment on your choice above:
1= Currently forging links with maintained school
2= Mandatory qualifications would put people off headship
3= Lack of time
4= Independent sector has benefit from closer leadership links with maintained sector
5= Keeping the two sectors distinct is important
6= Independent sector leaders lack the opportunity for proper reflection
APPENDIX B:

Interview Schedule: Professional Development Officer

Questions about the HMC headship development programme

Part 1: The rationale behind training provision

1. What is the history and development of the HMC training model? When HMC provision was set up, what was the inspiration? The source? What is the rationale for the programme on offer?

2. It seems there is a much larger emphasis in your training on learning through experience than learning through theory. Is this the case? Evidence? See highlighted areas of course brochure, Simon's own thesis on informal learning.

3. Ultimately, do you think being a good head is about undergoing training? How much acquired learning for headship can be codified and passed on in training courses?

4. How have your leadership programmes developed in recent years? Growing legal aspect of training...

5. Is the aim to promote a particular type of leadership? Even sub-consciously? What is the balance of management to leadership in the training programmes? Emotional intelligence & creative leadership feature on the website...

Part 2: The training provision itself

6. What training does HMC offer to aspirant heads? Is it adequate? Should there be more? Only open to deputy heads?? Do deputies necessarily make good heads? Apprentice style learning as a deputy head?

7. Why separate HMC and GSA heads for training purposes?

8. Is HMC training now compulsory for new HMC heads?

9. What’s the thinking behind the New Heads Induction Course Part 1? - “It is not, strictly speaking, a training course for new heads” what does this mean?

10. Looking at the format of the training, there are plenty of opportunities for sharing issues of concern with others and a panel of experts. Do these forums work? Do you think there is some reticence to share concerns out of embarrassment or confidentiality concerns?

11. I see the ‘established headship’ course is now held at the NCSL and I know there is a HMC head charged with NCSL liaison. What’s the rationale behind linking with NCSL? Is it productive? ‘The IS has a major contribution to make to the development of leadership theory and practice in general’ – what does this imply? Have there been influences/cross fertilization or is it one-way? How might this relationship develop?

12. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your training provision?

Part 3: Initial support for new heads and mentoring

14. Does mentoring work? What does HMC do when partnerships do not work?

15. I believe GSA have set up a helpline for new heads. Does HMC plan to do the same? Why? Why not?

16. Is there any mileage in the independent sector seeking to use the expertise of recently retired heads more effectively? Perhaps in setting links between retired heads and new ones?

Part 4: Conclusion

17. Apart from the HMC courses, what else do you see as the main sources of acquiring new professional knowledge for recently-appointed independent school heads? Apprentice style learning as a deputy head?

18. Overall do you think the independent sector is preparing its heads effectively? What is the main reason for that answer? Are they better prepared than the maintained sector? What about ongoing support once in post compared with the maintained sector?

19. Should there be a compulsory qualification for headship in the independent sector? Should it be more substantial than what is currently on offer?
APPENDIX C:

Interview Schedule: Recently-Appointed Head
(Interviewer prompts in italics for use only if required)

Introduction:

1. Can you give me a brief recap of previous posts?
   Career before teaching? Number of schools, posts and length of tenure etc.

Part 1: Work-based acquisition of professional knowledge

Early career as a teacher or previous career outside education:

2. Did you always want to be a head?

3. If I take you back to the start of your career, in retrospect do you think you were acquiring skills and knowledge which are significant to your role now? Did you always want to be a head? Were there any conscious decisions you took about actively seeking to further knowledge for leadership at this time? Which proved most significant and why? Own educational background a help in headship?

Time as a middle manager: (Head of department, housemaster etc.)

4. Are there particular skills you acquired as a middle manager which are of particular value now in headship? Appointments, people-management, knowledge of teaching and learning. Any role of subject discipline in preparing for headship?
   Are they different or more/less valuable than those skills acquired as a housemaster? House as a mini-school: ethos, values, vision, discipline, parents, admissions, holistic outlook?

5. What did you learn as much from heads you previously worked under?

Time as a senior manager: (deputy, assistant head)

6. Is there specific knowledge you picked up as a deputy, working more closely with a head? Is there particular value in working very close to a head (e.g. deputising)? Is there an ‘apprentice model’ of learning to be a head in the independent sector? Is experience as a deputy more important than training? ‘Learning from doing’ v ‘learning from listening’ (working with GB, parents, deputizing, managing staff)

7. What aspects of headship does being a deputy not prepare your for?
   What were you least prepared for? Education Law, Marketing, Finance? Head as strategist, leader, bigger picture; deputy as detail, executer & implementer, smaller picture – less vision?

