HEADTEACHERS' RESPONSES
TO GOVERNMENT POLICY ON
PRIMARY EDUCATION 1988 TO 2005

by

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Abstract

Since the 1988 Education Reform Act and the introduction of the National Curriculum soon after, many initiatives, introduced in rapid succession by governments, with very short lead-in times, have affected primary schools. These radically altered the primary school as a working context.

Headteachers were charged with the implementation of these initiatives into school contexts which are complex, fluid systems, and where interpersonal and personal-contextual relationships play an important part. The schools are part of the wider government policy context, which itself has significant effects on schools.

This study investigated how the government policy-initiatives impacted on the professional ideologies and identities of eight headteachers in primary schools. This was accomplished using an innovative combination of biographical narrative and 'activity theory' (in the sense that Engeström's 'activity triangle' is used only as a heuristic device in order to structure the biographical narrative accounts).

The data generated two broad professional identities: the child-centred and the curriculum-led headteacher. In response to the government initiatives, the former tended towards 'resistance'; the latter tended towards 'compliance'. The textual analysis of the narratives reveals the detailed patterns of resistance and compliance over the twenty-year period after 1985.

This thesis is dedicated to:

Susan, Peter, Dianne and Christopher;
for the encouragement and impetus they have provided;

and

My parents, Jean and Richard;
for giving me an enduring conviction that continual
learning is a vital constituent of human endeavour.

Contents

Figures

Tables

Abbreviations 1

In the main body of text:

CD	Compact Disc
CTC	City Technology College
DES	Department for Education and Science
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DoL	Division of Labour
DWR	Developmental Work Research
EAZ	Education Action Zone
EiC	Education in Cities (Programme)
ERA	Education Reform Act (1988)
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GM	Grant Maintained (School)
GTCE	General Teaching Council for England
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority
ITA	Initial Teaching Alphabet
KS	Key Stage
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
LFM	Local Financial Management
LMS	Local Management of Schools
LPSH	Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers
MoE	Ministry of Education
NAHT	National Association of Headteachers
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
NNS	National Numeracy Strategy
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headteachers
NUD•IST	Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PPA	Planning, Preparation and Assessment (time)
SAT	Standardised Assessment Tests
SEF	(School) Self-Evaluation Form(s)
SoA	Statement(s) of Attainment
TA (i)	Teacher Assessment
TA (ii)	Teaching Assistant
TES	Times Educational Supplement
TLR	Teaching and Learning Responsibility (points)

Abbreviations 2

In the matrix:

Pre   Pre-ERA (shortly before 1988)
Post   Post-ERA (a time of importance between the ERA and 2005)
Res   Tends to resist initiatives
Com   Tends to comply with initiatives
P   Primary
S   Secondary
F   First
Sp   Specific Needs Education
e   Excluded pupils
L   Large
S   Small
m   Multiple schools
T   Classroom teacher
DH   Deputy headteacher (including acting headteacher)
HT   Headteacher
A   Administrator
Aut   Autocratic leader
Bur   Bureaucratic management
Col   Collegiate management style
Cur   Curriculum-centred
Chc   Child-centred
NL   New leadership
NS   New school context
ERA   Education Reform Act (1988)
Init   Recent government initiatives
H   High
M   Medium
L   Low
Rel   Relationship problems
Mis   Mismatch between identity and context
Ow   Overworking
NB   Nervous breakdown
Np   Nervous problems (low self-esteem, self-doubt, etc.)
BP   High blood pressure
Ht   Heart problems (including heart attack and angina)
As   Asthma
Ex   Exhaustion
ER   Early retirement (retreatism)
LPc   Leaving the profession - considered (retreatism)
Rel   Relocating (self-actualising)
Red   Role-reduction / redefinition (downshifting)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background to the study

Since the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) and the introduction of the National Curriculum soon after, and as a consequence of these two interventions, there have been many initiatives introduced by successive governments. A summary of twenty-six of the main initiatives between 1988 and 2005, and the changes which they introduced, is given in Table 1.1, below. The two initiatives dated 2006 are included because headteachers, teachers and governors were aware of them in 2005 and thus they may have influenced the management decisions taken in schools during that year.

Initiative / recommendation	Year	Introducing or changing:
Education Reform Act	1988	National Curriculum, testing, local finance
Children Act	1989	Education Supervision Orders
School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act	1991	Mandatory training days
Education (Schools) Act	1992	Introduction of Ofsted inspections
Education Act	1993	Reduction of LEA powers
Education Act	1994	Changes to teacher training ('in-school training' made possible)
Dearing Report	1994	National Curriculum simplified. Five years without major changes recommended
Education Act	1996	Changes to school funding (centralisation)
Nursery Education and Grant-Maintained Schools Act	1996	Nursery vouchers
School Inspections Act	1996	Ofsted inspection changes
Education Act	1997	Assisted places for primary schools only, discipline
Education (Schools) Act	1997	Abolition of assisted places
NPQH and LPSH introduced	1997	Specific headteacher qualifications
Teaching and Higher Education Act	1998	General Teaching Council
National Literacy Strategy	1998	Directed literacy curriculum and lessons
National Numeracy Strategy	1999	Directed Numeracy curriculum and lessons
Excellence in Cities (EiC) programme	1999	Including Education Action Zones (EAZs)
Special Educational Needs and Disability Act	2001	Inclusion of children with physical and educational special needs in mainstream schools
Education Act	2002	Links with commerce and industry, changes to teacher salary scales (threshold payments)
National Primary Strategy (Excellence and Enjoyment)	2003	New framework for schools, a possible return to cross-curricular teaching
NPQH became mandatory	2004	No new heads without qualification
Children Act	2004	Every Child matters, Children's Services
Workforce reform	2004	Introduction of PPA time
Education Act	2005	More frequent inspections
Childcare Act	2006	Responsibilities of Local Authorities
Education and Inspections Act	2006	A new inspection regime introduced

Table 1.1: An overview of the main changes affecting schools between 1988 and 2005

These initiatives may, individually, not appear particularly burdensome to members of the teaching profession, but many commentators say that they have caused a great deal of stress within the profession, particularly when their continual, rapid introduction is taken into account. (Campbell and Neill, 1994; Carlyle and Woods, 2002; Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1977; Nias, 1989) Three specific examples of these initiatives (headteacher training, threshold payments and planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time) are introduced in the following paragraphs, together with a brief review of their impact upon teachers, and particularly headteachers. These three examples of the many initiatives are discussed, with others, in more detail in Chapter 2. The current chapter also introduces the reader to the broad theoretical perspectives of the study, and thereafter to the general aims and objectives. A brief consideration of the methods concludes the chapter. The introductory notes on these topics given in this chapter do not convey the full depth of their detail, but are intended more as an indication of the thoughts within, and sequence of, chapters which follow.

Effects of the initiatives

Initially, as will be shown, much of the impetus appears to have been provided by the Thatcher government's preoccupation with introducing a 'market-forces framework' to public services; some as a prelude to privatisation others as an ideological imperative. This drive towards a free market system followed the Hayekian principles which suggest that each provider should be allowed to 'sink or swim' depending upon their ability to provide what the consumer wants (Hayek, 1960). Paradoxically, the move towards a free market economy in schools and thus a diminution of the power of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) brought about greater control by central government as the requirement for systems of accountability increased. This open-market, therefore, may be considered a quasi-market since, although it appeared to replace a monopolistic state provider with competitive,

independent ones it effectively unified the power in one overall authority, drawing it in from the Local Education Authorities and centralising it in Westminster and Whitehall (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993). This paradox is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Many of the changes, particularly in the early years of the initiatives, were introduced with the pronouncement that they were measures to act as a panacea for poor teaching – or teaching which was at odds, ideologically, with the government doctrine that was current. To this end, they were introduced with a great deal of rhetoric from central government and the media, which has been labelled 'scatter-gun criticism' by Moran et al. (2001, p.18) and 'teacher-bashing' by some members of the profession, who would claim that the description is quite accurate. These initiatives have effectively reduced headteachers' responsibility, which hitherto had been largely self-directed and self-regulated, and thus have greatly reduced headteacher autonomy. In tandem with this, through testing and inspection regimes which led to published reports and 'league tables,' accountability has been vastly increased and this accountability, as mentioned above, is, principally, centrally directed and regulated.

A number of the initiatives introduced since the ERA, may seem to have been mutually contradictory, the later initiative seeking to correct (or at times justify) situations caused by an earlier one. Whilst not openly admitting that the previous initiatives have been overly burdensome the current government has recently introduced a number of new initiatives to reduce the administrative burden on teachers and thus improve their 'work-life balance'. These new measures, however, have proved a mixed blessing. Discussions with a number of teachers have revealed that some of the 'twenty-five tasks' which teachers are no longer required to carry out (and, indeed are actively discouraged from doing) are easier, or more useful, if they simply ignore the rules and do the jobs themselves. Entering pupil data (particularly assessment data) on to the computer can reveal hitherto unseen patterns and

problems which may then be addressed but may have been overlooked if somebody other than the teacher had entered the data. Bulk photocopying is more easily carried out (paraphrasing the comments of a number of teachers) "at the time – when it is in my mind – rather than asking an overworked assistant to do it, waiting for its arrival and worrying whether it will arrive on time." A full list of the 25 tasks is included as appendix 3.

PPA time has brought primary teachers much needed and long awaited non-contact time, but the lack of sufficient associated funding and the haste and statutory regulation with which it was brought in have also brought teachers, and particularly headteachers, considerable difficulties. Headteachers have been required to introduce PPA time to a tight deadline and with insufficient funding to appoint teachers with whom they may replace the staff who are not in class. This has been associated with a statutory change (Education Act 2002) allowing teaching assistants (and particularly higher level teaching assistants – HLTAs) to teach groups, or even whole classes, without a teacher being present in the room. The introduction to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance accompanying the 2002 Education Act specifies that:

> Schools will need to consider, in advance of the start of the Autumn Term 2003, which of their staff can undertake the 'specified work' based on their skills, expertise and experience – using the HLTA standards as an indicator of the required levels. (p.2)

It is shown later, in paragraph 31, that the term 'specified work' is the work normally carried out by qualified teachers, including the delivery of lessons to whole classes:

> For those undertaking the 'specified work' at a higher level, especially where this includes delivery of lessons to whole classes, it is strongly recommended that the headteacher should have regard to the standards for HLTAs and that they should take account of whether the individual has received training to meet those standards or has undertaken other training or qualifications of an appropriate standard such as Foundation Degrees for teaching assistants, the Specialist Teaching Assistant Course, and early years qualifications awarded by accredited bodies. (p.14)

Thus, in the 2002 Education Act the way was opened for individuals other than teachers to deliver lessons rather than participate in their delivery under the guidance of a qualified teacher. Some teachers are now having to prepare work for supply teachers or HLTAs, check that the work has been covered and, in the words of one teacher with whom PPA time has been discussed, "deal with the fallout from the time I was not in the room – it would be easier if I stayed in class!" Headteachers are following up on these problems, planning strategies for future PPA time and 'juggling the budget' in order to provide the best classroom cover for teachers in future years so that some of these problems may be alleviated.

One contradiction connected with this particular initiative concerns the governmental insistence that all children should have the highest quality education (something with which nobody would argue) and that their initiatives are intended to provide this. Ten percent of many primary children's weekly education is now taken not by their teachers but by less well qualified, far less experienced staff, who cannot know those pupils so well. The conclusion from this must be that the government either feel that the children's education is not worth the financial outlay to provide the extra teachers or that teaching is a task that can be carried out just as effectively by non-teachers. Since the former is denied by government who tell the electorate that they are spending more on education than ever before, it follows that the latter must be the prevalent opinion, and it is possible that this could further diminish the status of teachers.

It would appear, therefore, that a number of commentators consider that these initiatives were originally introduced in a somewhat precipitous manner (Benn and Chitty, 1996; Brown et al, 2002; Campbell and Neill, 1994; Carlyle and Woods, 2002) with an unnecessary level of disparagement of the teaching profession by government and media

(Moran et al.] 2001). If this is the case, it is certainly possible that the professional standing and psychological well-being of teachers in general and headteachers in particular may have been diminished.

Other initiatives such as threshold payments – linked to performance management – which may be regarded as a salary-led teacher retention scheme, may be multifaceted stress initiators for headteachers. The large increase of paperwork, combined with the possibility that claims of partiality may be made, will be covered in greater detail in Chapter 2 but, in addition to these, headteachers who work in schools with a declining number of pupils have said that when this difficulty is combined with the second and third threshold assessments (which are entirely internally validated) there is another problem. It is possible to find that they are obliged to pay each of a number of staff over a thousand pounds extra annually while making others redundant. While this is officially the responsibility of the governors, the headteacher is the person who is the natural target for criticism and complaint.

In addition to these factors, the headteacher training and qualification schemes leading to the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) and Leadership Programme for Serving Heads (LPSH) qualifications, could present further potential stress initiators for headteachers. While these qualifications are attached to outwardly excellent schemes that will eventually improve headteacher skills and standardise the quality of heads and their ability to cope with many situations, they have caused extra pressure from two directions. First, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) insistence that all applicants for headteacher posts since April 2005 must not be considered without holding one of these qualifications has led to many heads feeling they have no alternative but to attend training sessions and submit to the accompanying evaluation, which has been another extra burden for them in an already stressful time. It is interesting that initially the deadline

was 2002 but it seemed that when it was realised that there would be a huge deficiency of headteachers, the cut-off date was put back a number of years. Deputy heads have also felt the same compulsion to obtain the qualification and have reported that making the decision, followed by the protracted application procedure, and the course itself, has caused them to be subjected to extra stress themselves. Their regular absence from school while attending the training and assessment sessions has further increased the burden on headteachers. The second direction from which pressure may have arisen is the possibility that there will soon be a two-tier headteacher culture: those who are 'approved' heads with the relevant qualifications; and 'second-class heads' who have not attained the necessary standard for one reason or another. Such veiled possibilities, whether they are true or merely fanciful imagination, could be strong stressors for headteachers who are already feeling overtaxed and undervalued.

Headteacher stress

A great deal of research has been carried out and a large number of reports written detailing the additional workload and accompanying stress suffered by teachers since the introduction of the ERA (Campbell and Neill, 1994; Carlyle and Woods, 2002; Grace and Lawn, 1991; Kyriacou, 2000; Nias, 1989). Relatively little research, however, has been carried out with specific regard to the effects of these government reforms on headteachers, and this study reflects a wish to offset, to some extent, this lack of evidence.

The ethos of a school often reflects the professional identity and the educational object of the headteacher. This influences the staff, children and other participants in school life, and thus the headteacher's stress is not simply personal but can be transferred to others within the school. In this way, the stress of the key individual can influence the whole and therefore affect the smooth running of the establishment, the education of the pupils and the work of

7

the staff. These effects, together with the personal stress of teachers, brought about by their increased workload, may also lead to teachers moving to another school, or leaving the profession altogether. This, in turn, can lead to further pressure on the headteacher, and thus a self-perpetuating cycle may be initiated which results in the eventual decline of that particular school as an effective educational establishment and causes, sometimes irrevocable, health problems for the headteacher.

This study explores how government interventions in recent years (e.g. the National Curriculum, the Literacy and Numeracy strategies, statutory assessment tests (SATs), league tables, Ofsted inspections and the inclusion strategy) impact upon the careers of certain members of the teaching profession. More specifically, how headteachers, in particular, are experiencing stress-related difficulties; specifically where these difficulties appear to stem from perceived differences between what the headteachers see as the role of their schools and the direction they feel that the government initiatives are steering them.

There has been an undeniable reduction in numbers of experienced teachers and lack of new graduates wishing to join, which has been widely published in the educational press (McLeod, 2004; Temko, et. al., 2006; Woolcock, 2007) and in a number of research reports (Campbell and Neil, 1994; Carlyle and Woods, 2002; Grace and Lawn, 1991; Brown et al., 1989). It is important to explore the issues which led to this decline, which, the commentators above suggest, arise from the cumulative pressures of continuous recent initiatives, their relentless pace, the increase in administrative paperwork and the increase of anxiety which has occurred as a consequence.

Identity-role dislocation

Gonzalez-Rey (1999 p. 258) states that 'personality is intertwined with a subject's current interactions throughout human development' and other narrators (Lemke, 1997; Brown et al,

1989; Lave and Wenger, 1991) concur with this stance. Thus, throughout their careers headteachers will have forged their own, unique professional identities through their interactions with pupils, parents, education professionals and other stakeholders. These continual changes must, to some extent, enhance the feeling in headteachers that their daily routines have become dislocated from those dictated by their job identity and this dislocation could certainly be considered a cause of undue stress. It is useful to investigate how this perceived identity has been built within each headteacher, what part the culture of schooling in their individual history has had in developing this, and how this culture (and therefore the identities of new and future headteachers) is changing. Furthermore, it may be helpful to look at the influence of the culture prevailing in education and how this has affected the identity of the subjects and thus influenced the perceived disparity between identity and role.

This requires a detailed investigation of the history of recent changes to headteachers' roles, "adhering to the principle that to understand something it is important to know its history" (Cole, 1997, p.4). This needs to be combined with a history for each of the headteachers involved in the study so that a comparison may be made of their individual professional identities, perceived stress factors, the effects of the disparity between these, and their coping strategies.

Terminology

It is a small, but important, point that if the readers of this study are to understand the principles, underlying theory and conclusions of the research, they must be able to comprehend the terminology used. It is necessary, therefore, to explain this, carefully distinguishing between terms, which may appear similar, but here have distinct connotations.

Some of these distinctions are simple, while others are more subtle and need greater explanation. The word literacy, meaning the ability of a person to deal with textual material, is different from the National Literacy Strategy and the lessons derived from it; in order to show this distinction, where the word derives from the strategy it will be capitalised (thus – Literacy) while the general use will not. The same distinction will apply to numeracy and Numeracy. Two easily distinguished but more complex terms used are 'activity theory' and the 'activity triangle'. In order to draw a distinction between these terms in this initial chapter, it is necessary to present a brief, general introduction to the theory contained in this study. This will allow a distinction to be drawn between the activity triangle, which will be used as an analytical device, and activity theory, which is the theoretical basis from which the triangle is drawn. This theoretical basis has its roots in sociocultural activity theory, which has a Vygotskian heritage; and in particular, to Engeström's approach to activity theory, which resulted in his representation of activity systems in a more complex activity triangle. This theory will be developed more fully in Chapter 4 and therefore there is no need for an overly-detailed explanation at this point. In general, the theoretical approach will be allied to activity theory via the activity triangle, but will not use activity theory fully, in the way advocated by cultural psychologists such as Engeström. His use is generally described as developmental work research (DWR) in which the researcher attempts to alter systems within which people are working (Engeström 1999). The groups involved within the system participate in the research, considering tensions and their possible solutions. This leads to changes within that system and, hopefully, more efficient communication between the participants and more effective overall functioning in that system.

The activity triangle, which will be used here in a heuristic way, stems from work carried out on activity theory by Engeström and Miettinen (1999), which, although useful in other

areas, is not used in this study. Engeström and Miettinen's work builds upon Leont'ev's treatise on activity in the realisation, or fulfilment, of an object. This is considered more deeply in Chapter 4, but at this point it may be useful to consider the nodes on the triangle. Each of these nodes relates to identifiable ways in which the community may be involved in the activity of a subject, upon an object, leading to specific outcomes. To elaborate: in their work within schools, headteachers have an *object* in mind; this will be related to their individual educational philosophies and their professional identities, developed through their interactions with others throughout their professional lives. The *object* is not necessarily the same as their *objective*, though often the two will relate to each other – their object, in the context of this study, may be regarded as the driving force behind their educational activities whereas their objective will be a shorter-term target. When using the activity triangle, the terms *action* and *activity* are also used differently, in a non-interchangeable way. The distinction between the two is also given in more detail in Chapter 4.

Considering the approaches to the study

Using the activity triangle as a heuristic device, to evaluate interactions between headteachers' identities and the activities they are carrying out, enables us to consider the whole aspect of their activity in such a way that we can perceive how "cognition is stretched across mind, body, activity and setting" (Lave 1993). We may thus consider how excessive stress may be caused in some people by the discontinuity of subject-object interaction when activity is mediated by other people and (social and professional) rules, while others are less affected by this disparity. When this is set within "concentric circles representing the notion of context as 'that which surrounds' with … [the subject] … at its centre" (Cole, 1997, p.133) we may consider the relationships in substantial detail. Therefore, although this study will be using the activity triangle it is important to stress here that it will *not* be using

11

activity theory, nor the cultural-historical approach espoused by Cole (1997), since this might lead to the individual being subsumed into the contextual whole, following the premise of inseparability – the claim that "the individual and the social cannot be methodologically or ontologically distinguished" (Sawyer, 2002, p.283) which is incorporated into activity theory.

The stress mentioned above is described simply as, "a state of negative effects experienced by the teacher due to his (her) perception of work," (Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1977, p.300) but later in the same paper (p. 302) they add that, "this […] underplays the importance of environmental characteristics, individual stress responses and individual differences in perception and reporting situations". We must, therefore, consider these aspects when carrying out research which seeks to illuminate the causes of stress amongst headteachers and determine possible strategies for reducing the level of stress-related problems in this target group.

This study has been carried out during the period between 2000 and 2007, the interviews taking place between September and December 2005. The period reviewed by the work is from the Education Reform Act (1988) until the time of the interviews, although it has been stated as a twenty-year period (1985 to 2005) to allow the headteachers to more easily consider the pre-ERA schools in which they worked. During that twenty-year period there have been numerous government initiatives, each of which had the potential to raise the stress levels of teachers and headteachers, the effect of which, collectively, can have been catastrophic for some. It is not within the scope of this study to consider each of these, but those specifically highlighted by the headteachers as problems may be more reasonably taken into account. If the results of this research can help reduce the trend towards the high turnover of teaching staff which is reducing numbers of experienced teachers and

headteachers, low morale and a generally mentally exhausted profession, then it will certainly be beneficial for education in general and the headteachers in particular. If it allows just some headteachers to understand any possible burgeoning feelings of inadequacy which may occur, and therefore be able to utilise techniques which permit them to limit the effects of stress then it will still have been a worthwhile exercise.

Aims and objectives

The study seeks to consider the career paths of eight primary school headteachers with different backgrounds, and their responses to the government initiatives which have been introduced since the ERA in 1988. Each of these headteachers will have built their own professional identity through interactions with other members of their educational communities throughout their careers. These professional identities will also, to some extent, have influenced, and have been influenced by, their views of the prime functions of schooling and the best ways of achieving those functions. Such identities, developed throughout their careers, will be compatible to different extents with their views of the expectations of government policies, and will thus play a part in determining their response to those policies. This study considers the extent of this compatibility upon the professional lives of the headteachers. It also considers the impact of the differences in compatibility upon them in view of the much publicised decline in teacher, and headteacher, numbers.

The aims are a reflection of this concern:

The aims of this study are: first, to reveal the agreement and/or disagreement between what primary school headteachers want for their schools and communities and what they perceive to be the expectations held by policy makers in the period 1985 to 2005; and second, to consider the impact of any agreement and/or disagreement on their satisfaction with their professional lives.

This period of twenty years has been a time of rapid, far-reaching change and provides the possibility that a number of headteachers will be available with whom these changes and their consequences can be considered.

The objectives, which will need to be satisfied in order to achieve these aims, and the research questions which relate to them, are outlined below and explored in greater detail in Chapter 5. In this introductory chapter they are introduced as three general points but not discussed in depth, since they are divided into five specific objectives, and their relevance to the study and the relationships between them, and to the aims, are also considered more comprehensively in Chapter 5. The objectives are divided into two sections. The initial objectives consider differences relating to tensions that may occur between headteachers' perceptions of the direction and pace the school should be progressing and the expectations of policy makers. The objectives which follow relate to the pressures that headteachers may feel arise from the expectations of their school communities. The members of these communities are in a position to apply pressure for change and make strong demands with relation to the wishes of policy makers. In order to satisfy the aims of the study it is necessary to determine discrepancies and commonalities between what headteachers want for their schools and communities and what they perceive to be the expectations of policy makers. It will also be necessary to consider how individual headteachers either resist what they perceive to be the expectations of policy makers or comply with them. It is also necessary to consider any differences which may exist between those headteachers who mainly comply and those who mainly resist. The features of the working contexts of headteachers which appear to allow for their compliance or resistance, and any implications for the retention of those headteachers who aim at resistance, but are met with strong demands for compliance, also need to be taken into account.