8. Have changes to leadership style been necessary? How does a new headship impact on your values or approaches to leadership and management? Do the two terms differ? How have you brought these about? What resources have you drawn on? Is there a sense that the emotional side of leadership becomes more important? Personal spiritual and moral dimension to leadership? From personal convictions or religious experiences? Family role in support and acquiring sense of perspective or other?
   How much has the legacy, practice and style of the previous head informed your own practice? Is professional knowledge inherited or influenced by previous practice?

9. What active decisions did you make about acquiring a better knowledge/experience base to approach headship whilst a senior manager?
   Externally-delivered management/leadership programmes? Apprenticeships? Shadowing? Involvement with GB?... Why? What was their value? Strengths/weaknesses? Might you have benefited from a more coherent set of development opportunities for aspiring heads? Is the situation now any different? Do you attempt to provide such opportunities for aspirant heads in your school?
Time as a head:

10. What measures did you take to improve your skills and knowledge of the school after appointment but immediately before taking up post? Visits to the school prior to taking up post? Documentation provided? Training needs assessment with chair of governors? What was the most useful source of understanding for you in understanding about the culture of the school prior to taking up the post/ once in post?

11. Realistically, what time can you set aside now for your own personal professional development? Mentoring? Reading? Reflection? Courses? What barriers are there to more professional learning? Time? Distance? Opportunities? Would you say you get opportunities to learn from others? Formally or informally? Do you attend in-house training? Are you a leading learner attitude to CPD? Would you seek to take a sabbatical?

12. What is the most important source for informing your professional practice now? What has been the main source of your improvement since you took over in post? How much has improvement come from others (e.g. courses, colleagues, chair of governors) as opposed to self-improvement?

13. Does your own educational background impact on your leadership style/inform your practice?

14. Does your own moral/spiritual background impact on your leadership style/inform your practice?

15. What opportunities for feedback do you have? Appraisal (external/internal?), coaching, mentoring, chair of governors? Is this useful? Is there enough/too much?

Part 2: Externally-delivered training:

16. Have you undertaken any other leadership/management development training that we haven’t covered yet? Were they beneficial? Where did they fall short? Most useful aspect of HMC/GSA training? Are such courses expected by governing bodies? Is this rationale well-founded?

17. Do you think there are limits to the sort of knowledge that can be acquired exclusively from a source outside the school? Codified knowledge from a course? Specific areas such as education law, marketing,

18. What sort of knowledge is best acquired on the job? Situational knowledge, knowledge of people, instinct, talent etc.?

19. Do you use the HMC/GSA on-line support scheme? Useful? In what ways?


20. Overall, are new Heads in the independent sector adequately provided for in terms of professional development?
Part 3: The Future of Independent Sector leadership development:

21. How would you like to see leadership development in the independent sector develop in the future? Is the independent sector's approach to preparing its heads any good? A more coherent set of development opportunities for newly-appointed heads?

22. Are you aware of recent developments in leadership programmes in the maintained sector? Do you follow state sector leadership training programmes? Should they be relevant to the independent sector? NCSL/NPQH: Impressions and thoughts about these? Can the IS learn from business or maintained sector?

23. Would you like to see compulsory training for aspirant heads in the independent sector?
APPENDIX D:

Interview Schedule: Experienced headteachers

1. Can you give a brief recap of your career to date?

2. In your own case, what were your most significant learning experiences prior to taking on a headship?

3. How do you think your own educational experience impacted on headship? Have moral-religious considerations been significant?

4. How important is learning from working under previous heads in approaching headship for the first time?

5. Are there any specific illustrative examples?

6. What leadership skills are unique to headship and how did you learn these?

7. Must a good head be a deputy first? What is significant about time spent as a deputy in terms of approaching headship? Do deputies necessarily make good heads?

8. Is there enough time for heads to continue their own personal professional development whilst they are in the job?

9. Do experienced heads take this seriously enough? Does the HMC prepare its heads adequately?

10. How much of the essence of headship can be neatly packaged and passed on in training courses?

11. Is there enough time for heads to continue their own personal professional development whilst they are in the job?

12. Do experienced heads take this seriously enough?

13. Do heads have enough opportunity for feedback? What are your thoughts on headteacher appraisal?

14. Do you have any thoughts on the future of independent school heads and their training?
References:


Hayes, T. (2005) Rising Stars and Sitting Tenants – A picture of deputy headship in one London borough and how some of its schools are preparing their deputies for headship Nottingham: NCSL

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NCSL (20003b) *What Leaders Read: Key Texts from the Education & Business, a review of the literature* Nottingham: National College of School Leadership


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