Research questions

The consideration of the aim of the study, and the objectives relating to it, leads to the research questions that need to be addressed during the study.

First: it is necessary to ask, *How did the headteachers perceive the policy demands*? This needs to be considered since headteachers' perceptions of the demands will determine their tendency to comply with those policy demands or resist them.

Second: *How did the headteachers plan to resist, or to comply with, policy changes?* What strategies did they use, what trade-offs did they make, and how successful were they?

Third: *How did they interpret the expectations of 'local' stakeholders?* Stakeholders include parents, governors, teachers, the local education authority, as well as other geographically more distant groups such as the Department for Education and Skills and the Office for Standards in Education, which certainly have a contextually local effect.

Fourth: *What did the headteachers do to resist – or comply with – the policy changes?* What form did their action (or lack of action) take and were those actions (or that inaction) a deliberate attempt at resistance or compliance?

Fifth: with regard to those actions, *Who helped them?* Were they acting alone or as part of a group? If they were part of a group, which stakeholders were in that group and how were the actions divided amongst them?

Sixth: *What contradictions and conflicts emerged in the school as a system?* Compliance with, or resistance to, policy demands will elicit responses in other stakeholders and these may lead to conflicts, which could lead to positive or negative results, depending on the prevailing culture within the school.

Seventh: *How did those contradictions and conflicts impact upon the headteachers' own work in taking their schools forward?* Where there is a culture of constructive discussion, contradictions and conflicts can lead to progress which has been agreed by the majority of the school community. If this culture is not prevalent, there may be negative tensions and stress, which can be detrimental to the progress of a school. How these are viewed by headteachers can determine their personal stress levels.

Finally, eighth: *What practical steps, if any, have the headteachers taken to reduce these tensions and contradictions?* A number of adaptive strategies may be adopted by headteachers, including retreatism, downshifting and self-actualising (Troman and Woods, 2001). Whether headteachers feel that these strategies are available for them to utilise and whether they are happy with one or more of the alternatives may cause any stress to be decreased or increased. These strategies are discussed in much greater detail in later chapters.

Methods

The biographical details provided by the headteachers should offer answers to these research questions which may then be considered with reference to the activity triangle, used as an analytical device, in order to draw out specific points of tension, where this may have been the result of a disagreement between the professional identity and the changing demands. This should demonstrate whether this disparity is a major cause of stress in headteachers or whether there is some other, more significant, cause. Drawing out the biographical details from the headteachers' professional trajectories over a twenty-year period suggests that semi-structured interviews may be the most appropriate method of data-gathering, particularly as these allow the flexibility which may be required when working

with subjects who may have suffered from very negative emotional experiences due to stress at work.

At this point it is not necessary to describe the method used for this study in any great depth, since further detail is given in a later chapter. It is appropriate, however, to give a preliminary description so that sufficient detail may be brought into this introductory chapter.

This study required a substantial consideration of the initiatives promulgated by several successive governments, their underlying principles and the ethos guiding each. In addition, careful reflection upon stress, its possible causes, symptoms, major outcomes and some of the possible methods used for its reduction, was necessary.

Following the in-depth literature searches in Chapters 2 and 3, interviews were held with eight headteachers who were, after discussion with the local senior inspector, considered to have a range of previous experience when length of service, variety of jobs and outlook are taken into account. Further detail regarding the help given by the senior inspector is given in Chapter 4. The interviews with headteachers took the form of 'guided discussions' about their career paths and were related to the activity triangle so that the same range of specific areas could be considered for each one. This form of interview also helped to minimise the possibility of aggravating the stress levels of headteachers who could already have been suffering the symptoms of job-related stress. This was very important as the researcher is ethically bound to avoid raising stress levels and, if possible through the discussions, help reduce it since the results of stress had previously been seen in a number of the subjects. In dealing with this sensitive area it is also ethically necessary to take all possible measures to protect the anonymity of the subjects, so, in addition to the intention to use a letter-based reference system, with the subjects' names known only to the researcher (which was

subsequently discarded and pseudonyms used to give a greater impression of personalities) all subjects have been referred to using the feminine gender throughout the study. In a similar vein, any inspector mentioned in the study will always referred to as masculine. In order to further protect the identities of the individuals taking part in the study, the county in which they work will be referred to as Mercia; a name taken from the ancient Saxon kingdom within which it lies.

Since the interviewees' views with regard to their schools would be subjective and may, at times, have been what they thought the researcher wanted to hear, it was necessary to find some way in which to overcome these possible sources of inaccuracy. In addition to these interviews, therefore, the contact inspector for each of the headteachers was interviewed. The interviews with inspectors focused upon sixteen headteachers and their schools so that the headteachers who were taking part in the study would be more difficult to identify and thus their anonymity was protected. During this exercise some inspectors who were not the contact inspectors for any of the research subjects were also interviewed, further protecting the anonymity of the headteachers. The interview recordings for headteachers who were discussed with inspectors, but who were not part of the research group, were discarded immediately so that their anonymity was also protected. As a further aid to objectivity, through data-handling work with the local authority, the researcher obtained the latest performance and assessment (Panda) report for the schools and, via the internet, a copy of the most recent Ofsted inspection report for each. These extra pieces of official information together with the inspectors' interviews helped to obviate the possibility of analytical inaccuracy due to headteacher subjectivity or their responses being tailored to their impression of what the researcher wanted to hear.

Each of the interviews with subjects considered their career paths from just before the introduction of the ERA and looked specifically at three specific points within that period.

   i)   A time just prior to the Education Reform Act, which was introduced in 1988

   ii)   At the time of the interviews, which took place in December 2005

   iii) A point between (i) and (ii) when they were particularly stressed or particularly enthused - either by the introduction of initiatives or by another factor in their professional lives.

Relating the systems within which the headteachers were working at these times to the nodal points of the activity triangle enabled a comparison to be achieved between those systems for each headteacher and between the systems experienced at these times by different headteachers. The use of the triangle allows the systems within which the headteachers were working to be compared according to specific, known parameters, wherever they fall, chronologically, in the period under consideration. There was an initial expectation that a consideration of the professional identities of the headteachers taken together with their comments concerning their feelings with regard to the initiatives would be a guide to the extent of their stress. Their relationships with other stakeholders at each of the times, however, was another important factor which needed to be considered when thinking about the tensions between identity and context, which could be contributory factors in headteacher stress.

The research methods are described in more detail in Chapter 5, prior to which the recent developments in primary education, particularly as they relate to headteachers, are discussed in Chapter 2, stress is examined in Chapter 3 and theories used in the study are considered in Chapter 4. Following these chapters, the analysis and findings are discussed and the conclusion presented.

Chapter Two: Changes to the Role of Headteachers.

Introduction.

The role of headteacher has long brought with it a considerable burden of responsibility; for pupil attainment in all areas - curricular and social; for day-to-day running of the school; for liaison with parents, the LEA and external agencies and to the governors regarding any matter associated with school life. Running in tandem with this responsibility has been accountability for the school's delivery of the curriculum and its performance in the areas mentioned above. However, the accountability inherent in the role became an increasingly salient issue in the education debates of the 1980s. Writing at that time, Slater stated:

> . . . the headteacher will be responsible for the organisation and the delivery of the curriculum, including detailed syllabuses and the teaching approaches and materials employed, within the available resources and having regard to the statement of aims and objectives determined by the governing body; (Slater, 1985 p.68).

But he also argued that the 1985 White Paper, Better Schools, was a restatement of the responsibilities defined in the 1944 act, since only limited changes were intended to the legislative framework for education sub-government. What was special about the new emphasis on the role of the headteacher was a function of the particular context of the mid 1980s. Riley (1998) says,

> In the UK, national government has been instrumental in changing expectations and introducing new structural arrangements. Financial delegation, formal accountability mechanisms and new forms of governance have all taken their place alongside market mechanisms and consumer choice. (Riley, K., 1998, p.111)

She also says,

> The tension [for headteachers] is in managing the 'fit' between the external world and the internal world of the school, between a sharper focus on staff and pupil performance, and classroom pedagogy. (ibid., p.114)

Other evidence, however, suggests that whilst her synopsis of the changes in the headteachers' role is accurate it does not present the whole picture. The government

requirement for the provision of measurable data across a wide range of aspects has not merely changed expectations but considerably increased the accountability of headteachers while effectively reducing the opportunities for development of school based – rather than government-directed – responsibility.

The following comments from the Pricewaterhouse-Coopers report on teacher workload (2001) commissioned by the government of the time, reinforce this point as shown in the following quotes.

> Many teachers, headteachers and senior teaching staff felt they were not in control of their work, (p. 10)
> They often supported many of the recent reforms in principle, but felt the pace too great, and they questioned the extent to which new methods really supported better teaching and learning. (p.10)
> For headteachers the pressures are different, but equally strong. They need to support their school and its staff through a changing world, in which they must maintain a clear focus on the school's strategy for improvement, whilst at the same time responding to external research, advice, guidance and requirements relating to local or national priorities for improvement. (p.14)

The breadth of responsibility, enshrined in the 1944 Education Act and restated in the 1985 White Paper, was considerably increased and redirected over the following fifteen years or so as the burden of many government innovations was brought to bear upon those working in the education system in general, and senior management of schools in particular.

The smaller size of primary schools (when compared to secondary schools) leads to small-scale management structures, which bear relatively heavily upon the headteacher. In addition the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies (now beginning to be introduced at key stage three) the lack of teacher non-contact time – requiring heads to cover absent staff – and the relatively high level of headteacher curriculum commitment have caused the intensity of curricular and other initiatives to bear particularly heavily upon the heads in these establishments. Ostell and Oakland (1995, p65) tell us that although, "the

causes of teacher stress have been so widely publicised that they are familiar to not only occupational stress researchers, but also the public at large […] relatively few occupational stress studies have targeted headteachers." They then go on (pp 64 - 67) to document some of the recent additional stressors on headteachers.

In this chapter, which starts with a broad overview of some of these changes, the implications will be traced, particularly for the role of headteachers in primary schools, of a number of these government interventions.

The recent historical context.

When looking at historical perspectives the temptation is to start as early as possible and cover a great number of aspects superficially. Indeed, had the content of 'The Sabre-toothed Curriculum' (Benjamin 1939) been a case of history rather than allegory the review could have started with *New-Fist-Hammer-Maker* and his introduction of what might have been the first agreed Curriculum in Palaeolithic times.

However, arguably the most significant piece of legislation in the twentieth century was the 1944 Education Act (MoE, 1944). It laid the foundation upon which the national education system was founded for more than forty years. The tripartite system accompanied the 1944 Act - though it did not refer to different types of secondary school (McCulloch, 1994 p.52). This system was superseded by comprehensive education in most LEAs but the basic tenet of the act still determined the underlying features of the educational system in England and Wales until the late 1980s when the accountability of Headteachers began to increase dramatically.

While the 1944 Act provided clarity regarding what government expected of schools and those who work in them, education was riven by debate over the subsequent forty years. In primary education these differences centred on the impact of the Plowden Report (CACE, 1967). This endorsed the small but significant trend towards child centred and 'progressive' methods of teaching which was a reaction against the narrow and restrictive approach of 'Victorian – elementary school' style education (McCulloch, 1994 p.34). Critics of the 1944 Act have also sought to establish its role in the maintenance of social inequalities (Benn & Chitty, 1996) and show its role in the 'wastage of ability in those working class children who were rejected by the system' (Vernon, 1957 and Floud, 1961 quoted in Riley, 1998). These trends and ideas led to innovations such as those at William Tyndale School in Islington, London, which, in turn, brought the attention of Central Government sharply to educational matters.

The 'Tyndale Affair'. The story of events at William Tyndale School, which follows, captures the essence of major epistemological tensions which may be seen in differences between proponents and critics of post 1944 education.

During the 1973-74 academic year, Terry Ellis became the headteacher of William Tyndale Junior School. His radical management style and strong views regarding whole staff decision-making exacerbated a number of deep divisions in the staff regarding pedagogical issues; the main protagonists in this division were Mr Haddow and Mrs Walker. Mr Haddow, strongly supported by Mr Ellis, believed that a less formal teaching style with the children having a substantial input into their learning and school organisation was the best way forward. Mrs Walker was convinced that the role of a junior school was to equip

the pupils with basic academic skills and the best way of achieving this was with firm direction and a mainly didactic teaching style. These differences and Mr Ellis' insistence that a majority voting system of decision making was employed, caused deep conflicts in staff meetings which emphasised the schisms in the staff, causing views to become even more polarised. Towards the end of Mr Ellis' first term Mr Haddow set up an option system, which allowed the pupils in his class a choice of twenty activity options, allowing them to opt out of some activities and into others. During the second term there was a further trend towards freedom of choice and free expression advocated by Mr Haddow and Mr Ellis leading to sharper divisions in the staff.

During May 1974, Mrs Walker decided to take her views about the management of the school into the public domain. She produced a written commentary on the school for parents, which contained the following critique, taken from the report of the Auld Inquiry, which was set up to look into the affairs at the school.

> Chaos and anarchy are in possession. Discipline is frowned on as 'old fashioned.' Children are seduced to behave in ways which are detrimental to them, both in their progress in learning anything and in producing anti-social behaviour … The fault for this … is almost entirely due to the school atmosphere. (Auld, 1976, para 260)

Riley (1998) suggests that there is a deliberate use of inflammatory wording (e.g. 'seduced' rather than 'led') suggesting a political motive for the commentary, and this is borne out by subsequent revelations.

About this time Mrs Walker discussed the situation with Rhodes Boyson – a newly elected Member of Parliament and ex-head of Highbury Grove school who saw the dispute as having a political basis, grown out of the convictions of a left-wing group of teachers. Around the time of these discussions Mrs Walker also produced a paper criticising the 'free choice' method of education – subsequently known as "Mrs Walker's Black Paper." It was

one of a number of Black Papers, some of which were co-authored by Rhodes Boyson, which criticised progressive education as political ('leftist') meddling in the lives of children. This, "heightened tensions at the school and later led some staff to perceive events at Tyndale as a conspiracy of the political Right. Mrs Walker was seen by her colleagues as a strong supporter of the Black Paper movement, supported in this by Rhodes Boyson." (Riley, 1998, p. 30)

In 1975, following falling rolls, a local petition and representations by the school managers (governors) the managers were banned from visiting the school with the justification that they had already passed a 'virtual vote of no-confidence' in the staff and, "any managerial visit could only involve a search for evidence to give credence to that resolution." (Ellis et al, 1976, p.99) In response to this the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) ordered an inspection and the staff went on strike, continuing to teach a small number of children in a neighbouring building. After two weeks of teaching in the school by inspectors and temporary staff, the teachers returned to work, co-operated with the inspection and gave evidence to the Auld Inquiry.

Throughout the public portion of the affair and the four months of the Inquiry, the dispute was a topic of national newspaper articles on an almost daily basis. The vast majority of these were highly critical of the Tyndale staff, suggesting that they were politically motivated and cared little for the children's best interests. At the close of the Inquiry, further press releases intimated that there was too much freedom for teachers and schools to impose their own pedagogical ideals – even at the cost of damaging children's futures – and that they were becoming too powerful to oppose. In an article entitled 'The Classroom Despots,' Mary Macpherson asked: "Have teachers, as a group, become so powerful that no one wants to argue with them?" (Evening Standard, 1976,) and this was typical of the trend

that took the Tyndale affair and generalised to such an extent that readers could be forgiven for assuming that all LEA schools, and particularly those in London, were hotbeds of political dissent and educational experimentation.

These alleged weaknesses in primary school provision generally, and more specifically in the ILEA, exemplified by, "the antics at William Tyndale School, where a group of ideologically-driven teachers had taken the professional control of the curriculum to ludicrous extremes," (Barber, 1999) was one of several precursors to the Great Debate. The Debate, initiated by James Callaghan (the Prime Minister at the time) led to huge changes in the roles of Headteachers in primary schools. Indeed we are told by Riley that:

Events at Tyndale created waves – and indeed a veritable storm – which resounded not only in the world of education but on the wider national stage and which eventually reached the ears of the Prime Minister of the day, James Callaghan. (Riley 1998, p.22)

This may appear a little harsh, but exemplifies the 'hands off' approach of governments prevalent at that time which is mentioned further below.

'Teaching Styles and Pupil Progress'

Around the time of James Callaghan's speech at Ruskin College (see below) Neville Bennett and his colleagues were completing a research project entitled teaching Styles and Pupil Progress. This research drew upon a sample of 871 primary schools in north-west England and analysed the different teaching styles (formal, informal and a mixture of the two), the prevalence of each, and their effects on children's progress. The findings of this study were such that they could be used, selectively, to support various viewpoints, but suggested that it was easier for most teachers to achieve appropriate pupil progress in a formal situation. One of the most successful teachers, however, used an informal approach that was meticulously planned and carefully structured and Bennett was careful to stress that

it was this rigorous approach in the planning and delivery of lessons that was the important factor.

> The central factor emerging from this study is that a degree of teacher direction is necessary, and that this direction needs to be carefully planned, and the learning experiences need to be clearly sequenced and structured. (Bennett, 1976, p. 162)

The authors were very careful to warn against this subjective use of the results, giving an example of the drawing of premature conclusions and saying 'The dangers of moving from research evidence to unfounded conjectures are clearly illustrated here.' (p. viii). A number of paragraphs in the concluding chapter, however, suggested strongly that the findings showed that a formal approach to classroom organisation and lesson delivery coincided with enhanced pupil progress in the core subjects of English and mathematics.

> In reading, pupils of formal and mixed teachers progress more than those of informal teachers, the difference being equivalent to some three to five months … In mathematics formal pupils are *superior* to both mixed and informal pupils, the difference in progress being some four to five months. In English formal pupils again *out-perform* both mixed and informal pupils, the discrepancy in progress between formal and informal being approximately three to five months. (p. 152)

> [P]upils who had entered formal classrooms with a high level of achievement showed much greater progress than pupils of similar achievement levels in informal classrooms. (p. 153)

> [T]he frequency of punctuation errors was much smaller in the written work of formal and mixed pupils than in that of informal pupils. (p. 155)

> Most pupil [personality] types showed *better progress* under formal teaching. (P. 156)

> The analyses of the different progress of pupils in the three general teaching styles show clearly the *efficacy* of formal methods in the basic subjects. (p. 157)

> [Observations suggest] the juxtaposition *low work-low performance in informal classrooms and high work-high performance in formal.* (p. 158)

Despite the entreaties to 'ignore the rhetoric which would have us believe that informal methods are pernicious and permissive, and that the most accurate description of formal methods is that found in Dickens's Hard Times' (p. 163); these findings, and possibly, to some extent, the emotive wording used (italicised) give the distinct impression that formal

teaching gives the most acceptable results. If this was not the intention, then the wording

used may be, at best, considered niaive, and, at worst, regarded to be inflammatory and

seeking popular approbation. It is, therefore, not surprising that the media, the educational

Right, and, after 1979, the Thatcher government, were able to draw upon them to support

calls for a return to more formal, didactic teaching methods. Indeed, this suggestion of a

return to formal teaching is an appropriate one to make, given the apparent clarity of these

findings when taken in isolation from the other, overarching finding that:

> It therefore seems to be curriculum emphasis and organisation rather than classroom
> organisation factors … which are crucial to pupil performance … for teaching and
> learning 'it is what you do, not the way that you do it' would seem more appropriate in
> the light of this evidence. (p. 160)

These research findings were so quickly and enthusiastically adopted that Bennett himself,

writing some time later, said:

> The publication of our report unwittingly gave the educational Right the research
> findings they had been waiting for. From the day of publication we found ourselves
> fighting a rearguard action against the excesses of the educational Right. Despite
> protestations and disclaimers, members of the Conservative Party constantly
> misrepresented, overstated or sloganised our findings. (Bennett, 1978, p,26)

Some time later, Bennett reanalysed the data from this study, but this further analysis,

leading, as it did, to somewhat a different conclusion.

> Scrutiny of his [Bennett's] research has revealed that its conclusions are not well
> supported. This is shown most strikingly by a re-analysis of the data carried out by
> Bennett himself and others, in which rather different results were produced.
> (Hammersley 1993, p. 494)

These new results, however, did not coincide with the wishes of the educational Right and

Bennett was attacked for his re-assessment of the data, prompting Wragg (1983, p.4) to

comment: 'It is regrettable that Bennett was attacked for reanalysing his teaching-styles

data, when this seemed to me a most responsible act, leading as it did to the testing out of

new clustering techniques.' After this time the initial findings continued to be used as to

provide support for calls for teachers to return to more formal classroom techniques.

<u>The Ruskin College Speech:</u> When James Callaghan put forward his ideas regarding the future direction of education in his 1976 Ruskin College speech, he was breaking with a tradition that had lasted in excess of thirty years, since,

> Most commentators (Becher and Maclure 1978; Kogan 1971; Lawton 1980; et al) have agreed that governments prior to 1976 adopted a laissez-faire approach (Waddington, 1985, p.100).

This laissez-faire approach is exemplified in the following quote from the Prime Minister, Edward Heath's address to the Society of Education Officers Conference in 1973.

> We try as a society to indicate to the professionals the human values, the social attitudes, the cultural traditions, the range of skills we wish them to foster . . . Thereafter we leave it to their professional responsibility and expertise. (Ibid., p.101)

Certain phrases in the Ruskin speech were to lay the foundations for many of the aspects of education we now associate with the National Curriculum ". . . 'common core' of subjects in schools . . ." such as standards, and attainment in various areas, particularly literacy and numeracy ". . . there is concern about the standards of numeracy . . ." [and again] ". . . the basic purposes of education require the same basic tools. These are basic literacy, basic numeracy, . . ." value for money ". . . a challenge in education is to examine its priorities and to secure as high efficiency as possible."

Each of these, particularly the final two were inextricably linked to prior lack of participation by parents, the (tax-paying) public and central government. In short the message was, "we've put the money in – now we want to see some *measurable* results and we're setting the criteria for both what is going to be measured, how the results of the measurement should inform future curricula, who will be involved and to what extent." This was, in effect, an early indication of the greater accountability which has since become a feature of the role of headteachers.

Much of the educational establishment could be forgiven for dismissing this speech as a feature of the political scene at that time (in the wake of the oil crisis) and believing that their high level of professional autonomy would not be compromised. This initially appeared to be the case since, as John Patten (ex secretary of state for education) says; the effect of the speech "was much watered down allegedly by Shirley Williams, who was the Secretary of State at the time. There was, I think, a very strong view among the civil servants . . . that the relationship was right – you left it to the LEAs and they got on with it. So Callaghan didn't do much in the three years." (Ribbins and Sherratt, 1997, p. 177)

There were, however, follow-up studies published which reiterated Callaghan's sentiments. The Red Book - Curriculum 11-16 (DES, 1977) described five local education authorities (LEAs) where experimental 'focused curricula' were being developed, and two years later *Aspects of Secondary Education in England* (DES, 1979) was openly critical of highly diversified option systems at upper secondary level. In 1983 *Curriculum 11-16. Towards a Statement of Entitlement* (DES, 1983) concluded that a common curriculum was both desirable and feasible.

While these examples are taken from reports on the secondary educational system, they are indicative of the direction in which reports in this era were pointing for the whole spectrum of education.

The introduction of the principles of market forces.

In the period under consideration, beginning with the introduction of the Education Reform Act (ERA) (DFES, 1988) and continuing to the present time, there have been numerous changes in the primary school curriculum and the ways that teachers are required to plan, perform and record their professional duties. These have also affected the ways in which

headteachers have been required to carry out their duties and, linked to this, there has been a parallel effect on the perceived objectives of the school and those staff within it who are concerned with educating the children who attend those schools. In this chapter research on primary schools as systems is discussed in order to examine these interactions in more detail.

Later in this chapter the ERA will be considered along with the changes that followed the Act and how these changes and their precipitous introduction culminated in the 1994 Dearing Report which suggested that there should be five years with little change to allow a period of stability in which the curriculum could stabilise and teachers [and headteachers] develop their management and teaching to make the best use of it. This change has, however, continued apace with recent introductions including the new Primary Strategy, entitled Excellence and Enjoyment (2003) and further planned developments which have been outlined in the current consultation documents, Every Child Matters (2004), the Ofsted recommendations for a new inspection regime (2004) and the revised Literacy and Numeracy strategies (2006) so it would appear that development is still continuing and its rate of change has yet to diminish. These strategies have arisen from a variety of areas of concern, pedagogical and non-pedagogical, and each has increased the pressure upon headteachers to conform to the wishes of central government and, to some extent, reduced the direct influence of the local education authorities.

Every Child Matters is an example of a strategy which has had a substantial effect upon local authorities and schools that arose out of an event which had a non-pedagogical basis. The Laming Report (2003 para. 5.3), following the sad and untimely death of Victoria Climbié on February 25th 2000, found that there were "serious shortcomings in the practice and in professional judgements made at the time" by both Brent Council and Haringey

Council Social Services departments. Many of these shortcomings were due to poor communication between social services, medical teams and schools, though the schools themselves were not seen as lacking care. This has led to substantial changes in the structure of local authorities, including (in Mercia, for example) the establishment of a 'Children's Services' department which encompasses education, social services and child health, with one overall executive manager, formerly from the social services department. It has also brought about Joint Area Reviews, which are inspections of local authorities along similar principles to Ofsted but which set out to establish the adherence of local authorities to the principles of Every Child Matters.

Ball (1990) presents a strong case for the argument that the ERA guides education in general and individual schools in particular, towards a market-based system where "Financial planning and decision-making take preference over educational planning and decision-making." (Ball 1990, p.10). He points out that Thatcherite monetarist policies are based upon the Hayekian principle that government based upon market forces is the only true, pure form of impartial administration, where every person can achieve their true level of competence and personal development without hindrance or unfair assistance. Hayek, he suggests, wants social and economic life to be organised entirely by the aggregate effects of decentralised, free markets rather than by policy and planning, so that there is no 'deliberate organisation by a commanding intelligence' (Hayek 1960 p.154) which, he says, will maximise creative entrepreneurship and cope more readily with the uncertainty of rapid social and technological change. This view of human nature leaves little room for either honest, social government or moral decision making, leaving all notion of social justice to the 'aggregate effects of decentralised free markets' (Ball 1990, p.2) and suggests that envy is a positive force that stimulates competition and encourages initiative.

With this free-market theory as an underpinning philosophical premise for the government in 1988, and with the input of the Centre for Policy Studies (of which Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph were co-founders), Ball (p.4) explains that the ERA was based upon the elements of the free market in education as proposed by Coopers and Lybrand (1988) which were **choice, competition, diversity, funding** and **organisation**.

Parental **choice**, one of the fundamental tenets of the Act, was, at the same time, a diminution of the power and control of LEAs. In addition to giving parents more choice this allows all schools to accept pupils 'up to their standard number, based on 1979 figures' (Ball, 1990, p.4) and thus reduces the possibility of fixed limits on intakes, so that 'local authorities will no longer be able to plan to balance intakes between schools or to protect schools against the effects of falling rolls' (ibid.).

This also relates directly to **competition**, where standardised testing, the publication of test and public examination results and open enrolment mean that 'accountability and competition are the lingua franca of this discourse of power' (Ball, 2001, p.210) and that power is exercised over education directly by central government rather than mediated through the authority of LEAs. The suggestion that competition raises standards is a common argument for its introduction but Downes (1994) argues that the complexity of the educational process is such that it remains unclear whether that hypothesis can be soundly tested. As an example he points out that while academic standards, as tested by examination results at sixteen and eighteen, did indeed rise in the 1980s there is evidence that this rise began before the full effects of the market philosophy had been felt. These tests have also been called into question by Wragg (1988) who, quoting music as an example, points out that standardised testing relates to quantity, rather than quality, of experience.

Ball (1990, p.6) tells us that the principle of a Hayekian market also requires **diversity**. This was provided initially through the introduction of Grant Maintained Schools which 'opted out' of LEA control and were directly funded by the DES (although these have now been drawn back into the 'fold' of conventional funding) and City Technology Colleges which were, in theory, funded by industry but in practice massively underwritten by DES funding (Ball, 1990, p.6) and more recently by the addition of specialist 'excellence centres' – schools covering the National Curriculum but catering for students who wish to specialise in a specific area such as, for example, sports or science. These are in addition to the grammar schools that are still in existence and the availability of education in the private sector.

Variation in **funding** has been provided by a combination of the less balanced school populations mentioned above and the mechanism of per-capita funding, which was introduced in April 1990. This means that those schools attracting smaller numbers of pupils are allocated lower budgets. Ball (1990) points out that lower budgets mean less investment in staff, equipment and infrastructure is possible in those schools with reduced income. This reduction in investment will lead to less desirable schooling and thus lower numbers, which leads to further reduced investment and to a cycle of decline. He then suggests that this cycle of decline is, in some cases, inevitable and "clearly the DES are expecting that some schools will not survive in the market place. In effect 'the weak will go to the wall' [when they are] no longer viable and will close" (Ball, 1990 p.9). He also reminds us that this is the same principle which operated in the first term of the Conservative government with regard to British manufacturing industry and suggests that the same 'market disciplinary system' will apply to schools. This is echoed by Walford (1996, p.7) who says that, "the discipline of the market is said to ensure that only 'high

quality' provision survives." The final aspect which the application of the elements of a free market will inevitably affect, if the school is to survive in the market place, is **organisation** of the school administration and government. It is suggested, here, that, "the model of organisation which the ERA implies is clear, it is that of governors as Board of Directors and headteacher as Chief Executive. Schools are to become businesses, run and managed like businesses with a primary focus on the profit and loss account." (Ball, 1990, p.11) The parent, therefore, becomes the client and the well-educated pupil is the product of the school. It follows that those schools which apparently produce less suitable goods will lose custom. In this analysis the 'less suitable goods' give comparatively lower national test results and provide a consequently lower position in the 'league tables'. Since schools are required to adhere to the 'recipe' dictated by the National Curriculum, it is the raw materials and the mode of application (also partially dictated in the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy) that make the difference in the output. Hargreaves (1989) suggests that if we refine this model a little further it is possible to see the education market as a system of franchises, which he likens to 'Kentucky Fried Schooling'.

Whitty (1990) also remarks that the government presented open enrolment, financial delegation, grant maintained schools and city technology colleges as consistent with increasing schools' autonomy and their ability to respond to parental wishes. In addition the DES Consultation Document (1987) stated that the ERA would "add a new and powerful dimension to the ability of parents to exercise choice within the publicly provided sector of education," and points to a substantial increase in the power of governors, and the influence of parents and the local business community in the development of schools. This suggests that the school at this point was being viewed as part of that business community, with the pupils and parents considered as 'customers' or 'clients' rather than recipients of a service.

The logical extension of this is that since the prime function of a business is to operate with the maximum efficiency, for the minimum expenditure thereby producing the greatest profit, schools should, in some way, be doing the same. A further suggestion from this analogy is that, just as in business there is a high degree of autonomy and commercial enterprises are allowed to stand or fall depending upon whether their performance (profit) is appropriate, so schools should be allowed to stand or fall depending upon the parental perception of their performance (via the vehicle of parental choice of school) and that this performance is both measurable and reportable using standardised tests and inspections, the results of which are published statutorily. Simply phrased, the perception was that, in education, as in commerce, market forces should be allowed to have their head.

In apparent opposition to this 'open market' approach the National Curriculum was rigidly specified at the time of the ERA and has continued to become more prescriptive with the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The DES Consultation Document (1987) pointed towards the increasing power of parents and governors, but, significantly, added that this would be within the legal framework of the National Curriculum, so, as Whitty (1990) suggests; the exercise of choice and responsibility continues to be denied to the majority of parents in the curricular field of education, where only the wealthy will continue to have a choice. Wragg pursued a similar line in response to the introduction of the ERA being linked to greater choice for parents when he suggested that:

> On the surface this appears to be straight advocacy of more choice and higher standards for all through competition. The reality is, in fact, much more sinister. First of all this is a prime example of a rigged market [where] the test scores in the first semi-privatised schools with their higher socio-economic intake, enhanced income and massive publicity from the government's own well-oiled publicity machine are indeed higher than those in local authority schools. (Wragg, 1988, pp. 12/13)

To some extent he was right, as grant-maintained schools and City Technology Colleges (CTCs) received the advantages he suggested, though he was wrong regarding the extent and longevity of the grant-maintained system, which he thought would grow and prosper, but which has been subsequently dismantled by another government. Many commentators (Heath, 1987; Straw, 1987; Goodson, 1990; Ribbins and Sherratt, 1997) also argued that the function of the ERA was centralisation, rather than distribution of power and thus it enhanced the opportunity for the introduction of market economy theories to the educational system.

Classroom management.

Alexander, Rose and Woodhead (1992) consider that, in the years immediately prior to the introduction of the ERA, much classroom work was planned and carried out in a child-centred (cross-curricular, topic-based, group orientated) manner with the buzz-words being 'flexibility', 'openness', 'informality' in 'freely-flowing' lessons. Alexander (1995a) refers to these as 'shibboleths' since, he suggested, they served to reinforce the corporate identity and practices of the groups of teachers who used them. His research in this style of classroom concludes that this type of openness in the classroom could only be effectively carried through with thorough planning and good classroom control, leading to a tension between the shibboleths and the actual activities of the teachers. He further suggests that teachers felt constrained to work in this way, however much it may have conflicted with their individual educational philosophies, since it was the accepted practice in primary schools at that time. This aligns with his *political* statement of good educational practice – "This is the practice which I (or others) expect to see and it should therefore be adopted," (Alexander, 1995b) about which he says, "We appear to have a situation […] where those

with power may assume the right to impose their preferred versions of good practice on those without." We need, here, to ask the question, "Who were 'those with power' in this statement?" Alexander's thinking is mainly with regard to schools within Leeds where the Local Education Authority primary advisers were very strongly in favour of the application of child-centred education and were considered to be people who 'polished the shibboleths with enthusiasm' and thus supported, encouraged and developed these educational strategies. They, therefore, would seem to be 'those with power' and the headteachers and teachers in that area were those who had 'preferred versions of good practice' imposed upon them. One of the greatest influences in this area at the time was Sir Alec Clegg, education officer for the West Riding of Yorkshire. One of the guiding principles of his educational philosophy was that that the object of teaching was not so much to convey the knowledge to the child but to excite a determination in the children to acquire knowledge for themselves and teach them how to proceed with that acquisition.

It would appear that this philosophy was strongly promulgated in this area of the country and that teachers capitulated (willingly in many cases) to its principles, leading Alexander to the conclusions above. This would suggest that little has changed since the introduction of the ERA regarding the intensity of planning, classroom control and the imposition of both content and practice, other than the direction from which this imposition comes. This, once again, could be a comparison of constraints before and after the introduction of the ERA in a small area of the country and therefore needs to be tempered with the consideration of further evidence.

While there is a suggestion later in Alexander's (1995a) post-ERA research that classroom management had remained much the same as before the introduction of the ERA, despite the emphasis on whole-class teaching rather than groups, other areas had changed

considerably, including: *assessment*, which was now seen as a never-ending burden; *record keeping* (which changed several times in rapid succession) that was tighter but needed to be supplemented with a more formal kind of profile; and the *curriculum* which was viewed as having too large a range and an inappropriate and unnecessary depth for the pupils, particularly at Key Stage one. Webb and Vulliamy (1996) point to the diminution of group work which has occurred since the introduction of the National Curriculum and the consequent reduction of the proportion of lesson time pupils spend in direct interaction with the teacher. This, they suggest, has reduced the effectiveness of teaching in the period under consideration. Woods (1997 p.168), referring to Alexander's (1992) allusion to thematic work, topics, enquiry methods and group work as 'sacred cows and shibboleths,' points to his own research (Woods, 1993) which indicates that these activities can be among the most exciting and rewarding of those in the educational field. The conclusion is that the reduction of these activities following the introduction of the National Curriculum has reduced the pupils' opportunities for taking part in exceptional educational events and that, 'unless we are careful, we shall organise genius right out of existence' (ibid p.176).

One dilemma experienced by many headteachers and other school managers since the introduction of the National Curriculum and the accompanying aspects of the ERA is what Alexander refers to as an intellectual tension, which is a possible further cause of stress. This dilemma is connected to one apparently retrograde effect of national tests, which is in opposition to the progress made towards a genuinely child-centred approach over the previous two decades. Simon (1997 p.7) remarks upon the media drive "for the return to streaming, whole class teaching, and of course for more rigorous assessment and testing, which has, on occasion, been supported by government spokespeople." Thus, the move away from streaming (and 'cramming') in primary schools which accompanied the demise

of the eleven-plus examination in many parts of the country, and allowed more autonomy in the planning and delivery of the curriculum, has now been reversed. Primary schools have adopted setting, particularly for Literacy and Numeracy lessons (along with 'booster groups' officially sanctioned by the possibility of ring-fenced 'booster money' by the DfES) and these have become far more widespread as the pressure to achieve highly in the national tests has increased. As Ball (1990, pp.16/17) points out, "Clearly, in terms of predominant political and media messages it is academic performance and particularly test and examination results that are the major selling points for the 'successful' school."

The government have not directed headteachers to apply this reversal of procedure but indirect pressure has been applied via testing, financial strategies, inspection reports and recommendations, and media pressure. Alexander (1995a) points out in the context of child-centred teaching, that "this combination of generalised ideological pressure and vagueness about operational detail can generate high levels of anxiety and guilt among teachers." This generalisation also applies here, where governmental ideological and financial pressure directed towards specific outcomes, combine with vagueness about details of how those outcomes are to be achieved. In apparent opposition to this vagueness the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy were introduced with such detail regarding the minutiae of curricular content and application that many training days were allocated to direct experienced teachers along the prescribed route. This combination of pressure with vagueness in some areas and pressure with prescription in others can serve only to exacerbate the already high levels of anxiety through a lack of uniformity in approach (and thus a suggestion that there is a lack of adequate understanding and accountability). The term 'teachers,' above, must also include headteachers, who are accountable to Ofsted for

whole-school management, curriculum application and test results with a generally demoralised staff and an ever-changing set of criteria to which they must adhere.

This contradiction between headteachers' visions for their schools and the imposition of a system with which they do not necessarily agree is another site for the manifestation of the tension, mentioned at length in Chapter 3, which is seen as a primary cause of stress. These tensions and contradictions developed within individuals, and between those individuals and the contexts within which they have been working, may have resulted from those educational changes. These may be considered to be associated with satisfiers and dissatisfiers (Herzberg, 1966); 'positive and negative evaluations of difference' (Norwich and Kelly, 2004 p.44), 'mismatch [tension] between the demands upon a person and their ability to meet those demands' (Kyriacou, 2000 p.4) or tensions between the visions of individuals regarding suitable outcomes and their progress towards achieving those outcomes which is constrained by the constantly changing contexts within which those individuals operate.

The major contextual forces in this mercurial surrounding context, with its accompanying mesosystems, exosystems and macrosystems continually work upon the participants' actions and identities to shape and reshape them in order to guide their perceived objectives along a path which is parallel to, or preferably congruent with, those which are prevailing within that context at the time. The mesosystems, exosystems and macrosystems are successively wider contexts, becoming further from the central, core system which is referred to as the microsystem. This is described in ore detail in Chapter 3.

At the same time as they are being shaped by the system the participants will, by dint of their actions and identities within their context, tend to influence their immediate contextual situation. This is expressed by Engeström (1999, p.36) as, "The idea that the fundamental

societal relations and contradictions of the given socio-economic formation – and thus the potential for qualitative change – are present in each and every local activity of that society." This can, in turn, influence to some extent the societal contexts allied to it.

This tendency to realign action and identity to fit more closely to contextual constraints and, at the same time, to influence the context to align more accurately with action and identity, may be seen as a result of trying to increase the beneficial, stress-reducing effects of the major satisfier, which Nias (1989) considers to be the feeling of individuals that they are autonomous, or in control of their professional life. By arranging a more accurate fit between context and individual, the feeling of autonomy derived from the ability to work towards one's own goals is accentuated and the tension caused by mismatch tends to be reduced. However, "because the imperatives arrive as officially endorsed orthodoxies backed by hierarchic power, they cannot easily be questioned," (Alexander 1995a, p.41) so the tendency will be for headteachers to adopt strategies which will align their local context with the wishes of the current hegemony.

While it is self-evident that changes to pedagogical practice will have varied from area to area and school to school and, perhaps to a lesser extent, will have been different for classes within one school, it is worth looking at some research evidence regarding the extent of those changes. Campbell and Neill (1994) remark that a number of the requirements enshrined within the ERA were a powerful set of forces for change on primary school culture, and thus those requirements must have affected practice. They then go on to consider in detail some of the changes which were made, including increases in working hours and workloads, a general move away from teacher autonomy and individuality to collegiality and more unified and regulated forms of practice, and a significant increase in paperwork in addition to the already extended workload – a point which is supported by

Dunham (1992).   Galton (1995, p.97) also points out that the National Curriculum emphasises planning and assessment, which, he says, "accords with the belief that assessment is able to drive pedagogy in the desired direction;" this has increased the emphasis on planning and assessment in the primary school in recent years and, to some extent, subjugated the practical and spontaneous aspects of pedagogical practice.

In apparent contradiction to these findings, Broadfoot et al (1993, p. 116) point out that; "both groups of teachers [in France and England] are likely to resist any attempt by less significant 'others' - notably in the form of changes in government policy – which they see as inimical to the fulfilment of this primary [commitment to children] goal."   They also comment a little later (p. 123) that, "Crude attempts, such as we are currently witnessing in England, to make teachers more contractually accountable and, by so doing, to steer more directly their practice, can thus be shown to be doomed to failure unless teachers' *own* definitions of their professional responsibility also change."

While this contradiction may be rooted in the different developmental stages of the fast-changing educational reforms being considered by each researcher (pre-1993 compared with 1995) it does, however, seem to reflect the character of teaching, taking part in which, Nias (1989, p.196) suggests, is "to learn to live with unresolved uncertainties, contradictions and dilemmas; to accept that the very nature of teaching is paradoxical."   It is not within the scope of this study to unravel the intricacies of this contradiction, nor to examine the evidence upon which each standpoint is based, but in relation to this there must be some investigation into an aim which is based more upon individuals and their responses to the changes that have occurred in the period with which we are concerned.

Those responses will depend upon the co-linearity, or otherwise, of the headteacher's professional identity and the direction she feels the changes are moving her and the school. As Day (1999, p.2) points out:

> The way the curriculum is understood is linked to teachers' constructions of their personal and professional identities. Content and pedagogical knowledge cannot, therefore, be divorced from teachers' personal and professional needs and moral purposes.

Those professional identities have been forged throughout that particular headteacher's career, as a result of the combination of her own, internal, needs and requirements, and the result of her interactions with children, educational professionals and other stakeholders throughout her career. Nias (1989, p.203) refers to the internal needs and requirements as the 'substantial self', which, she says 'is based on a set of self-defining beliefs, values and attitudes which resist change' and the result of interactions as the 'situational self', which 'is developmental, and alters as we interact with other people'. Goodson and Adair (2007, p.5) refer to the substantial self as the 'personal scripts' of professionals, such as headteachers, which they weave into a 'life theme' which often becomes their life work. They then go on to say that:

> These professionals often structure their own vocational identity around this life theme. Their self-project, their primal learning and their work identity therefore becomes merged. (ibid. p.6)

That is to say that:

> [T]he professionals create intra personally an individual, private and personal script which guides crucial parts of their life and learning. (ibid. p.6)

While Nias, and Goodson and Adair do not use the term *'professional identity'* here, it is apparent that they are discussing the formation of an individual, personal character that relates directly to, and impinges upon, the working life of the professional. Goodson and Adair go on to point out (mirroring Nias' explanation) that the professionals derive a part of their identity from their personal and primal identity and part from their interpersonal

encounters.   While this division of professional identity into the two areas (primal/substantial and work/situational) are evident in the data obtained in this study, it would appear that there is not complete agreement with either Nias or Goodson and Adair, since the responses of the headteachers suggested that the work/situational area was less open to change than suggested by them. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

Sugrue (2005, p.8) concurs with the development of a professional identity, but without any division into the two areas. He does, however, extrapolate this to describe the tensions that may exist between identity and enforced change, when he says that:

> [I]t may be the case also that school leaders have inherited this earlier 'coding' on leadership, primarily through apprenticeship, to the extent that 'changing leadership for changing times' becomes an uphill struggle and goes against the grain of many incumbents. Transforming schools, their respective leaders and leadership styles, therefore, is crucially concerned with altering the identities of principals.

Goodson's earlier (2003) work also includes a consideration of professional identity, although he seems to use the term '*identity*' interchangeably, to some extent, with *'personal projects'*, *'professional beliefs and missions'* and *'professionalism'* in this text. At this point he had not reached his and Adair's later (2007) definition regarding the two-part construction of professional identity, but he makes some important points regarding the tensions that are apparent at the interface of professional identity and imposed change. He points out (p.74) that 'professionalism is learnt, constructed and necessarily sustained in the everyday working environment of the school' and 'the role of reforms and change should be to construct sustainable environments where such professionalism can continue to flourish.' Later (p.95), he also points out that this has not been the case and that 'politicians are pushing inappropriate and politically motivated reforms' and that 'new testing regimes disvalue many students and attack teachers' sense of themselves as caring professionals.' Further on (p.98), he makes an important point; imposing 'change theories and projects'

without considering the impact upon the professional identities of the school staff (teachers and headteacher) will not only alienate those members of staff, but will ensure that they 'are bound to end up wide of the target.'

'The teacher's career', he tells us (p.101) 'reflects these issues of commitment and personal satisfaction. These ingredients are not likely if change initiatives and theory ignore the personal projects and internal school projects so dear to teachers'. Also (p.96) 'When teachers [and headteachers] detach their identity projects, their 'hearts and minds' from school, change is unlikely to be successful.' Goodson et al. (2006) relate the development of professional identity, and responses to change to the concept of nostalgia. This nostalgia, they say, is related to;

> [W]hy and how they [- the teachers -] have been bearers of certain historically situated experiences of teaching over time on the substance of what they recall and on how they reflect on their past emotionally and intellectually. (p.43) [and that] The substance of their nostalgia … was expressed in both social and political dimensions [and] was directly connected to the particular history and context of change in their school and their community.' (p. 55)

These statements clearly link teachers' (and headteachers') nostalgia, their 'longing to return to *conditions, experiences, and relationships in the past*' (p. 44), (my emphasis), with their professional identities, which have been developed through their interactions with others in their previous school contexts; that is to say, the *conditions, experiences, and relationships* in their school contexts *in the past*. While this does not equate nostalgia and professional identity, it links the two in such a way that threats to one are inextricably related to the other. Goodson et al. also point out that nostalgia is 'a source of resistance to changes that threaten patterns and purposes that teachers have cherished for decades' (p. 43) and thus ineluctably links nostalgia (and thus, by association, identity) to resistance to changes. This theme is revisited in Chapter 8.

In 1979, the Conservative party was brought to power by the electorate and this heralded a change in education policy, bringing it more in line with the aims stated in the Ruskin speech. A Conservative administration continued until 1997, during which time there were seven Secretaries of State for Education, each of whom introduced their own development towards the overall changes which took place in those years. The development which had the single, greatest effect, however, was the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988.

Enshrined within the ERA was the principle that schools should be locally managed. This essentially strove to take the power for school funding and management out of the hands of the LEA and place it with the school and, through greater parental involvement in school governors, with the parents themselves. This had the effect of lessening the LEAs' control of schools, which the cabinet saw as desirable since LEAs were considered resistant to the general thrust of the ERA by central government. Under these new arrangements for local (school based) financial management (LFM) and management of schools (LMS) schools were formula funded (funding related directly to the number and type of pupils) – presumably to reward successful (popular) schools at the expense of those seen to be failing (unpopular) as judged by parents, guided by the performance (league) tables of assessment results. In addition, all schools were encouraged to consider grant maintained (GM) status – being directly funded by central government – if the governors and the majority of parents wished this to be the case.

The direct funding option was similar to that proposed by the government and embraced by the medical profession who had recently generally opted for 'fund holding status' forming health trusts which were centrally funded and mostly self-governing.

Throughout the 1980s, prior to the ERA, a number of Education Acts were introduced to enhance the role of parents on governing bodies and therefore in the running of schools and allow them greater rights when making a choice of school for their children. The ERA further removed obstacles to parental involvement and the combination of all these moves was encompassed in the Parents' Charter (1991) that set out parental rights and responsibilities in detail. This was one of many such charters, each of which set out the rights of the individual as the client, thus the parents were placed to some extent, in the position of customers rather than partners in their children's education. This enhanced the feeling of some people in the teaching profession that GM status was a move towards 'backdoor privatisation'.

In reality, however, LMS and its reduction of the powers of LEAs vested school managers, parents and governors with greater power and responsibility regarding the direction schools could take, giving them, 'control over their own destiny,' it set this power within a rigid framework of accountability. This accountability was bi-directional; to central government, via the auspices of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the National Audit Office and through a large number of official forms to be returned to the DfEE within tight, specified deadlines; and to the community through the governors and the enhanced parental rights of choice and involvement mentioned above.

This move away from LEA control, and towards tighter school accountability as mentioned above, was seen by some members of the government and the opposition in parliament as a move towards greater power in education for central government rather than greater autonomy for parents, governors and headteachers. This may be seen in the following statements made in the second reading of the Bill; taken from Ribbins and Sherratt, (1997, p.2).

> The Secretary of State [for education and science – at that time Kenneth Baker] has taken more powers under the bill than any other member of the cabinet. Edward Heath – Conservative (Hansard, 1987, p. 792)

> . . . it should be called the 'Education (State Control) Bill'. Under the disguise of fine phrases like 'parental choice' and 'decentralization' the Bill will deny choice and instead centralize power and control over schools. Jack Straw – Labour (ibid., p.781)

There was, therefore, a view that this move towards greater freedom and enhanced parental rights was inseparably bound to accountability, a centralised inspection regime and a strong move towards parents and pupils being viewed as 'clients'. This centralisation of inspection was another example of the move from LEA management of schools to national control and was accompanied by criticisms of 'the failure of schools to achieve appropriate standards' by successive Secretaries of State, which were readily adopted by the media.

Within this framework of rights combined with accountability, the main thrust of the Act, and the part with the greatest initial effect, was the introduction of the National Curriculum, which was the centrepiece of the reforms and set out what would be taught to the pupils in every state maintained school in the England and Wales. The introduction of the National Curriculum meant that all children between the ages of five and sixteen in publicly funded schools would be presented with the same subject matter during any Key Stage. The subjects to be taught were specified and a range of content within each subject was given from which particular items could be used. In addition there were Statements of Attainment (SoAs) which specified what knowledge pupils should gain in each area – and therefore the knowledge on which they could be tested.

The National Curriculum was divided into *core subjects* (English, mathematics and science) with six further *foundation subjects* (history, geography, art, design & technology, music and physical education) in primary schools with religious education as a statutory

addition but not forming part of the National Curriculum. In secondary schools a modern

language was added as a seventh foundation subject. The details (content, SoAs etc) for

each of these subjects were sent to schools in a separate ring binder for each subject. These

were received by schools with a great deal of anxiety, Anne Waterhouse, (1991) a

Headteacher, described this graphically.

> However, a bad dose of the National Curriculum heebie-jeebies beset the school
> during the autumn term 1989. There was absolutely no alternative but to work
> through the wretched ring-folders that seemed to arrive by parcel post on an almost
> daily basis. It has been soul destroying trying to become familiar with the seemingly
> endless attainment targets and statements of attainment. (Waterhouse, 1991, p.114)

This picture is reinforced by another headteacher, Chris McDonnell (1991, p.3) who

comments that, "The arrival of the National Curriculum Council documents by the van load

added considerably to that stress" (originally caused by the amalgamation of two schools).

The prescribed curriculum called for a way of working which was unfamiliar, time

consuming and obviously caused a great deal of concern due to the sheer quantity of

material associated with it. This was recognised in the Dearing Report, which stated,

"Urgent action is needed to reduce the statutorily required content of its programmes of

study and to make it less prescriptive and less complex." (Dearing, 1994). Despite this

complexity and the rapid, poorly planned introduction of the National Curriculum, schools

did their best to master the content and deliver the curriculum. This proved, subsequently,

to be a wasted effort as there were further developments which made a great deal of this

work unprofitable and caused further unpleasant tensions. Commenting on the introduction

of the National Curriculum, Barber (1999) says:

> The farce that followed was due to crass implementation, not the principle of setting
> clear standards as an entitlement for children. Thank God for Sir Ron Dearing, who
> rescued that principle in his review.

There was a great deal of unrest in schools about the unnecessarily rapid introduction of the

National Curriculum at the beginning of the 1990-91 academic year. Many serving teachers

thought it was introduced without sufficient consultation and to serve mainly political, rather than educational purposes. As Phillips (1998) points out in his review of Riley's book, 'Whose School is it anyway':

> When you consider ... National Curriculum and assessment, ... local management of schools, league tables, OFSTED ... and so on, then the answer provided by most people in education to the question, "who is in control?" would have been "the government", and more particularly Kenneth Baker or Margaret Thatcher.

This aura of politicisation was enhanced by the extent to which denigration of the profession (styled 'teacher-bashing' by those who suffered from it) was used to justify the introduction of the National Curriculum. When it was amended several times in rapid succession due to its unwieldy nature - having ten levels of attainment and numerous accompanying statements - and the inherent difficulties of its introduction this was seen as a justification of those feelings of unrest. Plewis and Veltman, commenting on these changes effectively sum up the situation saying, ". . . the transition from pre-ERA to post-ERA was not smooth. There were many shifts in the definition of the National Curriculum, culminating in the report by Sir Ron Dearing" (Dearing 1994).

Dearing (1994) also emphasises this unwieldiness when he comments in his report, that:

> ...we have created an over-elaborate system which distorts the nature of the different subjects, which serves to fragment teaching and learning in that teachers are planning work from the statements of attainment, and which at times has reduced the assessment process to a meaningless ticking of myriad boxes (p. 61, paragraph 7.25)

and:

> It is possible to cut back on this unjustifiable complexity and improve matters significantly (p. 61, paragraph 7.26)

The introduction of Key Stages, at the end of each of which assessment could take place, was the second principal feature of the Act. The tests at the end of each Key Stage were initially expected to be by both teacher assessment (TA) and Standard Assessment Tests

(SATs) in all core and foundation subjects but were revised after recommendations from the Dearing Committee so that they were as follows:

Key Stage one (KS1) - pupils aged 5 to 7 years - KS1 SAT Tests – English and maths

Key Stage two (KS2) - pupils aged 7 to 11 years - KS2 SAT Tests – all core subjects

Key Stage three (KS3) - pupils aged 11 to 14 years - KS3 SAT Tests – all core subjects

Key Stage four (KS4) - pupils aged 14 to 16 years - GCSE examinations – various subjects

There was a great deal of unrest about the time needed for administration and marking of the SAT tests, to the extent that industrial action was taken. This, together with the Dearing recommendations resulted in changes being made (including the use of external markers) so that from the 1994-95 academic year the amount of teacher time required to administer the tests and to assess their results was reduced. A further cause of tension was the introduction of the 'league tables' for test results, which were (and still are in England, though they have been discontinued in other countries of the United Kingdom) published in the media. This tension was especially marked for the senior staff in schools who bore the responsibility for whole-school results and the possible knock-on effects such as lower intake numbers as parents had also been given greater choice of schools under the Act. In addition, as, 'the person with whom the buck stops', the headteachers' responsibility and accountability for teaching across the curriculum and throughout the school were heightened and greater stress caused as a result.

It was suggested (Plewis and Veltman, 1996, p. 11) that the excessive pressure from the assessment tests may lead teachers to concentrate upon the knowledge and techniques which would ultimately lead to success in the tests, and therefore a good position in the league tables. This is something which would reduce the sensitive, interactive teaching which research suggests is the most effective for developing pupils' understanding. Dealing with

this disparity between what would be good for 'the school' and what would be good for the children was another cause of tension, and therefore ultimately stress, in staff.

<u>Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.</u> The result of the 1997 General Election in which the Labour Party won a landslide victory was, perhaps, in part due to their election slogan 'our three most important priorities are education, education and education'. This led those involved in teaching to believe that there would be changes to free them from the binding constraints imposed upon them and allow them to consider the children rather than league tables and attainment targets. In this, they proved to be niaive, since:

> As John McGregor, not noted as one of the most combative of the seven, [Conservative Secretaries of state] said: The labour party, having opposed so much of what we carried through in the 1980s have now come around to the recognition that we were right, and will not attempt to reverse most of the reforms. (Ribbins and Sherratt 1997, p. 7)

This is not wholly true, since GM schools have now been brought back into the state sector but the great majority of those 'constraints' are still in place and causing the same tensions.

In addition, the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) have been introduced into the curriculum. (Throughout this document they will be referred to as (capitalized) Literacy and Numeracy to distinguish them from literacy and numeracy which refer to the accumulation and use of skills in these areas.) They lay out in detail the topics to be taught and the techniques to be used in their incorporation into the curriculum – right down to details of how the hour-long lessons should be divided and the fashion in which they should be planned.

These too were introduced with what was considered to be unnecessary haste and a degree of 'teacher-bashing,' the feeling of governmental pressure being enhanced by continual statements detailing the disappointment of the Chief Inspector of Schools (who

had also been in post under the Conservative regime) with the ability and performance of teachers.

Further White Papers have been rapidly introduced (1992, 1993, 1996, 1997, 1998) which have also caused stress for teachers and, particularly, headteachers; in addition the National Curriculum has been revised a number of times, culminating in the present model: Curriculum 2000, which, in primary schools, has been supplemented by the document entitled "Excellence and Enjoyment – a Primary Strategy" (2004) which gives further details about teaching the National Curriculum and what the outcomes should be.

This rapidly changing basis for work was seen by Campbell and Neill (1994) to be a powerful force for change, not only causing primary school teachers to work longer hours but causing a move from individual working to a more collaborative (collegiate) culture. While this may be seen as a positive step, both the change itself and the pressure causing it must be stressful for teachers and be disconcerting for headteachers. Campbell and Neill continue;

> Added to this, the requirement to produce School Development Plans, [subsequently called School Improvement Plans by the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE)] to engage in 'agreement trials' for assessment purposes and the encouragement for curriculum co-ordinators to work through the school … were thus a powerful set of forces on primary school culture. (Campbell and Neill, 1994, p.212-213.)

A further example of stress-causing governmental policy introduced during these changes has been the 'inclusion strategy,' which was a direct result of the government's wish to reduce exclusions due to behavioural problems. Rather than dealing with these as individual cases and discovering the root cause of the problems the DFEE devised rules designed to make exclusion more difficult and strategies to 'punish' schools which had high exclusion rates. This was certainly a further cause of tension for headteachers who were torn between

the best avenue to take for the benefit of staff and the majority of pupils and keeping the school's statistical returns within defined limits.

In addition, there have been strategies which, while they have been beneficial to schools, have dramatically increased the burden of responsibility upon headteachers. One example of this is the introduction of Education Action Zones (EAZs) in particular areas of the country. This has given schools within EAZs the financial backing to carry out specific projects that have been of great benefit to those taking part. In order to achieve EAZ status, however, the headteachers in Action Zones were involved in the compilation of bids for the DFEE that were extremely detailed and time-consuming. Having achieved the status, they then became members of the steering group for their zone, meeting regularly to discuss projects and plan further activities, so their workload was continual rather than a short, concentrated effort. As participants in a government initiative to which a great deal of money was allocated on a short term basis these same headteachers were required to account for the successful progress of the projects in order to retain the funding and access the next tranche. Thus, what at first appears a beneficial initiative (and is for most people involved) increases the responsibility and accountability of headteachers still further. One headteacher who was, at the time, off work due to a stress related illness said in her interview, "I walked out at the end of the [EAZ steering group] meeting thinking, 'how did I become responsible for so many things?' and the next week I was sent home from school."

Teachers and Teaching.

There has long been, "sense of autonomy in matters of curriculum and pedagogy […] closely related to the ideological freedom which most British primary teachers enjoy," (Nias 1989 p.16) which was, "for some teachers, one of the main attractions of the job," (ibid.

p.16). Nias goes on to say that while political decisions taken between 1986 and 1988 have undermined efforts to regard teaching as a self-governing profession, "habits of autonomy are likely to die hard." Since she wrote this, however, further developments have caused a great deal of classroom autonomy to be eroded by this culture where the invisible, omnipresent hand and eye of the central bureaucracy underlies the rhetoric of decentralisation. Commenting on teachers' professional response to this, Moore et. al. (2002 p.552) observe, "not only might some teachers be severely restricted in their choice of identifications or positionings by such matters as increased government control […] they might find themselves pushed into some kind of professional identity *crisis*." As the apparent in-school agent of this erosion of autonomy and pedagogical identity while simultaneously being the person entrusted with the professional well-being of the staff, the headteacher is also in the stressful position of being open to accusations of 'having a foot in each camp' by staff opposed to the pace or extent of changes.

Teachers' hours of work: When comparing the hours worked by teachers in their study with the data published by Hilsum and Cane; Campbell and Neill (1994, p.45) say, "the obvious explanation for the increase [in working hours] since 1971is that the work requirements have changed following the educational legislation outlined in Chapter one." The legislation referred to this extract includes the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 and the Education Reform Act (1988). The former specified the working hours (1265 per year) and added, "such additional hours as may be needed to enable them to discharge effectively their professional duties," (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document, 1989, para 36). This specification allows 'open-ended' hours to be worked, depending on the conscience of teachers, both in school beyond the pupils' working day and away from school. Campbell and Neill continue, "in particular the introduction of the National Curriculum is widely

acknowledged (e.g. DES 1990b, 1991a, 1991b, Silcock 1990, 1992, Smithers and Zeintek 1991, Alexander, Rose and Woodhead 1992) to have increased teacher workloads, and is a principal explanation offered by the teachers themselves (see Evans *et al* 1994)." (Campbell and Neill, 1994, p.45) Furthermore, while their data may represent teachers' perceptions to some extent – they, "argue that teacher perceptions of the impact of changes upon their work are at least as important (for aspects of morale and commitment, for example) as the actuality of change." (ibid)

They do suggest that this increase may have been a 'temporary blip' caused by the introduction of the new curriculum but point out that this was an unlikely scenario since, at the time of writing, some years had passed and the hours worked had not diminished and they expected further changes to mediate against any substantial reduction. This prediction has been justified since the rate of change hardly faltered until the introduction of 'Curriculum 2000,' which seemed to be a plateau following a plethora of changes, although there have recently been other innovations which have added to the bulk of the National Curriculum documents.

A substantial part of this extra time is spent on administration for teachers and particularly headteachers. While Campbell and Neill do not refer directly to headteachers' workload they admit that, "the paperwork involved when headteachers respond to letters, process budget matters, meet visitors, deal with phone calls or otherwise administer the school as part of their management role […] is an increasingly significant aspect of primary schools." (ibid)

Dunham also makes a valid point when he notes that, for all teachers, but particularly headteachers, "these mounting pressures are additional to those already being exerted from different sources. They are not replacements." (Dunham, 1992 p.69) This additional

working time for both teachers and headteachers is a further factor, which causes additional stress in both, but particularly for conscientious headteachers who will also be concerned about the health of their over-burdened staff. Since then the government has reconsidered teachers' work-life balance and has introduced further reforms to alleviate some of the problems, however, this action to reduce the burden on teachers has, once again, caused a number of associated problems for headteachers who have to consider the application of the measures in schools.

Requirement of evidence: The scope, depth and rapidity of recent developments in education have brought about a considerable increase in workload for teaching staff, "who are now required to devote their time to producing auditable records [in addition to that] spent on teaching" (Shore and Wright, 2000 p.72) and in many cases their prime objective has shifted from providing the best teaching possible to amassing evidence showing this is what they have done. This evidence then has a range of uses from support during inspections to attaining the dizzy heights of the extended pay scale or becoming an Advanced Skills Teacher (Superteacher). One of the role-shifts for Headteachers has been a huge increase in the administrative functions associated with these initiatives, such as vetting the evidence for its strength and validity, completing the multitude of forms required by inspectors, assessors or advisers and justifying their decisions during the 'audits' by these various evaluators. In addition there is the extremely stressful situation these assessments carry with them, which may be caused by the possible rifts in the staffroom and consequent depression of staff morale if there are some staff who 'pass' while others 'fail'.

This audit culture, where, "it no longer really matters how well an academic teaches and whether or not he or she sometimes inspires their pupils, it is far more important that they

have produced […] all the paraphernalia of futile bureaucratization required for assessors," (Johnson, 1994, p. 379) appears debilitating for teachers. When combined with the decline in status due to the 'scatter-gun criticism' the profession has suffered over the last twenty years (Moran et al, 2001, p.18) it is one of a number of causes of an unprecedented exodus from teaching. Indeed, Mike Tomlinson - the Chief Inspector of Schools - said the dramatic reduction in numbers of teachers, "was the worst he had seen in his 36 years associated with the profession" (Hayes, 2001). The strain caused by the teacher shortage on the equilibrium of already over-extended Headteachers (exemplified in an article by Ward (2001 p. 7) where a headteacher forced to teach full time as well as manage the school during the recruitment crisis commented, "I haven't had to send classes home but it's been at my own expense. I went off with stress through not doing that,") has significantly increased the likelihood of stress-related problems. This is further supported by Dunham (1992) who quotes research by Travers and Cooper (1990) in which about 66% of teachers in the project said they had actively considered leaving the profession in the previous five years; almost 28% were actively seeking alternative employment and 13% were considering early retirement. He also refers to a study by Smithers and Robinson (1990) in which they estimated that the proportion of teachers leaving the profession was rising by one per cent annually. More recently, an article by Hackett in the Sunday Times (News section, 3/2/02, p. 7) says, "there is already evidence that a shortage of trained maths teachers is hampering attempts to improve standards … [as] … there has been an increase in the number of lessons taught by non-specialist staff." This short article is interesting, as it is reporting on staff shortages but clings to the media preoccupation with standards and 'the gap between good and poor schools' mentioned above.

<u>Teaching and professional development.</u> During the initial phases of the ERA, the Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker, introduced five compulsory training days each year for all teachers. This innovation was accepted by the profession as a move towards greater proficiency and increased professional status, giving the opportunity for teachers in each school to choose five group sessions each year on a topic of common interest. Since the introduction of Literacy and Numeracy, however, the content of the majority of these days has been prescribed, restricting further the opportunities for teachers to exercise professional choice. The National Commission on Education (1993) sums this up, saying,

> the bulk of in service provision in recent years has focused upon 'keeping teachers updated about recent reforms, in particular the curriculum', and has hindered personal development and the continuing development of teaching practices and strategies. (NCE, 1993, p. 219)

This prescription in what, traditionally, has been an area where teachers have been able to make their own professional, informed decisions may certainly be considered a demotivating factor and as Day (2000) points out, "As with children, so with teachers the key to successful learning is motivation, which cannot be achieved by tight centralised control."

It is an oft-stated truism that the best teachers are those who are utterly dedicated to their job, who have an excitement and a passion for sharing their love of academic and social knowledge and experiences with their pupils. This dedication, excitement and passion can only be diminished by the demotivation engendered by the restrictive environment in which they find themselves.

Conclusion

In this chapter an attempt has been made to give a flavour of the pace and scope of the government initiatives which have caused the current increased focus on the performance of schools. This has been allied to, and concurrent with, a culture of greater accountability for headteachers and an intensification of the audit culture across education at all levels. This has restricted the autonomy of headteachers and therefore reduced their opportunity to make responsive decisions regarding such matters as making suitable curricular changes; appropriate assessments and how they are utilised; detailed matters regarding school finance and exclusion of disruptive pupils. It has also increased teacher workload to such an extent that, in a letter to all headteachers in February 2002, Estelle Morris, the Secretary of State for Education, stated, "progress in the next phase of raising standards will depend a great deal on progress in reducing teacher workload" (DfES 2002) - note also the continued emphasis on raising standards. The responsibility for this will fall upon headteachers and part of the updated Ofsted inspection (from 2004) will be an investigation of the extent to which this has been achieved (letter to teacher unions - April 2002). This intensification of workload has led to a steady increase in the numbers of teachers leaving the profession and the resultant shortages have made appropriate staffing much harder to achieve. These points have combined to increase the level of stress on headteachers beyond the point where it ceases to be a source of inspiration, enthusiasm and imaginative solutions to the point where it causes exhaustion, instability and a breakdown of health. It is evident that this is due to what Kyriacou (2000, p. 4) calls the, "mismatch between the demands on a person and the person's ability to meet those demands".

Chapter 3: Stress – Causes, Outcomes and Stigmatisation

> In order that people may be happy in their work, these three things are needed; they must be fit for it; they must not do too much of it; and they must have a sense of success in it. John Ruskin, *Pre-Raphaelitism,* 1851

It is interesting to note that the quote above, referring to happiness in work, is attributed to Ruskin, while James Callaghan's Ruskin Speech (1976) could be said to have been the motivation for the educational reforms which, by increasing the amount to be done and reducing the celebration of success, considerably diminished the happiness, or satisfaction, of many headteachers in their work. This chapter considers the responses of headteachers to this diminution of satisfaction and the possible outcomes of any resultant stress that may occur. In addition, some possible remedial actions are mentioned, as is the exacerbating effect of denying, or hiding, the strain due to the stigma attached to being considered someone who 'suffers from stress'.

Prior to considering these points, in order to clarify some of the terms used, it is worthwhile to explain the view of the researcher regarding context. This view is derived from Cole (1997, p.132) mentioned later in this chapter, but is adapted to allow specific relevance to this study.
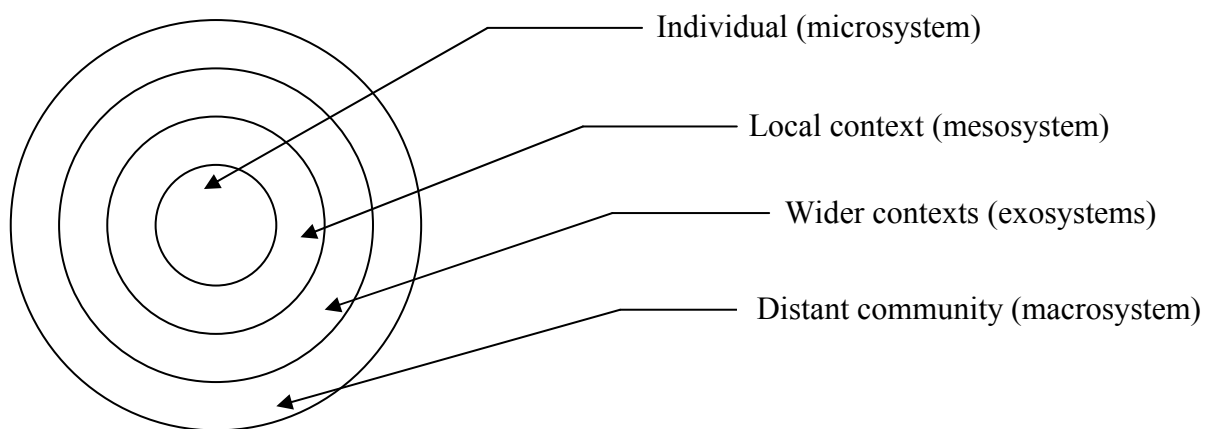
Figure 3.1: Concentric Contextual Structure.

- Individual (microsystem)
- Local context (mesosystem)
- Wider contexts (exosystems)
- Distant community (macrosystem)

If context is considered to be like a series of concentric circles, with the individual headteacher at the middle (the microsystem), then the immediate context is the school, with the individuals (staff, pupils, governors and parents) who are directly involved with her (the mesosystem). Surrounding this immediate context is a series of further, slightly more remote ones which may include the LEA and local community and further contexts encompassing the wider community and 'remote' influences such as the DfES (the exosystems). Beyond this is the (influentially) distant community (the macrosystem). Troman and Woods (2001, P.5) use the same terms when they say that:

> Stress is a multi-dimensional and multi-levelled phenomenon, and personal (micro) situational (meso) and structural (macro) factors are involved in its production.

The members of the various systems, or contexts, are not static, but may move between those contexts according to institutional and temporal factors. The DfES, for instance, may gain more direct influence over the school and therefore move into a closer context through a particular initiative (institutional), and Ofsted will move into a far closer context at particular times when inspections are carried out (temporal). The context which has the greatest immediate effect upon the individual is that which is closest and the other players in that context, whether temporary or permanent, will have the greatest influence upon that individual. For that reason, references to 'the context' in this chapter will apply to this local, mesosystemic context and references to any of the wider contexts will specify the one to which they apply.

There are already many texts dealing generally with stress and the proportion dealing with teacher stress has grown rapidly in recent years (Carlyle & Woods, 2002; Cole & Walker, 1989; Kyriacou, 2000; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978; Ostell & Oakland, 1995; Troman & Woods, 2001). Most of this work, however, has its origins in psychological issues and the ways in which individuals deal (psychologically) with the causes, symptoms and effects of

stress – as Cole (1997 pp.132-133) points out, "the psychologist's focus is ordinarily on the unit 'in the middle,' which may be referred to as a task or activity engaged in by *individuals*" (my emphasis). Not unnaturally, this has led the research and its findings into a rather individualistic notion of stress itself and the coping strategies available to deal with it. At the best it tends to look at what it sees as a dynamic interaction between individual parties or between individuals and their immediate context, leading to a simplistic and rather restricted view of the origins and therefore the treatment of stress and its causes. In order to develop a more complete understanding of stress it is necessary to look at the individual and the context within which they are operating but we also need to consider the wider context within which that local context is set. Referring to Cole (1997 p.132) again, he describes context as "that which surrounds," so in considering context it is necessary to bear in mind that each context is set within a wider context, rather like a set of concentric circles with the microsystem at the centre proceeding outwards through the mesosystems and exosystems to the outer macrosystem as described earlier in this chapter. In order to understand each context it is necessary to have some perception of its setting. It is also necessary, however, to work within defined limits since an unbridled consideration of all contexts would lead to an unwieldy research project with a lack of clarity and focus.

In order to allow investigation of multiple levels of context and still minimise this lack of focus it will also be necessary to adopt an analytical technique which is powerful enough to allow consideration of the action of individuals within a context which is, itself, within wider contexts. It will need to consider the relationships between individuals within that context to comprehend and if necessary adapt it but yet still be straightforward to use so that appropriate outcomes may be derived from the data.

Theories concerned with stress.

Kyriacou (2000 p.4) defines teacher stress as, "unpleasant emotions, such as anger, frustration, anxiety, depression and nervousness, resulting from some aspect of their work." He then describes three alternative approaches to considering stress; first, where stress is considered to be the demands and pressures on a teacher and strain is the reaction of that person to the situation. This may be referred to as the engineering model since it relates to the derivation of Young's modulus in physics where stress is the force applied to an object and strain is the deformation due to that force. In the case of headteachers' reactions to government initiatives, the strain is dependent upon a number of factors, which may include the headteacher's professional identity and educational philosophy, which have developed throughout her career. If this identity and the direction in which the initiatives are steering the school are contradictory, then the strain on the headteacher will be increased. An additional factor which may be considered is whether the headteacher complies with, or resists, the pressure to move the school in a direction which is contrary to that which their identity suggests. This may affect the level of stress and may, itself, be dependent upon the professional identity, and thus the professional history of the headteacher.

Secondly, some people refer to stress as the level of challenge (positive or negative) facing a person, where it may be regarded, at the appropriate level, as a beneficial force, providing impetus for initiative and imaginative approaches to problems. If, however the level of challenge becomes excessive, it can lead to rushed, irrational decision making and the constant use of reactive rather than proactive coping procedures which are far from beneficial. What Kyriacou does not consider here, however, is how the level of challenge and the point where it may become excessive varies according to the degree of control that individuals feel they have over the situation within which they are participating – the greater

the feeling of control, the less stressful the situation. This, again, may be related to the headteacher's tendency to comply with, or resist, the initiatives and any realignment which they could cause in the school's pedagogical direction.

The third approach is that mentioned at the end of Chapter 2, where stress refers to the mismatch between the demands made on a person and the person's ability to meet those demands. An important feature of this approach is that the stress may be considered a result of the person's perception of that mismatch rather than any objective assessment of it.

These approaches are not mutually exclusive and have some merit for a consideration of stress despite their individualistic viewpoint, indeed to consider stress from a number of angles, looking at its various facets will tend to provide a more complete and informative picture of its causes and effects. If, for example, we initially consider teacher stress using the engineering model, then we are looking at the interplay of stress upon the subjects and its resultant strain in their lives. This interplay is a function of interaction between the institution (including the individuals within it) the institution's wider context and the individual; therefore we must consider all these factors. This applies equally if we consider the mismatch approach; the demands emanate from the institution, the exosystemic contexts within which the institution functions and the perception of the mismatch by the individual between these contextual demands and their socioculturally derived attitudes, self-awareness and sensitivity. In each of these there is an allusion to the tension which arises between the individual's perception of the situation as it should be and the situation as it is. Once again, the individual's perception of 'the situation as it should be' arises from that headteacher's professional history and therefore her professional identity. This tension, Norwich and Kelly (2004) consider, relates to positive and negative personal evaluations of difference, the

positive aspects of receiving individually appropriate help and the negative aspects of experiencing stigma and devaluation. This is another facet of the tension experienced by all teachers, including headteachers, in a rapidly changing contextual sphere where feelings of inadequacy and professional devaluation combine to cause, or exacerbate, the stress they feel. However, whereas teachers have the possibility (which is not always realised) of appropriate help from the headteacher and colleagues, the headteacher has a much smaller spectrum from which to draw this help. As aspects of headteacher stress are considered, this study will, therefore, be drawing upon the approaches which allow the best analysis and so give the greatest benefit. It will also be considering the various aspects of these tensions between desired outcomes and contextual pressures which lead to what Norwich and Kelly call 'difference dilemmas' that have adversely stressful effects.

It is worth mentioning again, however, that while these definitions are useful, they are limited in their scope, since they are individualistic and approach stress from a simplistic, interactionist point of view. Carlyle and Woods (2002, introduction – p.xi) point out that,

> while stress is acknowledged as a multi-dimensional and multi-levelled problem involving micro (personal), meso (organisational) and macro (structural) factors, much research on stress has treated these three elements as discrete entities rather than inter-related phenomena. […] This encouraged the adoption of a discourse of individual responsibility.

It is important, therefore, that when stress is being considered, the whole system within which the individual is working is taken into account so that all aspects may be considered rather than simply the individual and perhaps her immediate environmental context.

Ostell and Oakland (1995, p6), having defined psychological stress as, a state arising when a person considers that a situation is a problem having significant costs for them as an individual and so reacts in a way which taxes or even exceeds their individual coping resources, go on to say that this,

emphasises that people are not disturbed by situations per se but by the ways in which they think about and react to situations.

In addition to this they consider that,

no situations or events are universally stressful; rather, it is the way in which the individual appraises and reacts to a situation which results in a state of psychological stress.

They seem to be saying that the relationship between the individual and the situation depends entirely upon the individual's appraisal of that situation and their ability to cope with its problems. This, of course, is synonymous with the third, mismatch, theory outlined above although Ostell and Oakland refer to it as transactional, since it involves a relationship or transaction between the individual and the environment. They infer that the quality of this relationship is dependent upon the individual's perception of that environment and the ways that it affects them. Further evidence, however, suggests that the quality of the relationship between a person and a situation depends upon *both* the perception of the individual and the nature of the situation. Indeed, later (page 144) Ostell and Oakland conclude that, "the differences in outcome most probably reflected differences in the nature of the problem concerned," and the nature of the problem lies with the system within which the headteachers are working – in the school – and through the school to the constraints placed upon schools by society. Headteachers may act to try and reduce this perception of difference using alternative strategies. Some may comply with the initiatives, trying to alter their own professional actions and thus reduce the difference. This, of course may compromise their professional identities, and thus their educational philosophies and, in so doing, increase stress, depending upon how strongly those philosophies have been internalised by them. Others may resist the initiatives, and so may be trying not to adopt practices which exacerbate their perception of a difference. Once again, this may increase stress since it may then reveal other differences, between the wishes of the headteacher and those of the other stakeholders. It is also evident that the greater the number of people who find the situation

stressful, the more likely it is that the situation is outside the bounds of the generally accepted norms for that group. So, if a very large number of headteachers would find coping with an extremely large, but diminishing budget at a time of school roll contraction stressful, then it is likely that this particular situation, combined with the lack of training and support when dealing with it, is the cause of stress rather than their perception of it as a threat to their well-being. As Fineman (1995, p.120) comments;

> Though the personal experience of stress is decidedly individualistic, it is expressed through the cultural and political milieu of the organisation. By this I mean firstly the differences in power, status and control that socially structure an organisation, elements of which emanate from the society of which that organisation is a part.

This suggests that while each individual headteacher feels the stress and reacts to it in her own way it is the interplay of the individual, the organisation and broader society which acts to define the parameters that cause the environment in which that stress can flourish and where its consequences are played out. This interplay is, perhaps more accurately expressed as the tension between the individual's desired outcomes and those permitted by the context within which she is working. Again, Brown et al (2002, p2) state that the environment in which people work can have a direct effect on their stress levels. These statements, though they relate to the individual and that individual's immediate environment, do direct us to a consideration of the tension caused by a specific mismatch. This mismatch is between the direction individuals wish to take and the direction in which they are channelled by the constraints imposed by their context, and those wider contexts to which it is subject.

This leads us on to further questions: does the 'fault' lie with the individual, the institution, a combination of the two or constraints put upon both from their relationship with the wider context? Can it possibly be simply the response of one to the other or is there a greater complexity that needs to be considered? We may also be required to answer the question, how does the possibility of stigmatisation from being known as a person who

'suffers from stress' increase the burden and thereby exacerbate the problem? If different terms, perhaps 'job satisfaction and dissatisfaction' or 'problems of recruitment and retention' are used, will this reduce the stigma of personal failure?

Outcomes and stress reduction strategies.

The DfEE figures for teacher absence in England and Wales was 2.5 million in 1999, forty four percent being absences of twenty days or more (Troman and Woods, 2001). These figures also direct the reader's attention to a ninety percent rise in mental health insurance claims since 1994. One estimate of the cost of stress to the Education service in 1998 was 230 million pounds. This worrying set of figures suggests a profession that is suffering from a high degree of stress and burnout, a conclusion which, Troman and Woods go on to explain, is supported by life insurance company actuaries who claim that teachers are a high risk for sickness insurance claims as they are prone to stress related illnesses and the burnout rate is high. This is supported by Brown et al (2002, p.33) who report that retirements and drop-outs through ill health increased from 1617 in 1979 to 4123 in 1990 rising steadily in the early 1980s and rapidly after 1988.

The physical consequences of psychological stress are well documented in medical journals and documents recording research on stress in various professions. The main reference for this area of this study is Ostell and Oakland (1995), the main details of which are summarised below.

The immune system. In stressful (fight or flight) situations the brain is activated and causes the pituitary gland to stimulate the secretion of adrenaline and similar glucocorticoid hormones into the blood. Prolonged or repeated stress in an individual can cause the presence of an excess of these hormones in the blood much of the time. This, in turn, can impair the effectiveness of the immune system since it reduces the power of the body's

inflammatory response and thus causes the body to produce fewer antibodies. This means that people suffering from repeated or continual stress are more likely to contract illnesses and that they are likely to be more severe and longer lasting when present.

Ulcers. Research evidence suggests that psychological stress can lead to severe disorders of the digestive system. When we digest food corrosive enzymes and hydrochloric acid are secreted into the stomach, the lining of which is coated with a resistant layer. These digestive juices are also secreted when an individual is stressed for a protracted period and when they are present in an empty stomach they can eventually overcome the stomach's natural protection and begin to digest the lining of the stomach itself or the duodenum. When this happens a hole is burnt into the lining of that organ, and this hole is what we call an ulcer. The body's natural repair mechanisms can deal with a small ulcer, providing there is a reduction in the stomach's digestive juice content. With excesses caused by further stress, however, this cannot occur and the ulcer is enlarged. Further activity at the site of this ulcer can eventually lead to the going completely through the stomach wall (perforation) which allows the digestive juices to leak out and act upon other organs with possibly disastrous consequences.

Hypertension Stress arousals produce temporary increases in an individual's blood pressure. This is a defensive mechanism, which allows higher oxygen permeation of the heart and other muscles in times of danger. However, if stress is intense and prolonged, this temporary increase in the blood pressure is maintained for longer and longer periods of time after the stressful situation has passed, eventually becoming permanent. Constant high blood pressure is very dangerous, causing damage to the heart and kidneys and being a prime contributor to strokes and hardening of the arteries.

Stress reduction strategies

Stress reduction strategies can be of two types: reducing the psychological reaction to stressful situations or using adaptive strategies. The first of these may take the form of assistance with the problems as they arise by giving counselling and/or advice. It may also involve chemically induced reduction of the reaction to situations through the taking of some appropriate medication. These, however, are mostly reactive controls, usually occurring after the individual has suffered some negative emotional effects due to stress being present. In terms of the engineering model, not only is the stress already present but the strain has been suffered as a result of it; what we are doing is using these strategies to remove the strain of future situations whilst the stress remains, thus giving the individual an increased chance of coping with the problems. Resistance or compliance with initiatives is one way in which the headteachers may try to reduce the stress *before* the strain arises, but this may be subject to the additional, high adrenaline, problems mentioned above.

Adaptive strategies effectively remove the situations by either altering the situations themselves or removing the individual from them in some way. Those chosen by teachers, as defined by Troman and Woods (2001, p.81) fall into three categories: *retreatism; downshifting;* and *self-actualising.*

Retreatism, they say, involves, "submitting to the imposed changes in professional ideology leading to stress and anxiety. This can be alleviated in a number of ways, including leaving the job." Many headteachers resorted to retreatism at, or shortly after, the onset of the National Curriculum, with its associated increase in workload and loss of autonomy, by taking early retirement and thus removing themselves from the situation that was causing them stress. Others have resorted to retreatism following prolonged absence suffering with depressive illness; older individuals have retired early and younger ones taken less stressful

(but potentially less rewarding) employment. Troman and Woods (ibid., p.83) quote the case of 'Julie' who "redefined her role outside teaching" and worked in an office. While she no longer suffered from the stresses and strains of teaching she found the alternative was at the other end of the scale, "having virtually no responsibility and doing only what you are told."

Retreatism is a growing form of stress relief, a poll carried out jointly in 2003 by the General Teaching Council, Mori and The Guardian newspaper suggested that thirty five percent of teachers were considering leaving the profession within the next five years and that of this number, "more than one in seventeen – equivalent to 28 500 teachers nationally – intended to quit the classroom for another job outside education. That is almost as many as began teacher training courses last autumn." (BBC News website, 7th January 2003.)

Downshifting involves reducing one's workload, responsibilities and/or status, and therefore effectively curtailing one's career. It can take the form of *planned demotion, role-reduction* or *role-redefinition.*

Planned demotion is, as implied, seeking a position which is of lower status than the one being left. A headteacher undergoing planned demotion may seek employment as a deputy head or a class teacher. A former headteacher with whom the researcher is acquainted (who did not take part in the interviews) has recently undergone planned demotion, leaving his job and first becoming a supply teacher while looking for and then obtaining permanent employment as a class teacher in a small private school. Troman and Woods tell us that this, "used to be an extremely rare phenomenon prior to the recent reforms" (ibid., p.84) but it is now becoming a more familiar way for senior staff in schools to reduce their workload and regain some of the more positive and enjoyable factors of teaching (which Nias (1989, p.86) refers to as 'satisfiers') that were among the reasons they initially joined the teaching profession. Once again we see the results of the tension between the individual's perception

73

of the situation as they feel it should be and the situation as it is, and the strategies which are used to reduce this tension and therefore the stress which accompanies it.

Role-reduction occurs when a teacher relinquishes a post of responsibility and the payments which accompany it. This usually occurs with individuals in middle-management positions within a school but with headteachers can mean the delegation of one or more roles within their remit (perhaps subject co-ordination in a smaller school or employment of a bursar to remove the stress of budgetary problems) or even movement to the same role but in a smaller school with a lower salary. One example of role reduction quoted by a number of the headteachers in this study was of another headteacher who stayed at the same school and appointed a job-share partner, so that they led the school together and shared the teaching of a class through the week.

Role redefinition is the situation which occurs when an individual leaves a full time, permanent post and takes a short term contract, a part time contract, a job-share or permanent supply work.

Self-actualising occurs when a person finds new opportunities for self-development. This can be done by two main methods, *re-routing* and *relocating*.

Re-routing can allow individuals to retain some of their links with their previous profession while moving in a different direction and relieving some of their stress. Examples of this could be moving into writing children's books or working as an adviser for a children's society. More recently however, a new route has opened for self-actualising involving becoming a Local Education Authority National Curriculum adviser in Literacy, Numeracy or ICT. These advisers visit schools, advise staff and occasionally give demonstration lessons without the constant pressure of planning, marking and assessing to which classroom teachers are subject. Goodson (2003, p.67) gives the example of a teacher

who was training as an occupational therapist and would soon start her own business [re-routing to another caring profession] who, when she started to tell him about this move, 'was sitting on the edge of her seat full of excitement and purpose whereas before she had been sitting lethargically recounting the way her job was being bureaucratized and deprofessionalized'.

Relocating, as the name suggests, involves remaining in the same post but moving to another site and 'starting again' with a different team of colleagues in a different location. This strategy is usually used when the stress arises when an individual has relationship problems within one school and feels that changing to a new environment and 'making a fresh start' can overcome these.

Some possible causes of stress in headteachers.

The reasons for the high, stress-induced, attrition rate amongst teachers, not just in England and Wales – but on an international scale (Troman and Woods, 2001), are varied. There are, however, a number of common factors which must be taken into account since they are accepted stressors across all professions, and particularly the 'caring professions.' One of these factors is the reduction in public and governmental trust following sustained attacks by state agencies and the media (who evidently regard the caring professions as 'soft targets') for political expediency and in order to encourage public support for the imposition of target-led restructuring of those areas. Grace and Lawn (1991, p.3) comment that, "within a remarkably short time, the decade of the 1980s, the professional gains made by teachers over a long historical period were either weakened or eliminated by the action of the central state in education." This state intervention has led to a general feeling amongst teachers that there has been a substantial diminution of their status and that they have exchanged their

professional autonomy for governmental 'guidance', over recent years. This shifting of the locus of control from the classroom to external sources has led to many feeling stressed and adopting the coping strategies outlined above.

These coping strategies, are inevitably taking teachers from schools and thus reducing the pool from which heads can choose staff to replace them. When combined with government schemes to reduce the diminution of the teaching workforce, they are producing extra stress for headteachers who are trying to obtain, and keep, the best possible staff for their needs. Some of these schemes such as threshold payments – linked to performance management – which may be regarded as a salary-led retention scheme, are multifaceted stress initiators. The large increase of paperwork involved in delivering such schemes, and the possibility that claims of partiality may be made against headteachers, are stressors which have already been mentioned in Chapter 2. In addition, headteachers who are in a falling roll situation can, when this is combined with the second threshold assessments (which are entirely internally validated) find that they are obliged to pay a number of staff over a thousand pounds extra annually while making others redundant. While this is officially the responsibility of the governors, the headteacher is the person who is the natural target for criticism and complaint. Furthermore there are some teachers (including heads) for whom retreatism, via retirement, is the obvious course of action but who cannot now take this option as the new pension rules which give actuarially reduced pensions and lump-sum payments on retirement would mean up to a twenty five percent reduction in their future income. This can lead to experienced but disillusioned staff who wish to retire yet nevertheless cannot afford to do so and therefore 'mark time' while serving the rest of their years teaching, causing further stress for the headteacher who needs to have all teaching up to the government-required standard – as Carlyle and Woods comment in their introduction,

the Government altered pension rules in 1997, making it more difficult for teachers to retire early, adding to the decline in morale and prompting fears of an ageing, sick profession. Premature and ill health retirements showed a significant drop. Carlyle and Woods (2002, p.ix)

In addition to these factors, the headteacher training and qualification scheme leading to the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) and Leadership Programme for Serving Heads (LPSH) qualifications may well have caused stress for headteachers. While these qualifications are attached to outwardly excellent schemes that will eventually improve headteacher skills and standardise the quality of heads and their ability to cope with many situations, they have caused extra pressure from two directions. First, the DFES insistence that all applicants for headteacher posts from 2004 must not be considered without holding one of these qualifications caused many heads to feel they had no alternative but to attend training sessions and submit to the accompanying evaluation, which has led to another extra burden for them in an already stressful time. Initially the date was 2002 but it was put back to 2004 when it was realised that there would be a huge deficiency of headteachers unless the cut-off date was delayed a number of years. Deputy heads have also felt the same compulsion to obtain the qualification and have been subject to extra stress themselves, while their attendance at regular training and assessment sessions has, once again, increased the burden on headteachers. The second direction from which pressure has arisen is the possibility that there will soon be a two-tier headteacher culture, those who are 'approved' heads with the relevant qualifications and second class heads who have not attained the necessary standard for one reason or another. Such veiled possibilities, whether they are true or merely fanciful imagination are strong stressors for headteachers who are already feeling overtaxed and undervalued.

Further stress has been introduced with the "crass implementation" (Barber, 1999, TES website) of the Education Reform Act and the continual deluge of documentation and

paperwork that has arrived on the desks of teachers and headteachers since that time (Hargreaves, 1994; Carlyle and Woods, 2002). This may be likened (in terms of stress) to gently and carefully burying the headteachers in a large amount of soft sand. Initially they have the strength and energy to dig themselves out, overcoming any obstacles, but as they reach the surface another load is added so that they are beneath the pile once more; further digging brings them back to the surface – just in time to be buried beneath another deluge – before too long even those who are stronger, fitter individuals are weary of the game. This is how many worn-down headteachers feel and is another reason for disagreement with Ostell and Oakland's argument that the basis of stress lies with the perception of the individual that the outcomes of a situation are beyond their abilities and with other individualistic approaches to the consideration of stress.

The stigma accompanying stress.

To many people being known as a person who suffers, or has suffered from stress brings its own pressures and appears to be conveying to others an aura of weakness and inability to cope with everyday situations (Carlyle and Woods, 2002, p.116). This, they feel, might both affect the way in which their colleagues, governors and parents view their ability to manage and reduce their chances of promotion or even moving to a similar post in a different school. 'David' – a teacher with four years' experience is reported as saying, "I think it would help to talk to somebody about my stress, but I think then I would be labelled as incompetent. There is so much stigma attached to admitting that you are stressed. It's an admission that you can't cope. If I said this and lost my job, where would I get another one?" (Brown et al 2002, p10) While this may well be far from the truth, the stigma which some individuals attach to their condition causes further tension. This not only deepens their despair but can lead to them trying to hide the situation until it has reached a position where the treatment

required is far more extensive and the recovery time considerably prolonged. Watts and Cooper (1992, p49) say that, "individuals will continue to hide the truth from themselves and their employers, going off sick and employing poor and potentially fatal coping strategies." Troman and Woods cite the example of a teacher who "had not taken time off work even though she was stressed. This was because she did not want a 'stain' to be on her records and affect future appointments" (Troman and Woods 2001, p.89). When the teacher does then return to work (in those cases where this does actually occur) a higher stress level can be suffered since the opinions of others do matter and there is a genuine fear about both what others think and whether the same situation will occur after a short time back at work.

This 'struggling on in silence' response is a natural and frequently observed reaction but it has a negative effect and conflicts with a number of the top ten direct coping actions as described by Kyriacou (2000, p.63) which are shown in the table below. The italics in the table have been added to show the coping actions that are incompatible with the stigma-induced action described above. A number of others, such as keeping your feelings under control, may also be incompatible under certain circumstances but only those that conflicted directly with an individual keeping their stress-induced problems hidden have been italicised.

The top ten coping actions
▪ Try to keep problems in perspective ▪ Avoid confrontations ▪ Try to relax after work ▪ *Take [positive] action to deal with problems* ▪ Keep your feelings under control ▪ Devote more time to particular tasks ▪ *Discuss problems and share your feelings with others* ▪ Have a healthy home life ▪ Plan ahead and prioritise ▪ *Recognise your own limitations*
Figure 3.2: Coping actions (Kyriacou, 2000, p63)

This common reaction suggests that the term 'stress' does, itself, cause stress due to the negative connotation associated with it. Thus, it may well be synonymous with, or at least relate to, feelings of failure rather than simply an inability to cope with an ever-increasing pressure from certain situations. In addition, there are two other possibilities. The first possibility is that the individual has either caused the situation(s) or, at least, made them worse by their action or inaction. The second is that it is not just the particular situations that are beyond the control of the individual, but the entire job (such as headship) so that they should not have been appointed to that position in the first place.

This stigmatisation caused by the individual's view of suffering from stress, their feelings of inadequacy and the way they feel that others will view the results of the strain they are experiencing, does indeed suggest that the word 'stress' itself is a problematic concept with which some people are extremely unhappy. If this is the case, which certainly seems a strong possibility, then it would be a positive step to introduce another term which, by diverting the apparent 'blame' to the stressor, not the stressed. This would not cause the individual these difficulties to the same degree and thus might encourage the application of Kyriacou's coping actions, helping the individual to manage the situation more successfully.

Two such terms which seem immediately available (although others may serve as well for this purpose) are 'job satisfaction and dissatisfaction' (Nias, 1989 pp.110-111) and 'teacher supply/recruitment, retention and morale' (Grace and Lawn, 1991, p.3). In order to decide whether either of these are acceptable alternative terms it is first necessary to examine whether they have sufficiently similar meaning to be used as an alternative or whether they have meanings and connotations which are too dissimilar to those associated with stress for their use to be acceptable. That is, does either of them relate to stress in a way which means

that measurement of them is able to be used to determine the general levels of stress in any particular working population or individual. If either of them is sufficiently similar for its use to be acceptable it is then necessary to establish whether they would help to bring about a reduction in the negative effects, mentioned above, now caused by the word stress,.

They may, of course, not relate to individuals in the ways that the term stress does but may still be indicators of a greater, more widespread malaise which is affecting society as a whole. This general malaise is due to general pressure on the working population from the requirements to be ever more productive and to meet more clearly defined, externally set targets. This pressure would then be the cause of deeper, more widespread exhaustion; more frequent job/direction changes; a wish to retire earlier or being content to consider retreatism, downshifting or self-actualisation. If this is the case, however, it will be necessary to reconsider the consequences of stress on individuals and examine whether there are other terms which could be more accurately used to reduce the negative effects of this terminology.

Headteacher supply (recruitment) and retention are naturally linked to stress (Hayes, 2001; Dunham, 1992; Goodson, 1990; Hackett, 2002) and so could be used as a general measure of the amount of stress suffered by the profession since it seems that high stress inevitably leads to a high dropout rate through retreatism, downshifting and self-actualising. The 'actuarial reduction of pension' strategies employed to discourage early retirement, however, caused a temporary shift away from these stress relief strategies. This seems, however, to have been short-term, since the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) report that, in 2007, only 4% of teachers are actively considering moving into headship since the rewards are not seen as adequate compensation for the lifestyle. It does, however, demonstrate that short-term differences in retirement rates may be obtained by changing

factors other than the degree of stress, even if the overall trend of retirements and resignations is not significantly altered. Short-term changes such as the one caused by actuarial reduction of pensions could disrupt the ability to use this as an accurate measurement of the stress upon, and therefore the strain suffered by, headteachers. Furthermore, even if they could be considered a reasonable measure of stress in the profession and although recruitment and retention problems may refer well to the profession itself it would be very difficult for individuals to regard themselves as suffering from recruitment and retention problems rather than stress. It would be difficult, therefore, to use the term 'recruitment and retention problems' as an alternative to try and reduce the fears and stigma associated with the word stress. This term, therefore, while it has its place and is one which gives good information, is not particularly appropriate in this situation.

The use of the terms 'job satisfaction' and 'lack of job satisfaction' or 'dissatisfaction' could be considered, in order to determine whether they are more suitable for reducing the stigma which may be associated with the term 'suffering from stress' and thus be regarded as a viable alternative. Nias (1989, p.83) reports that many of her interviewees (primary school teachers) had consciously looked for a job with a reputation of having job satisfaction that was said to be high, even if monetary recompense was low. If we consider that lack of job satisfaction may occur when there is a mismatch between the individual's perceptions of the job should entail and the realities of that job at that particular time then this definition is aligned with the 'mismatch' theory of stress and the two may be considered interchangeable. There is, however, a more comprehensive list of satisfiers and dissatisfiers as reported in Nias (1989) and taken from Herzberg's (1966) work on motivation.

Nias (1989 pp 99-101) makes what she calls, "a few tentative generalisations" regarding those satisfiers, which may be considered to apply about equally to teachers in both early and

mid career situations. These relate to "the affective rewards of being with children – giving and receiving affection, talking and laughing together, sharing common interests [and] enjoying shared activities." They are also associated with helping children learn, extending one's skills and qualities and being involved in a range of activities. These are considered later but prior to their consideration there is one satisfier that increases in importance (from eight percent to fifty four percent of respondents noting its ability to give satisfaction) over the first few decades of teaching. This satisfier is the feeling of individuals that they are autonomous, or in control of their professional life. Nias considers that the emphasis on this area reflects the teachers' growth in self-confidence, itself due to their increasing identification with the teaching role and a successful search for pedagogic and curricular confidence in addition to their awareness of their increasing personal and professional influence over colleagues. These aspects, from which more experienced teachers derive satisfaction (autonomy, pedagogic and curricular confidence and professional influence) are also those which were strong satisfiers for headteachers in the period prior to the Education Reform Act. These have now been eroded due to reduction of autonomy linked to increase in accountability; sapping of confidence caused by the predominant audit culture introduced and perpetuated by successive governments; and having professional influence reduced or even removed by the regular imposition of curricular, pedagogic and managerial dictate since the ERA. Although classroom teachers have also been affected by the reduction of the influence of these satisfiers, they do still have, for the majority of their work, the autonomy provided by the classroom situation and the curricular confidence given by regular manifestations of short and medium term increase in pupil knowledge and understanding. In addition, classroom teachers have the whole range of satisfiers mentioned above which are the affective rewards presented by regularly working directly with the children, which for the

headteacher are either not present or (in the case of the headteacher of a small primary school with a teaching commitment) serve to increase the pressures caused by already having too little time to cope with the ever increasing burden of paperwork from which they suffer.

The terms 'satisfiers' and 'dissatisfiers' as used by Nias (1989, p.86) are taken from an empirical study of engineers and accountants by Herzberg (1966) which related job satisfaction to factors intrinsic to the nature of the work such as achievement, advancement and responsibility – designated satisfiers – and dissatisfaction to contextual factors, for example, policy, administration, relationships, working conditions and salary – called dissatisfiers. An important point made by Herzberg is that the removal of a dissatisfier, while it may make the job more rewarding (and thus may be regarded as a 'hygiene factor') does not constitute a satisfier and the addition of a satisfier does not affect the level of dissatisfaction since the two have different phylogeny and, therefore, each is independent of changes in the other. While contextual factors are seen by Herzberg as dissatisfiers, however, and therefore not linked to satisfiers, governmental initiatives which result in a reduction of autonomy (a satisfier) through manipulation of certain contextual aspects of professional practice may be seen as linking the satisfiers and dissatisfiers in a general reduction of fulfilment and associated increase in stress.

Nias (1989, p.104) mentions the close empirical relationship between dissatisfaction and stress, pointing out that the two conditions are logically distinct but that stress is a 'phenomenon which often renders the work unpalatable'. Later (pp 110-111) Nias indicates that stress is 'second only to institutional factors' as a source of dissatisfaction and points to stress (as has been mentioned earlier) being both emotional and physical in origin with fatigue - described as being, "drained, exhausted or shattered at the end of every day," - being a major factor. She does not, though, draw any conclusions about the relationship

84

between lack of satisfiers and stress. Both satisfiers and dissatisfiers, however, may adversely affect stress levels, since removal of satisfiers and addition of dissatisfiers both may be regarded as making the job less satisfying and more burdensome for the individual. Additionally (p.132) she makes the point that Herzberg's separation of satisfiers and dissatisfiers, while serving useful purposes, "does not do justice to the complexity of the environment in which teachers work or to the impact of this on their daily experience." She indicates that, as a result, there are relationships between the two which cause a complex interaction of the intrinsic factors with the contextual which are peculiar to education. This interaction between factors gives rise to specific stressors for individuals who work within the teaching profession. Again it can be seen that the tensions which exist between the individual's vision of her role as headteacher and the constraints of the context in which they arise will have a significant effect on that individual and can form the basis of deep-seated stressors. These stressors are exacerbated when the community and rules are at odds with the vision of the individual regarding both the outcomes and the routes taken to achieve those outcomes. .

Nias (p.105) also points out that one source of dissatisfaction for teachers is conditions within schools which they may consider responsible for their lack of pedagogical success. "Most of these," she notes, "they laid at the door of their headteachers because they consider it to be the latter's responsibility to create a context which would enable them to give of their best in the classrooms." In an environment where the headteachers' responsibility for pedagogical practice has diminished and their accountability has greatly increased, the tension between their inability to substantially affect pedagogical practice and their increasing accountability for its results combined with the teachers' indication of their culpability in this matter can only be an added source of stress for them.

Conclusion.

It is apparent that stress has both psychological, or emotional, and physical effects, some of which can lead to catastrophic consequences and that it may be based on a psychological (tension between the requirements of the job and the person's view of that job and/or ability to carry them out) or a physical (fatigue or illness) problem, but more likely a combination of the two. One of the points which will be considered in this study is the development of these two difficulties in the headteachers and the possible relationships between these stress-related problems and the tendency for individuals to comply with, or offer resistance to, the constant changes in education.

The problems associated with using the term "suffering from stress" have been outlined and some possible alternatives – 'recruitment (supply) and retention problems', and 'job satisfaction and dissatisfaction' – have been considered. Recruitment and retention seems to be able to give a possible source of measurement for analysis of the breadth of stress related problems in the profession but would not be 'personal' enough to be used widely as an alternative term in order to reduce the stigma of being known as an individual who is 'suffering from stress.' The term 'job satisfaction and dissatisfaction', however, seems to offer a viable alternative to 'suffering from stress' for the individual. A more in-depth consideration of this alternative, therefore, has been carried out and from previous studies the precision of this term and its ability to define the problems seems to be sufficient for it to act as an alternative, though further investigation into satisfiers and dissatisfiers for teachers would provide a more accurate picture of its viability and acceptability.

Furthermore, as individuals work within a context their actions are, to a greater or lesser extent, constrained, ordered and defined by that context. They are, therefore, changed by the context within which they are working and a change that is too rapid, or too great, is a potential source of great dissatisfaction and thus a considerable stressor. An individual

working within any context which has some flexibility, however, can, through their actions, change that context so that the outcomes desired by them and directed by the context are on more parallel courses. It can be seen, however that contexts which are more rigid will be more resistant to change and therefore in these contexts further tensions will arise between the directions the individuals wish to take and the directions in which those contexts are channelling them.

Throughout the discussion stress has frequently been considered to be the result of unresolved tensions between the individual's vision of the task, including their perception of their role in carrying that task to its conclusion in order to achieve suitable outcomes, and the progress they achieve towards achieving those outcomes, which is constrained by the context within which they are working. In order to investigate the 'satisfiers and dissatisfiers' the subjects encounter and the stresses these place upon them it is evident that these tensions and possible steps (such as adopting compliant or resistant strategies) which headteachers may take to alleviate them must be given appropriate consideration in the formulation of aims, objectives, research questions and the research design, which follow in Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Considerations

The previous chapters have outlined the case for the suggestion that, since the introduction of the 1988 Education Reform Act teachers, and particularly headteachers, have been under pressure to conform to the expectations of policy makers. This pressure will also have differed from area to area and school to school, according to a number of variables. These include the support which each headteacher feels that she has from other stakeholders in the system, how the management structure of the school supports her by allowing a suitable division of labour across the tasks to be performed, the tools available to them and whether each headteacher considered the changes accompanying the strategies to be educationally sound.

The professional identities of the headteachers will have been developed through the interactions they have had with the school communities in the systems within which they have worked. As Goodson (1992, p. 116) suggests:

> Life experience and background are obviously key ingredients of the people that we are, of our sense of self. To the degree that we invest our 'self' in our teaching, experience and background therefore shape our practice.

Each headteacher will normally have worked in different systems and therefore had different experiences and developed a distinct professional identity. It is appropriate, therefore, to consider each headteacher as an individual and look at her professional history individually, and thus it is also appropriate to use narrative accounts of their professional histories as a way of collecting and considering this information.

These headteachers do, however, work in highly social contexts, where the actions of each person within the system will affect other members of that system, including those who are more remote from the schools, such as the DfES. The analysis of the data gained from gathering narrative accounts from the headteachers will need to take this social aspect into

account. An appropriate tool for this analysis is the activity triangle, which stems from activity theory, but in this case will be used as a stand-alone heuristic device, separate from the theory upon which it is founded. A short commentary on activity theory is, nevertheless, included to give the reader some understanding of the basis upon which the activity triangle is founded.

Narrative accounts of headteachers' life histories

When discussing the field of educational leadership as a research area, Gunter and Ribbins (2003) suggest that it is suitable to divide knowledge production into six knowledge provinces. Although these are discussed later in this chapter and revisited in Chapter 8, it is worth drawing attention here to the point that, using their definitions, the major portion of this study resides in the humanistic province where narrative is an appropriate methodology.

Denzin effectively encapsulates the social and contextual aspect of narrative, and how understandings and practices are passed on within a particular context when he says:

> The stories that members of groups pass on to one another are reflective of understandings and practices that are at work in the larger system of cultural understandings that are acted upon by group members. (Denzin 1999, p.99)

It is the researcher's contention that rapid and fundamental contextual changes cause undue stress to the members of that cultural system, yet research into stress within education largely seems to concentrate upon the individual. These individualistic notions of stress in psychological research tend to be restrictive and therefore lead to 'within person' research, effectively minimising, or sometimes even disregarding the contextual aspects which, in schools, are so important. Teachers (including headteachers) work within an environment where the social, emotional and psychological characteristics of their work are extremely important and play a valuable part in the everyday completion of their duties.

The interaction between individuals and the contexts within which they find themselves is extremely complex. As previously noted, the extent to which this interaction causes stress is, at least partially, dependent upon whether they can - through interaction with their immediate context - alter the conditions of their local environment, essentially working on the context they are working within to effect a change on that context. A consequence of any alteration of the conditions within which individuals are acting is that there is a change in the job satisfaction they feel due to an alteration in the balance between satisfiers and dissatisfiers (Nias 1989) and therefore a related change in the subject's stress level.

This immediate context is, of course, within a wider context of its own (e.g. the school working within the policies imposed by the LEA, which is itself working within any restrictions applied by the DfES). That is not to say that these policies and restrictions are essentially inappropriate or unnecessary but it should be noted that they impose a framework, or can lead to a rigidity within the context, which may, in turn, lead to a tendency to resist the imposition of change. Hoyle and Wallace (2005, p.viii) suggest that "most headteachers and teachers have […] mediated government policies to render them congruent with the needs of individual students in individual contexts". This pragmatic approach to the implementation of government policies by those at the 'chalk-face' of education can have the effect of constraining and contextualising those policies so that their effects are directed in ways which are considered appropriate by the implementers. An analogy from chemistry which may help describe this resistance is Le Chatelier's principle, which says that a system in equilibrium which has an external constraint put upon it, in order to impose a change on that equilibrium, will react in opposition to that constraint in order to maintain the original equilibrium. The tendency to strive to maintain the status quo may be

seen as analogous to the operation of Le Chatelier's principle, though to equate the two would be reductionist.

Changes will only be effective if the force for change is either powerful enough to overcome any opposition, or is sufficiently advantageous (continuing with the chemical analogy) to have an autocatalytic effect - so that a small change produces its own positive effects which encourage uptake of the ideas and principles which led to that change and therefore increase both the rate and the extent of that change. These two constraints, or forces for change, tend to have different points of origin; the extremely powerful force emanates from an influential source and therefore tends to be external, whereas the autocatalytic change normally stems from an intimate knowledge of the conditions within a context and thus usually originates from within that context. The majority of the educational policies introduced by the various governments since 1988 have been of the first, 'powerful source' type since their effect has been "through tightly specifying the work of headteachers and teachers and this has been coupled with equally tight surveillance and punitive measures for failure to meet this specification" (Hoyle and Wallace, 2005, p.vii).

In order to study the interaction of individuals and their contexts the narratives provided by eight headteachers will be used. These will be verified using data from interviews with the four contact inspectors with special responsibility for the schools which are led by those eight headteachers. These narratives will need to look at contextual change over a number of years and more specifically how the contexts have been changed by external pressures (i.e. governmental initiatives) and the impact this has had upon their professional lives. The use of narratives will allow a highly focused investigation of particular individuals and their interrelationship with the ever-evolving context of their working environment to be carried out while at the same time affording the opportunity for detailed comparison of the stories of

individuals, thus permitting similarities to be examined. Connelly and Clandinin (1999, p.132) tell us that narrative and story telling, "are terms representing ideas about the nature of human experience and about how experience may be studied and represented." Furthermore they suggest that these research techniques tread the middle course between the extremes of objectivists and experimentalists and that, "properly done […] they directly represent human experience; and […] give accounts that are educationally meaningful for participants and readers." Once again, there is an emphasis upon the individual and that person's experience but with appropriate guidance and analysis the stories of individuals can reflect their interaction with changing contexts and draw out the causes of stress and how developing individual–context relationships can reduce or exacerbate that stress over time. Connelly and Clandinin (ibid), quoting Carr (1986) point out, however, that, "Narrative enquiry may also be sociologically concerned with groups and the formation of community," (p. 133) and suggest that while, in education, personal rather than social narrative enquiries have been more prevalent, there is an expectation that social narrative will be increasingly emphasised in [educational] research. They do not, though, give a time frame, nor a methodological route via which they think this might happen. This prediction of greater emphasis on social narrative was written shortly before the introduction of the Education Reform Act. In the years since this was written, the progress towards greater emphasis on social narrative enquiry has been slower than they suggested, so there is little written detail which this research may utilise. However, as Connelly and Clandinin point out later in the same text (p.134) "The educational importance of this line of work is that it brings theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on the educational experience as lived" and it is the relationship between the nature of human life and the educational experience (in context) which is being investigated. Cohen, Manion and

Morrison (2000) further reinforce this point, directing it more closely to the area that is being studied; they say:

> Recent accounts of the perspectives and interpretations of people in a variety of educational settings are both significant and pertinent, for they provide valuable insights into the ways in which educational personnel come to terms with the constraints and conditions in which they work. Life histories, Goodson argues, have the potential to make a far-reaching contribution to the problem of understanding the links between "personal troubles" and "public issues," a task that is at the heart of every sociological enterprise. (p. 165)

Since the task is to relate the personal troubles of individuals, specifically those which may be attributed to the stresses that are inherent within the British educational system, to the public issues surrounding the changes within that system, it would appear that this is an appropriate approach to take. It is appropriate, therefore, to use a technique that involves social narrative, as described above (narrative concerned with groups and the formation of community). More specifically it is appropriate to use narratives relating to the interactions of the individual headteachers with their working environments, and to consider how those interactions have varied as the working conditions have changed in the recent past. The term *recent past* may vary somewhat from person to person but will relate to the period between the mid-1980s and December 2005, which has, as was shown in Chapter 2, seen fundamental change of the educational context within which children are being taught and in which teachers, including headteachers, are working.

Connelly and Clandinin (1999, pp. 135-137) suggest that there are a variety of ways in which narrative enquiry may be approached, including, amongst others, oral history, stories, research interviews, journals, autobiographical and biographical writing, letters, conversations and document analysis. Since a small number of individual headteachers will be participating in this study and will be documenting their histories for the period when they have been working within institutions which have been subject to these changes,

interviews will be the most productive, yet easily used, method. This method also, however, gives opportunity to 'slip into' a conversational technique which Connelly and Clandinin (ibid) tell us, "may end up probing more deeply than aggressive questioning techniques," and which may also be more suitable when dealing with those participants who are still wary of speaking freely about their difficulty coping with the stresses of their job in a formal interview situation.

Analytical principles

In order to analyse the influences upon headteachers it is appropriate to employ a heuristic which allows an analysis of the individual *within* the system (the school, as an organisation) in which they are working. This, in the case of headteachers, will be partly of their own making and partly structured by other participants in that system and, at a more fundamental level, will have been formed by the philosophies, activities and rules of those who have worked in that system throughout its history. One such heuristic is the activity triangle, proposed by Engeström, arising from his work which develops and continues that of Leont'ev, Luria and others on activity theory. This, heuristically useful, activity triangle allows us to place an emphasis upon mediation in the systems within which the headteachers have worked and also attend to specific features, such as rules, stakeholders and division of labour in work on the objects of those systems. Thus, the biographical data may be obtained from interviews with headteachers, regarding their professional histories between the time of the Education Reform Act (1988) and the time of the interviews (2005).

Locating the Study

Gunter and Ribbins (2003, p.262) suggest that there are six 'knowledge provinces' within which studies may fall, allowing them to be 'mapped' and then related to other studies of

educational leadership, where this is required. Their suggested knowledge provinces, and

the knowledge claims underpinning them are:

Conceptual: Concerned with issues of ontology and epistemology, and with conceptual classification.

Descriptive: Seeks to provide a factual report, often in some detail, of one or more aspects of, or factors, relating to leaders, leading or leadership.

Humanistic: Seeks to gather and theorise from the experiences and biographies of those who are leaders and managers and those who are managed and led.

Critical: Concerned to reveal and emancipate practitioners from injustice and oppression of established power structures.

Evaluative: Concerned to measure the impact of leadership and its effectiveness of micro, meso and macro levels of interaction.

Instrumental: Seeks to provide leaders and others with effective strategies and tactics to deliver organisational and system level goals.

Mapping this study to these knowledge provinces, it may be seen that it has mainly drawn

upon the knowledge claims relating to the humanistic and descriptive areas, since it

gathers data from the experiences and biographies of the headteachers and seeks to

provide a detailed factual report on factors relating to those headteachers and their

leadership. It also seeks to utilise these data to draw out features of the similarities and

differences that may lead to theoretical underpinning of the observations. However,

while the study draws heavily upon the knowledge claims relating to these two areas, it

also relates, to some extent, to the critical knowledge province since it concerns the

contested nature of the contexts within which these headteachers were working and is

concerned, through enhancing their own knowledge of their tensions, to help emancipate

them from the results of those tensions. This small-scale mapping suggests that this study

has a generally broad-based, eclectic nature and that it seeks to understand the

experiences of the headteachers and use this understanding to help them. The humanistic

element of this study lends itself well to data collection via narrative enquiry. The use of

the activity triangle, however, should be more able to provide the appropriate detail for

the fulfilment of the descriptive aspect when considering the interactions between headteachers and their contexts. When the data have been obtained, therefore, the activity triangle will provide a template within which they may be placed in order to structure an appropriately focused analytical framework.

Activity theory – a brief explanation
Activity theory has been an integral part of cultural-historical psychology for several decades – Leont'ev (1978) developed a distinction between 'activity' and 'action' which were underdeveloped by Vygotsky (Daniels, 2001, p.86) and Cole was introduced to it when studying with Luria in 1979, though he initially interpreted it as roughly equivalent to American neobehaviourism of the 1960s (Cole, 1997, p.105). Despite this period of familiarity, there is still some discussion amongst researchers about its actual nature. Kuutti (1996, p.25) for instance says that, "Both parts of the term *activity theory,* referring to the Soviet-originated cultural-historical research tradition, are slightly misleading, because the tradition is neither interested in activities in general nor is it a theory, that is, a fixed body of accurately defined statements."

Nardi, in the same volume, however, while agreeing with Kuutti's point about theory (p.7) goes on to say (p.8) "Activity theory offers a set of perspectives on human activity and a set of concepts for describing that activity," thus confirming that she considers that there is a definite interest in activities. Engeström and Mietinen (1999, p.1) demonstrate that they consider activity theory to actually be a theory when they introduce it with the words "activity theory is a commonly accepted name for a line of theorising and research initiated by the founders of the cultural-historical school of Russian psychology." The point upon which they all agree, however, is that the historical foundations of activity theory lie within the Soviet cultural-historical tradition and particularly with Vygotsky, Leont'ev and Luria.

In a further description of activity theory, Nardi (1996, pp. 10-13) explains that it proposes a strong notion of mediation by mediators such as tools and sign systems in human experience and that these mediators are not merely channels through which experience is carried but are ties which connect us organically and intimately to the world of our experiences. Thus it "embeds our consciousness in a wider activity system and describes a dynamic by which changes in consciousness are directly related to the material and social conditions current in a person's situation" (p.11).

This focus on the subject within the wider social context is another common feature in a number of explanatory texts on this topic (Cole, 1997; Daniels, 2001; Engeström, 1999; Kuutti, 1996 and Nardi, 1996). The social context is considered to be the unit of investigation and the individual is considered as a part of that context, shaped by it and acting within it. This, it appears, portrays the individual as a particularly passive part of the system in Engeström's version of activity theory and may be considered a weakness where the study of the individual is concerned. This is reinforced by Kuutti (1996 p.26), who explains that even if individual actions are our main interest the object of our research is always essentially collective since the context is included in the unit of analysis. Daniels (2001 pp.83-84) further emphasises the collective emphasis of activity theory when he points out that the emphasis of activity theorists is "on the psychological impacts of organised activity and the social conditions and systems which are produced in and through such activity". In this study the combination of biographical narrative and the activity triangle draws upon and emphasises the strengths of each approach by considering the individual as a vital, active constituent of the system with an important role in systemic change, as an individual and, more often, as part of an organised group.

Each social activity has a focus towards which it is directed, called its object. It is the object, and the participants' view of that object, which defines the activity and which may be transformed by it into an outcome. Kuutti (1996) expresses it thus:

> An activity is a form of doing directed at an object, and activities can be distinguished from each other according to their objects. Transforming the object into the outcome motivates the existence of an activity. An object can be a material thing, but it can be less tangible (such as a plan) or totally intangible (such as a common idea) as long as it can be shared for manipulation and transformation by the participants of the activity. (p. 27)

Leont'ev distinguishes between activity and action, which, on the one hand, may be collective or individual and which has as its focus a goal, and, on the other hand, an operation (which may be regarded as a subset of an action) the focus of which is a change in conditions in order to accomplish an action.

Engeström and Miettinen (1999, p.8) tell us that, "Activity theory should not be regarded as a narrowly psychological theory but as a broad approach that takes a new perspective on and develops novel conceptual tools for tackling many of the theoretical and methodological questions that cut across the social sciences today." In the social sciences, there is, therefore, a diverse array of possible causative, and thus explanatory, factors that have complex interactions between them. The analysis of these factors requires a tool that makes available a 'theoretical account of the constitutive elements of the system under investigation' (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999, p.9). The concept of the *object-oriented, collective,* and *culturally mediated human activity* in the activity system makes activity theory a serious candidate for use in such analysis. They go on to say that: "The behavioural and social sciences have cherished a division of labour that separates the study of socio-economic structures from the study of individual behaviour [… so …] more than ever before, there is a need for an approach that can dialectically link the individual and the social structure." (p.9) There is, however, some way to go if activity theory is to be cast in the role

of the integrating approach, since Engeström points out elsewhere (Engeström 1999 p.4) that "the first principle is that a collective, artefact-mediated and object-oriented activity system, seen in its network relations to other activity systems, is taken as the prime unit of analysis" and that "the second principle is the multi-voicedness of activity systems", thus effectively isolating the individual once more. This point is reinforced by González Rey (1999, p. 259) who points out that sociocultural psychologists have overemphasised semiotic mediation as a subject of psychological research, and thus have come to a new universal principle of psychological organisation that led many of their followers to reject the individual in the name of social. Whilst González Rey is talking about sociocultural psychologists in general, rather than concentrating upon activity theorists, the principle that they particularly concentrate on systemic, collective change, thereby underplaying the individual, is still appropriate. So, while biographical research tends to concentrate upon the individual, to the detriment, at times, of the context within which that individual is acting, activity theory tends to place an emphasis on the context, external to the individual, which leads to an object-based activity definition, downplaying its subjective constitution and its complex individual social characteristics.

With this in mind the activity triangle will be used as an analytical technique, since the social contexts in which the headteachers have worked will be studied and the effects of those systems on the formation of their identities considered. Combined with this approach the professional trajectories of the headteachers from a life-history standpoint will be considered, adding the individual aspect that may be missing if the activity triangle alone is used. Thus, the combination gives a multi-dimensional approach which neither underplays the contextual influence upon the individual, nor considers the individual to be merely a part

of the context that may only be considered as a minor factor that may only be regarded to be functioning as part of that context.

Primary schools as systems

In any activity system, while a number of influences in the system are guiding the action and identity of each participant, the influences from the action and identity of that participant are, with those of other participants, helping to develop the nature of that system – "it is not only the subject, but the environment, that is modified through mediated activity" (Daniels 2001, p.91) - as mentioned above. However, in the DfES-led primary curriculum there is a tendency towards a far higher degree of individual change and very little possibility of adapting the system to match individual educational philosophies. Activity theory, however, allows one to consider how the individual is positioned within the system, and how that system acts upon the individual. It is rather weaker, though, in relation to a consideration of the power of the individual's identity within that system, since the focus of activity theory is upon the system rather than the individual. It is, therefore, very useful when considering the relative positions of headteachers in their changing systems during the past twenty years, or so, since the introduction of the ERA, but may need to be enhanced by the use of a theory which concentrates more on the individual when collecting evidence from the headteachers. This leads to the suggestion that the use of life histories, which focus upon the individual, alongside the activity triangle, which focuses on the contextual system, will give the opportunity to relate the individual to the systems within which they have worked. Another consideration is that the techniques stem from differing paradigms, one of which focuses on the individual and the other on the context. Many users of narrative enquiry tend to use methods for analysing free-flowing texts, then take up 'methods that reduce the texts to codes' such as grounded theory, schema analysis and content analysis and are thus

embracing a systematic post-positivist approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.637). Conversely, users of the activity triangle tend to use a more positivist approach, fitting the data to the existing framework provided by the nodes of the triangle. The parallel use of these is not a common feature of studies such as this one and it is a point of interest for the researcher to discover, and report upon, the advantages and difficulties of combining the two.

When individuals participate in the various contexts that form their personal, social and professional life, the interactions within those contexts participate in the individual's identity formation. The construction of the individual's identity within each of those contexts depends upon the many, diverse social interactions occurring within and between each of those contexts. Gonzalez Rey (1999) suggests that personality has a social genesis and that it develops simultaneously in social and historical individual space. Personality is thus intertwined with a subject's current interactions throughout human development. As there are a number of contexts in which people participate, they may be expected to develop multiple, interchangeable identities relating to both their phylogeny and current position within each of those contexts.

These inner, contextually-wrought identities which headteachers have developed are due to the experiences in the whole gamut of their existence. These include a professional identity built upon their experiences of school as pupils, students and inexperienced teachers, and interactions with other professionals in a learning situation, as mentors and leaders, and in a managerial role. These professional identities serve as the basis upon which their current attitudes and actions are founded. As Cole (1997, pp109-110) puts it, "we live from birth to death in a world of persons and things which is in large measure what it is because of what has been done and transmitted from previous human activities." He

thus points out that the world and society, which influence our identities, have been influenced by those who passed through the world before us. These identities and the attitudes and actions based upon them will, at points, be in harmony with current contextual constraints while at other points there will be a particularly discordant relationship in which the tensions between the two are particularly strong. Furthermore, if there is a change in a context, then the individual's relationship with that context also changes, as do the points at which agreement and contradiction may occur between that individual and that specific context. Daniels (2001) says that even within one setting different people may need to achieve a balance between different priorities while different sociocultural contexts evoke different balances in priority. Where these changes are unhurried and subtle there is time for that individual to work with others, using shared experiences and appropriate initiatives to assimilate those contextual changes or, in a system which has sufficient flexibility, adapt the changing context to match more closely with their ideals and perceptions of what their job should entail. Thus they may, in one way or the other, adjust the balance between priorities to allow a 'comfortable fit' with their social-historical identities. Rapid and extensive change, however, neither permits time for individuals to keep abreast of the varying context nor allows the opportunity for appropriate assimilation or adaptation, and thus the likelihood of tensions arising is much greater.

With reference to the flexibility or rigidity of the primary school systems within which the headteachers are working, and how these have changed in the period being investigated, it is appropriate to bear in mind that each school system will have its own individual, historical framework within which its participants work, and that this will determine the rigidity or flexibility of that institution with regard to adaptation to change. Headteachers generally, however, whether their school's intrinsic flexibility is high or low, find that they

have restricted possibilities for adapting their school systems if changes 'arrive as officially endorsed orthodoxies backed by hierarchic power' (Alexander, 1995a, p.41). One point proposed by a number of writers (Kyriacou, 2000; Ostell and Oakland, 1995; Carlyle and Woods, 2002), and discussed in Chapter 3, is that individuals' views of the contextual situations in which they find themselves is particularly relevant to the tensions which exist, and therefore the degree of stress which follows. It is worth reiterating, however, that, as Fineman (1995) points out, although the personal experience of stress is individualistic, it is expressed through the cultural and political milieu of the context within which each individual is involved and thus relates not only to the perception of that context but also to the relationship between the context and the individual. This relationship, therefore, cannot rely solely upon the individual's opinion but must be directly involved with experiences within that context, and consequently upon the individual *and* the system. The rigidity of this system, and therefore the ability (or inability) of the individual to work spontaneously within its parameters, must therefore have a direct bearing upon the stress level of the individual within that system.

Primary schools as activity systems
Vygotsky (1986) suggested that the use of different tools, or psychological instruments, to mediate different forms of activity is evidence of different ways of thinking. This idea is sometimes presented as the first-generation activity triangle, where, simply, the subject is acting within a context to achieve an object using the appropriate tools, as shown in Figure 4.1 (Daniels, 2001, p.86). Here, the term 'objective' is used to suggest the motive, or reason, for the activity. This is distinct from the term *object* in the other triangles which, as expanded below, refers to the underlying constraint driving the activity and, at times, being transformed by that activity.

Figure 4.1 First generation activity triangle (after Vygotsky/Leont'ev)

Mediational Means (Tools)
(machines, writing, speaking, gesture, architecture, music, etc.)

Subject(s)
(individual, dyad, group)

Object/Motive ⟶ Outcome(s)
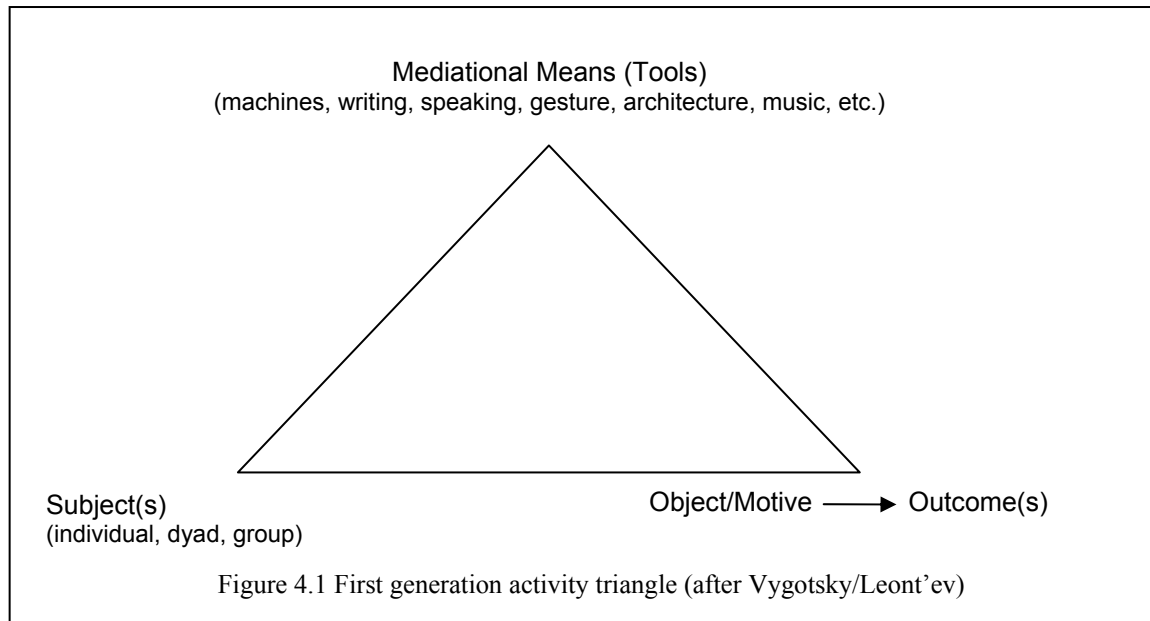
Daniels (2001, p.86) calls this the 'first generation activity theory model', but whether this triangle represents the Vygotskian synthesis of activity theory, or whether Vygotsky's work was actually pre-activity theory, is still a matter for discussion. Whereas Daniels (ibid) considers this to be a "representation of a Vygotskian view of an activity system", Edwards and Fox (2005) describe how, when Vygotsky died in 1934, his work regarding this analysis of how activity may lead psychological development was incomplete and his focus was on mediation and tool use. They, therefore, would call this the Vygotskian mediational triangle. They go on to say that Leont'ev (one of Vygotsky's former colleagues) developed the focus of attention towards the differentiation of action from activity, and how the object of an activity system may be interpreted and acted upon. Thus they stress that Vygotsky did not really work with the idea of an activity system, which was introduced after his death. An important outcome from this work of Leont'ev is summarised in his suggestion that:

> The main thing which distinguishes one activity from another, however, is the difference of their objects. It is exactly the object of an activity that gives it a determined direction. According to the terminology I have proposed, the object of the activity is its true motive. (Leont'ev, 1978, p.62)

He further reinforces the idea of the object of an activity being its true motive when he distinguishes between the activity and the actions which it consists of, and says:

> To understand why separate actions are meaningful one needs to understand the motive behind the whole activity. Activity is guided by motive. (Leont'ev, 1978, p.63)

An example of this distinction which he gives is that of a beater at a primeval collective hunt whose actions are directed at driving the game to the hunters but whose activity, as part of the group, is driven by the object of feeding and clothing himself and his family. This suggestion, therefore, is that it is the object which reveals the activity, or, alternatively phrased, the object of the activity is not simply the intended outcome, but that which directs the activity through its interpretation and development. It is the function of the participants to focus their actions upon the object and of the researcher to identify that object, which is a function of the system, to explore it, and to gain a better understanding of it.

Activity, therefore, may be considered to be the actions of the subjects within a system which are directed at the realisation or transformation of an object, which in turn may be aimed at, or cause, specific outcomes. In the transformation of the object, the subjects, acting in the system, may use appropriate tools, which may be physical, social or semiotic. They may also work together in various ways and to various extents according to the hierarchical and managerial structure prevailing in the system at that point, and be assisted or constrained in their use of tools to transform the objects by historically significant, implicit or explicit rules. In addition, the availability and modes of transformational tool use may be, to a lesser or greater extent, shaped by the stakeholders; for example, the DfES, as a stakeholder in schools, has had a varying degree of influence in the use of tools such as the curriculum and how it has been used in the transmission of knowledge and the imbuing of a sense of pleasure in learning. The aspects mentioned above were later added to the initial, simple triangle by Engeström to give the more detailed triangle (Figure 4.2).

Fig 4.2 Activity system triangle (Engeström 1999)
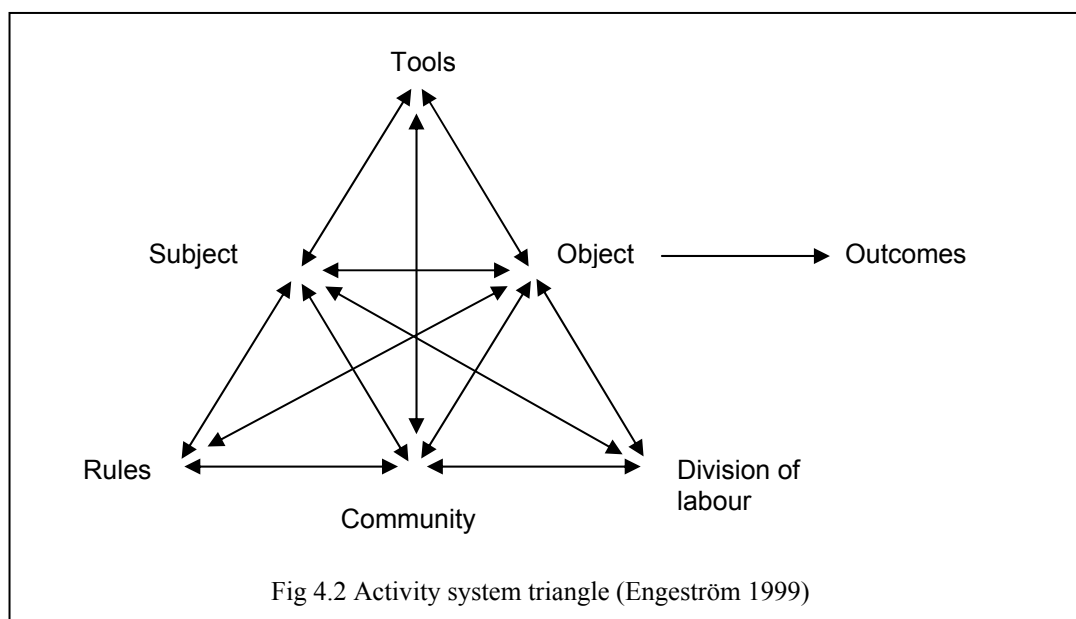
This, more detailed activity triangle is an effective and apposite method of studying the school systems at particular points in the professional life histories of headteachers. It is thus an appropriate method to use in this study for considering their professional trajectories.

The use of the activity triangle as a delimiter, to examine schools at specific points, and as a tool, to investigate the relative importance of the contextual pressures upon them within those schools, raises particular problems which need to be considered. Primary schools as systems may, therefore, be usefully represented, for the purposes of this study, by the activity triangle, which emerges from activity theory and particularly the work of Leont'ev, Luria and Engeström. Activity theory, and the use of the activity triangle as Engeström perceives it (Figure 4.2), is essentially concerned with cultural systems and, particularly, systemic change through the use of developmental work research (DWR). Engeström's use of DWR in his research looks at an activity system and specifically considers the possible causes of tension between the perceptions of that system by the actors within it, the tools they use and the rules within which they act. He then attempts to find resolutions to these tensions and, where this is possible, uses those resolutions to alter the system, or the actors'

views of that system, in order to allow more cohesion and target-oriented progress within the work of that system. *Activity theory*, itself, may be inappropriate for this study, since there is no intention to change the school systems within which the headteachers have worked, so DWR is not being considered. However, as a combination of the school systems and the professional life-histories of the headteachers themselves is under consideration the activity triangle is a useful *framework* for analysis. The activity triangle should act as a useful heuristic technique since it allows the primary school as a *system* to be interpreted in relation to the work of the headteacher as an *individual*. In addition it will be interesting to use the headteachers' life histories in combination with the activity triangle since they stem from different paradigms and thus may complement each other as each reveals aspects which may not be disclosed by using the either life histories or the activity triangle alone.

Over an extended period the objects of the activities in which those headteachers have been involved will have developed and changed, so it is necessary to consider a number of further points regarding the activities in which they have been involved and the objects that have been driving those activities. An example of this is that while government policies are the objects which are worked on in various ways to achieve the outcome of retaining a broad, balanced education within a school, resistance to, or compliance with, these policies may be the tools in other activities. In this case the object could be obtaining funding for specific activities, achieving the appropriate results in attainment tests (and therefore a better position in the published 'league tables' of schools) or perhaps obtaining a better work-life balance for staff in those schools. In addition, resistance or compliance may have been selectively used by headteachers within specific systems in order to attain a given outcome, particularly if there is resistance to that outcome by other stakeholders and the headteacher is sure that the correct course is to work on that particular object in order to achieve the

desired outcome. These points represent contradictions in the relationships between the object, the activity that is directed towards its achievement, and the actions of which the activity is comprised. They indicate complications which the researcher will need to examine and explain in order to understand the context. They also demonstrate the complexity of contexts such as schools and the various activities taking place within them.

The triangle as shown in Figure 4.1 gives little opportunity to fully investigate the relationships between the subjects and the systems in which they are operating since, although it allows the consideration of the object of the activity and the use of tools to further that object, it is not sufficiently detailed to allow the opportunity for consideration of the specific relationships between stakeholders in the school system and the effects of these on the individual. Where greater detail is required - such as the inputs of other stakeholders and the part they play in the activity, the historical and contextual rules under which the activity is taking place, or the parts played in the achievement of a particular object by each of those stakeholders (the division of labour) - then it is more appropriate to use the second generation triangle (as shown in Figure 4.2) which was proposed by Engeström as an extension of the first.

This second-generation triangle stems from Leont'ev's work but adds a further dimension. Through the addition of important aspects of the *community*, it provides a more powerful analytical tool, particularly in situations where changes are being made to systems but also in the analysis of historical information where more detailed data are being considered. For this study, the activity systems depicted by the activity triangle refer to the schools led by the headteachers at specific chronological points. These points define the beginning and end of the period under consideration in the study (times specific to each

headteacher, but close to1988 and 2005) and other points which may relate to times of particular stress for the headteachers during that period.

As the *subjects* (headteachers) participate in the activity to transform the *objects* into *outcomes* they will be using the *tools*, or instruments, appropriate to the task. The various stakeholders in the system (for example, governors, parents, the DfES) will have their own visions for the system which may, or may not, coincide with those of the subject and could cause tensions within the system. As the activity proceeds it will be subject to the historical *rules* of the system which, again, may coincide with the wishes of the subject in the activity. During the process the subject may work independently but is more likely to be working with other professionals who can share some of the tasks. If they are also working towards achieving the same outcomes as the subject, they may relieve some of the pressure and help overcome some of the tensions. This working together, either in concert with others, or in systems with varying degrees of hierarchical structure, and the extent to which the headteacher retains or distributes responsibility for aspects of the work on the object (or is able to do so), is the *division of labour*. Cole, citing Engeström's work relating to these factors which occupy the base of the activity triangle, tells us that:

> Action exists 'as such' only in relation to the components at the bottom of the triangle. The community refers to those who share the same general object; the *rules* refer to explicit norms and conventions that constrain actions within the activity system; the division of labour refers to the division of object-oriented actions among members of the community. (Cole 1997, p.140)

The differences between these variables lead to a corresponding dissimilarity, and therefore tension, regarding headteachers' views of the disparity between the imposed changes and their educational ideals. These views, in turn, will relate to how constrained they felt to implement them, and the support they received in their opposition to, or compliance with, those changes.

Fig 4.3 A general application of the activity triangle to headteachers' responses to policy changes.
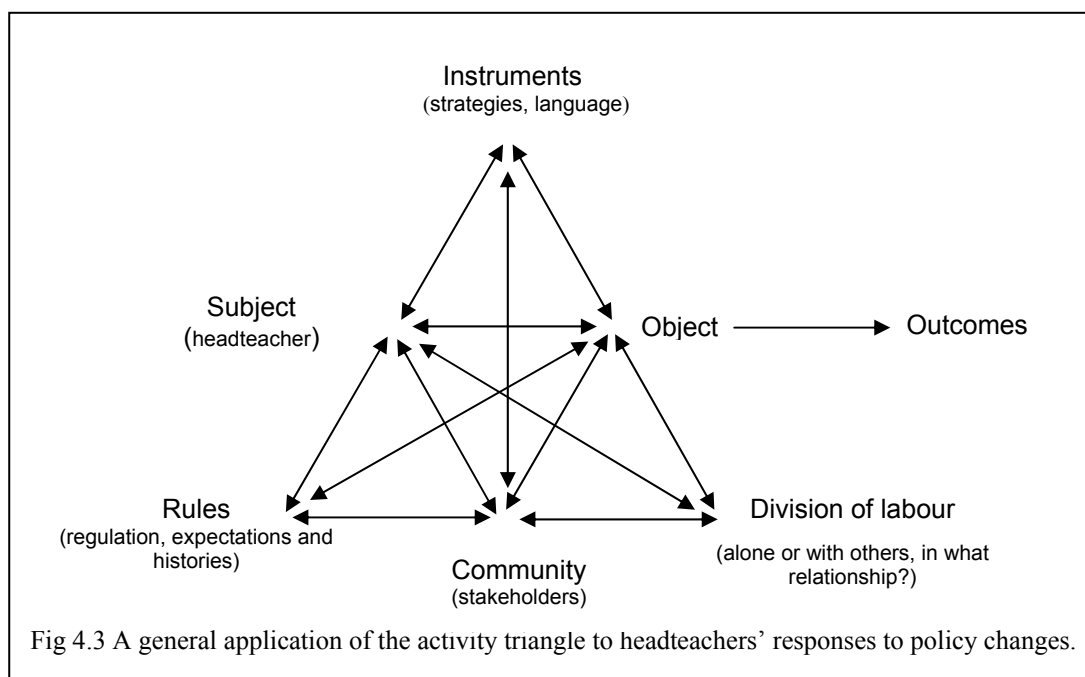
The aim, objectives and research questions which were outlined in Chapter 1, and are given in more detail in Chapter 5, relate to specific situations within individual school systems (each with their own different rules derived from degree of regulation, stakeholder expectations and varying individual and institutional histories) and the ways in which the headteachers are working within them using a variety of instruments. This may be referred to as the *activity* in which the headteachers are involved, with the aim of adhering to a specific *object* or satisfying a particular *motive* in response to those policy demands. Figure 4.3 shows how each of the nodes of the triangle relates to one or more of the general variables, and thus how the activity triangle may be regarded as a suitable method for considering the data which results from studying those elements.

When the general principles are applied to specific activity systems, a number of triangles may result, corresponding to the alternative views of the participants. As an example, if the situation prior to the ERA, as described by Alexander (1995a), is considered then two of the possible results may be as shown in Figures 4.4 and 4.5.

Figure 4.4 portrays the system described by Alexander (1995a) where he suggests that shibboleths are used by teachers in order to perpetuate a child-centred approach in which teacher-directed group work is used to achieve choice, activity and challenge in the classroom. These shibboleths relate to the *rules* at the base of the activity triangle, and, with the stakeholders and working practices, develop a system which supports the child-centred approach. What we see is a carefully planned, highly structured system which is necessary to allow the activities to take place in a safe and constructive atmosphere. In this system each classroom functions as an autonomous unit, yet is still part of the school, in which the philosophy is advocated by the whole staff and governors, under the guidance of the headteacher. This could, where the personal educational philosophy of a particular teacher is not aligned with that of the headteacher, lead to a tension, or contradiction, between the wishes of the headteacher to lead the school and the autonomous nature of that teacher within the classroom. Broken arrows between the appropriate nodes in the triangle are used to depict tensions such as this. These may occur when there is a breakdown in communication, or when actors in the system are working with different objects – for example, with the development of the children's curiosity or the full coverage of the curriculum as the perceived outcomes – causing a possible diversity of goals and thus a system that is not functioning as it should.

Group work with
Teacher guidance

Headteacher

Child-centred
approach leading
to an enthusiasm
for seeking truth
and knowledge.

Highly structured
system 'to allow
freedom for children's
curiosity to develop'.

Freedom, discovery,
flexibility, experiential
learning, spontaneity

Teaching staff,
support staff,
governors.

Individual / autonomous
work in classroom but
based on a whole school
philosophy.

Fig 4.4: A representation of the pre-ERA child-centred school system (Alexander 1995a).

Some commentators (Edwards, 2005; Waterhouse, 1991) have pointed out, however, that these tensions or contradictions may be more likely to occur after the introduction of government initiatives following the ERA than they were before. They suggest that, traditionally, primary schools were considered to be relatively 'flat' organisations (with little hierarchy) operating largely as a team, but since the ERA and Local Management of Schools (LMS) this could have changed, leaving the headteacher more isolated and accountable. This is an important point for this study since it is one of the factors which could have led to increased stress for headteachers over the past twenty years.

In contrast to this, the same pre-ERA school system could also be represented by the activity triangle shown in Figure 4.5, where the child-centred school is seen as failing the pupils by favouring a more thematic, esoteric course, rather than following a utilitarian, pragmatic, standards-based curriculum that encourages the use of knowledge and skills. This more political view was actively espoused by central government and the media (as detailed in Chapter 2) in the run-up to the introduction of the ERA, possibly to encourage

112

the electorate to support reforms to the curriculum, national testing and a more rigorous

inspection regime. In other words, they were introduced as necessities to overcome the

'trendy' tendencies of teachers and educationalists who supported the use of a child-centred,

thematic approach to education.

Fig 4.5 The pre-ERA child-centred school system (extreme right political and media view).
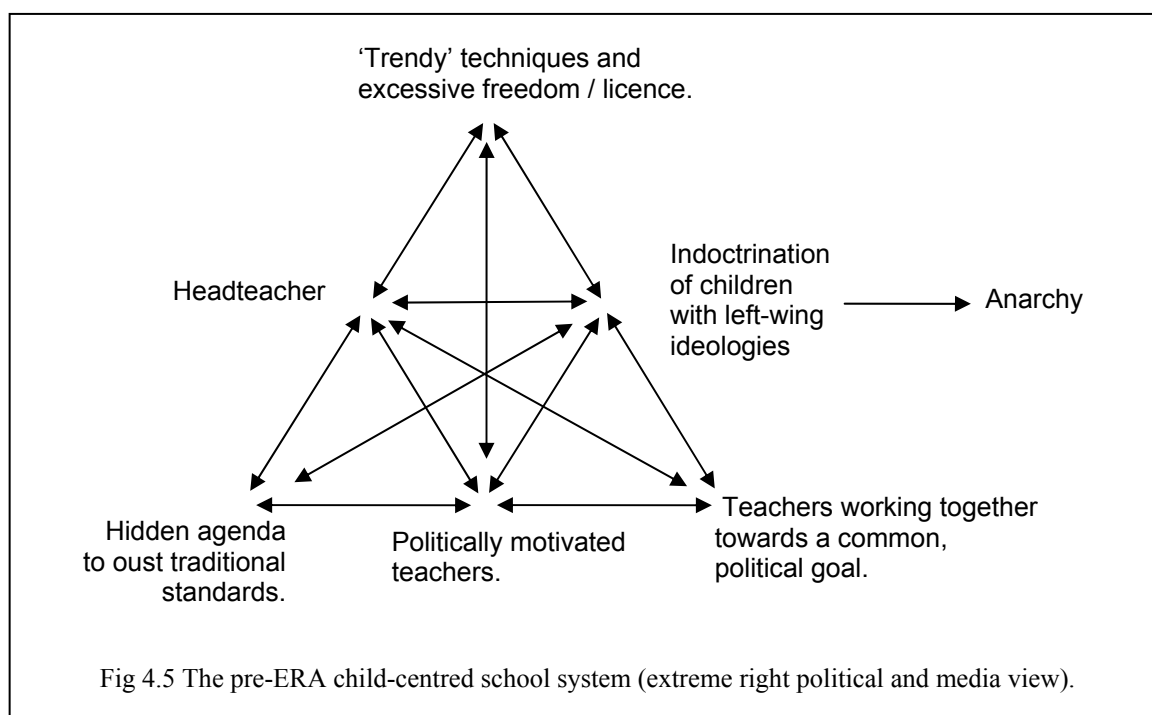
These two apparently opposing interpretations of a pre-ERA school system, however,

have a number of details in common which allow them to be contrasted and appropriate

comparisons to be drawn between them. They both consider the headteacher to be the

subject in the activity. The focus of the *object*, however, changes from children-as-learners

to become more curriculum-centred. The outcomes suggested in these triangles do not relate

to the expressed aims of the participants, but represent the opinions of external observers. In

both school systems, represented by the activity triangles in Figure 4.4 and Figure 4.5, the

subjects are ideologically motivated, though the ideologies suggested by the proponents of

these two views of the same system come from different arenas (educational and political),

have different aims (enthusiasm and indoctrination), and are completely different in their

opinions on the efficacy of the results of the system acting upon the attitudes of the children. Although these representations depict strongly held and important views of the general systems in pre-ERA schools, they are just two of many which could be drawn, as each school has its own headteacher, staff, governors, parents and children with their own opinions, ideologies and objects – its own system – which could be represented by its own model. A similar set of figures could be drawn to represent views of the activity systems after the introduction of the ERA, enabling comparisons to be drawn between different systems and between different views of the same system. This opens up the possibility of depicting, and analysing, the views of changes to school systems held by individual headteachers. These views reflect their responses to the many government initiatives introduced over the past twenty years and their differing feelings and reactions towards those changes.

Conclusion:

As suggested in Chapter 2, there is good evidence that schools and, as a consequence, headteachers have been required to adopt a curriculum-centred style since the end of the 1980s. Initially this was as a response to the ERA – which sought to bring in a Hayekian, open-market style of governance but established a quasi-market system (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993), centralising power with national government. This provoked a number of responses among teaching professionals, some complying willingly with the majority of initiatives, but many mediating the initiatives, to allow the individual pupils and the immediate context to be considered (Hoyle and Wallace, 2005). These measures, how they were received and interpreted by headteachers, and the local support those headteachers had in implementing (or resisting) them precipitated various tensions in the school systems and in the headteachers themselves. Any study which sets out to explain these tensions needs to

consider the individual headteachers, the school systems they have worked within and how those systems have changed over time, particularly with the introduction of government initiatives.

In order to consider the individual it is necessary to make use of a theoretical framework which has the study of the individual as its central tenet. In order to study the responses of the individual over an extended period it is necessary to utilise biographical narrative, which can consider the biographical history of the individual in a chronologically ordered fashion. Narrative enquiry fulfils these criteria, since it "preserves the complexity of human action with its interrelationship of temporal sequence, human motivation, chance happenings and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts" (Polkinghorne, 1995 p.7). Narrative enquiry also represents human experience and gives meaningful accounts of that experience (Connelly and Clandinin, 1992) so it is appropriate that this study makes use of the benefits which it offers. Polkinghorne (1995, p.5) reminds the reader, however, that narrative descriptions "frequently treat the individual as an entity – separate from the context within which they are acting" and therefore it is necessary to ensure, for the purposes of this study, that although the individuals are treated as entities, they are also seen as acting within contexts, part of the school systems in which they are working and subject to the tensions within those systems.

In this respect, it is good to also refer to a theory which is contextually-based and can therefore locate the individuals in the systems within which they have worked during the period under consideration. Activity theory concentrates upon contextual frameworks, but can, according to some theorists, emphasise the system at the expense of the individual (Engeström, 1999; Kuutti, 1996; Daniels, 2001). The activity triangle, drawn from activity theory, preserves the contextual basis of the theory and can represent school systems and

allow comparison of school systems across the period under consideration in this study. It is appropriate, therefore, to use a combination of biographical narrative and the activity triangle which will draw upon the strengths of each and effectively locate the individual within the context. Although this is an unusual combination, and the two frameworks spring from different paradigms, the combination, in this case, is being made so that the strengths of each complement the other and add to the overall effectiveness of the analysis.

Theoretical considerations lead the researcher to use techniques which vary according to the conditions, the information required and the ways in which it will be codified and used. The techniques which may be required will lead, in turn, to the development of an appropriate research design. This design, however, is not initially fixed and may vary as the study develops. Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that research designs will emerge over time and will develop further as the sampling changes. The researcher cannot, however, allow the design to arise, spectre-like from the ether of the other criteria and needs to propose an initial research design which may then evolve and mature into the final design as the other facets act upon it. Chapter 5 relates the proposed research design upon which the study will be built and leads into the analysis.

Chapter 5: Research Design

Rationale

Headteachers have been required to implement many changes in areas allied to curriculum, evaluation, administration and governance since the 1988 Education Reform Act (Slater 1985; Riley 1998). Campbell and Neill (1994) remark that a number of the requirements enshrined within the Education Reform Act were a powerful set of forces for change to the previously existing primary school culture, and thus those requirements must have affected practice. They then go on to consider in detail some of the changes which were made: these include increases in working hours and workloads; a move away from the autonomy and individuality, previously enshrined within the character of teaching, to collegiality and more unified and regulated forms of practice; and a significant increase in paperwork in addition to the already extended workload of members of the teaching profession – a point which is supported by Dunham (1992). Galton (1995, p.97) also points out that the National Curriculum emphasised planning and assessment, which accords with the belief that assessment is able to drive pedagogy in the desired direction. This, he says, has increased the emphasis on planning and assessment in the primary school in recent years and, to some extent, lessened the practical and spontaneous aspects of pedagogical practice.

While all headteachers will have aspirations regarding the performance, well-being and future development of their schools, these aspirations will have been shaped by their own values. Furthermore, when these values do not accord entirely with those driving policy, headteachers may, or may not, offer some resistance to policy expectations. Several questions arise from this observation. At one extreme, how quickly and effectively will some headteachers have embraced many changes as positive steps and moved to implement them in a confident fashion? At the other extreme, how will others, who have found many

of the changes intrusive, have sought to resist their implementation where possible? Between these, which are the two ends of the spectrum, where, in the many intermediate 'shades' of compliance and resistance which will have been possible, are the headteachers who will be the subjects of this study?

This range of possible responses allows headteachers to experience a range of satisfiers and dissatisfiers. Herzberg (1966) describes satisfiers as factors intrinsic to the nature of the work, which relate positively to job satisfaction (e.g. achievement of personal goals) and dissatisfiers as contextual factors which relate directly to dissatisfaction (e.g. oppressive policies or poor relationships). He then points out that while this distinction may not necessarily be systemic, this is usually the case. A range of satisfiers and dissatisfiers will, in turn, allow for the development of a range of tensions and contradictions, which may be experienced by the individual as what Nias (1989) has termed stress. Focusing upon stress will allow particular attention to be paid to contradictions that occur in relation to individual headteachers, the strategies they employ and the purpose of their actions.

Those tensions and contradictions, which may have resulted from the educational changes, may be considered to be associated with satisfiers and dissatisfiers. They have also been described as 'positive and negative evaluations of difference' (Norwich and Kelly, 2004, p.44), 'mismatch [tension] between the demands upon a person and their ability to meet those demands' (Kyriacou, 2000, p.4) and tensions between the individuals' visions of suitable outcomes and their progress towards achieving those outcomes. That progress is constrained by a constantly changing context and the limitations imposed by that constraint are dependent on the rate and extent of the change. The interaction between individuals and the contexts within which they find themselves is extremely complex. The extent to which this interaction causes stress is, at least partially, dependent upon whether they can, through

interaction with their immediate context, alter the conditions of their local environment, essentially working on the context they are working within to effect a change on that context. A consequence of any alteration of the conditions within which individuals are acting is that there is a change in the job satisfaction they feel due to an alteration in the balance between satisfiers and dissatisfiers and therefore a related change in each subject's stress level.

Thus, headteachers will perceive the current, rapidly changing climate in education in terms of how closely these relate to their own desires, which are shaped by their professional identity. The effect this relationship has on their professional satisfaction and therefore their stress levels is a central tenet of this study and relates directly to the aims, objectives and research questions which follow.

Aims

The aims of this study are: first, to reveal the agreement and/ or disagreement between what primary school headteachers want for their schools and communities and what they perceive to be the expectations held by policy makers in the period 1985 to 2005; and second, to consider the impact of any agreement and/or disagreement on their satisfaction with their professional lives.

This period was chosen since the greatest changes have occurred in education policy between these years and there remained a number of headteachers and ex-headteachers with whom these changes and their ramifications could be explored. For each of the headteachers, three key chronological points within this period will be examined. These are:

i)   A point just before the introduction of the ERA. This will be between 1986 and 1988, at the headteachers' discretion. The exact year will depend upon the amount of time which the headteachers have been in the profession and where they were teaching.

ii) At the time of the interviews, or shortly before if there is a specific point at which their particular recollections are relevant to the study.

iii) A period (or periods) of great stress between the two times. This point aims to reveal the relationship between changes in the headteachers' anxiety levels and specific educational initiatives which may have been introduced between point (i) and point (ii).

Some of these points in time are common to the headteachers (e.g. The 1988 Act and the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy in 1998) and some are peculiar to an individual or a group of headteachers (e.g. job changes, periods of illness or family concerns for individuals, and professional details such as schools being part of an Education Action Zone, which apply to certain small groups).

Objectives and Research Questions

The aims, objectives and research questions, stated in Chapter 1, relate to each other and to the research methods in a specific order to give a defined route through the research. These relationships are examined in more detail below.

Aim 1: To reveal the agreement or disagreement between what primary school headteachers want for their schools and communities and what they perceive to be the expectations of them held by policy makers.

Objective 1: To identify the points of agreement and/or disagreement.

These differences and similarities relate to the tensions that may occur between the headteachers' own perceptions of both the direction towards which, and pace at which, the school should be progressing, and to their views of the expectations held by the policy makers. In order to identify these points of agreement and/or disagreement, first it was necessary to examine those expectations, as revealed using the literature on relevant

government policy. Following this, interviews with the headteachers were aimed at revealing how they perceived these expectations, what their wishes for the school were and in which areas the discrepancies and commonalities were located.

It is necessary, therefore, to ask the research question: *How did the headteachers perceive the policy demands*?

This needs to be considered since their attitudes to those demands, and whether they believe that they are beneficial (and/or whether compliance is inevitable), may be expected to determine their reaction to them and the extent to which they will comply with, or resist, those policy demands.

Objective 2:   To discover how individual headteachers resist and/or comply with what they perceive to be the expectations of policy makers.

Having investigated the discrepancies and commonalities between the wishes of headteachers and their perceptions of the wishes of the policy makers, the interviews also set out to determine whether the headteachers complied with those expectations or resisted them. In addition, the interviews elicited ideas about what the nature of the resistance was, and in what ways it was supported (or otherwise) by the other participants in that particular school system.

The question associated with this objective is: *Did the headteachers aim at resistance to, or compliance with, policy change?* What strategies did they use and what trade-offs did they make? Were these successful, and if they were, what was the extent of that success and how was it measured?

Another question related to this aim is: *What did the headteachers do to resist – or comply with – the policy changes?* Were their actions (or was their inaction) a deliberate attempt at resistance or compliance, and what form did those actions (or that inaction) take?

With regard to those actions another question must be: *Who helped them?* Were they acting alone or as part of a group? If they were part of a group, who were the other actors and how were the actions divided amongst them?

Aim 2:   To consider the impact of that [agreement or disagreement between their wishes and the perceived expectations] on their satisfaction with their professional lives.

Objective 3:   To identify the differences between those headteachers who mainly comply and those who mainly resist.

After carrying out a literature search into stress, its probable causes and the medical signs and symptoms which are apparent in people who are suffering from excess stress, the interviews drew out the manifestations of stress in the headteachers. These individual manifestations were then compared with those classic signs and symptoms, as outlined in Chapter 3, in order to try to establish the underlying features of the schools which may have led to them. Whilst this thesis is not medically based, there are a number of features apparent in the health of headteachers (for example, nervous breakdown or hypertension) where strong links may be made to stress. Comparisons could then be made between the differences in these manifestations and features in relation to the headteachers' tendency to resist or comply with government strategies and the features of the systems which supported or opposed that resistance or compliance.

The question related to this objective is: *How did those contradictions and conflicts (or their absence) impact upon the headteachers' own work in taking their schools forward?* Lack of conflict and contradiction as a result of unquestioning compliance with government initiatives may help progress in a school. The direction of this progress, however, might not

necessarily be what the headteacher considers appropriate for the school and may also cause contradictions and thus stress for the headteachers. It is possible that these identity contradictions, conflicts and the tensions and stress to which they can lead may all have a detrimental effect upon school progress and the part that the headteacher can play in that progress. This possibility is endorsed by Hoyle and Wallace (2005, p.156) who suggest that some teachers (and it is presumed that this will include headteachers) who "submit to the imposed changes without any change in their professional ideology" will be left with "deep-seated feelings of resentment, demoralisation and alienation". Woods et. al. (1997) support this point of view, identifying a category of teacher they refer to as *diminished*, a term which they apply to those who feel disillusioned or devalued and who are leaving the system or sinking beneath it.

Objective 4:   To consider what features of the working contexts of headteachers appear to allow their resistance or compliance.

The interviews with headteachers and inspectors gave an insight into the features of the systems within which the headteachers were working. These include the historical rules (both long-established and more recent) within which the schools operated and the extent of the influence of other stakeholders on the headteachers' activities. In addition, the headteachers' choice of mediational tools, or instruments, and whether they worked in a collegiate, team-based fashion or as a lone figurehead, shouldering the burden of responsibility (and accountability), could have affected their ability to resist or comply as they felt necessary. Using the activity triangle as an interview focus and a heuristic tool allowed the features of the working contexts to be compared and thus gave the opportunity to see how particular features related to the ability of headteachers to resist or to comply with government requirements.

It is necessary to ask, therefore: *How did they interpret the expectations of 'local' stakeholders?* This includes parties such as parents, governors, teachers, the local education authority, and other groups, such as the Department for Education and Skills and the Office for Standards in Education, which, though they may not be geographically local, certainly have a contextually local effect. Were those interpretations always made in accordance with the way the stakeholders intended, or were some expectations misinterpreted? It may be seen that each of these questions follows naturally from the one before, and the questions below also follow from those preceding them. Also: *What contradictions and conflicts emerged in the school as a system?* Actions, whether complying with policy demands or resisting them, will elicit responses in other parties and these may lead to conflicts. These could produce positive or negative results, depending whether there is a culture of energetic, constructive argument or whether differences are viewed as less beneficial. Contextual contradictions can arise where there is pressure for policy changes to be implemented and those changes are at odds with the direction that the headteachers consider best for the school, or which direct the headteachers into actions or situations which do not conform to those in accordance with the identities that they, as individuals, have built during their careers.

Objective 5:   To establish the implications for the retention of headteachers who aim at resistance and are met with strong demands for compliance.

During the period in which the interviews took place a number of the headteachers made decisions regarding their professional future and one retired due to ill health brought about by the effects of stress. This provided first-hand information about the implications of stress related illness for the retention of those particular headteachers. In addition, information from the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) and from literature searches

regarding the national picture with relation to the increasing rate of headteacher loss expanded this local snapshot into a national trend (Campbell and Neill, 1994; Grace and Lawn, 1991; Hoyle and Wallace, 2005). The interviews with headteachers also contained questions regarding the adaptive strategies which might be used by the headteachers if they were considering moving from the posts they held at the time. The answers to these questions gave further insight into the tendency of the subjects to move to another headship, another level of teaching, or to leave the profession completely.

The research question relating to this objective is: *What practical steps, if any, have the headteachers taken to reduce these tensions and contradictions?* Troman and Woods (2001) suggest that the adaptive strategies which may be employed by headteachers include retreatism, downshifting and self-actualising. Retreatism includes retirement. Downshifting, as the name suggests, refers to planned demotion or role reduction. Self-actualising may include moving to a different role which nevertheless retains some links with their current role (e.g. advisor or children's author). It can be seen that each of these takes headteachers out of their post and into a different (though possibly related) area; this inevitably has a negative effect on retention of headteachers and reduces the pool of headteachers available to fill posts as they arise. This is linked to the final objective, above, as it relates directly to issues regarding the retention of headteachers through the adaptive strategies they have applied when faced with demands for compliance which conflict with their wish to offer resistance. This in turn is driven by their desire to shape their context according to their priorities and educational philosophy.

The objectives relating to the second aim are focusing upon the headteachers in their dynamic, contextual settings within the schools and the pressures they may feel arise from the expectations within their immediate communities. These communities include pupils,

parents, teaching staff, governing bodies, inspectors and local education authorities, each of whom may have specific ideas about the educational outcomes they require from the school. Each of these is also in a position to apply pressure for change and make strong demands for compliance with the wishes of policy makers. The influence which each of those groups of stakeholders has depends, to some extent, on the history of their influence within individual schools, the rigidity, or otherwise, of the context and the strategies used to organise opinion with which they may be familiar.

Narrative and the activity triangle – a new convergence

The life histories of headteachers over a period covering about the past twenty years have been considered, focusing upon three specific temporal points. Using specified points within the period being studied gives foci for a consideration of each headteacher with regard to the system within which they have operated at those points during the twenty-year period upon which this study is concentrating. These points have been chosen as specific times at which the headteachers will have elected, and/or have been required, to develop strategies that exemplified their compliance with, or resistance to, those initiatives.

The points chosen are:

i)   The implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act, with the introduction of the National Curriculum, standardised testing and Ofsted inspections which accompanied it;

ii)   The introduction of the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies in the mid-to late-1990s with the implementation of Curriculum 2000 which followed them closely;

126

iii)   The introduction of both the National Primary Strategy *(Excellence and Enjoyment)* and the teachers' workload agreement, to be implemented between 2003 and 2005.

The questioning also allowed for the headteachers to discuss and develop other periods if they felt those times were relevant. The questions asked were geared to reveal the activity systems within which they were working at each point in time, and the headteachers were made aware of the features of the activity triangle before the main interview.

These three periods for each of eight headteachers gives an initial data-set containing twenty-four foci, which was supplemented by further data from a particular time of stress or development chosen by the headteachers, each from their own life history, in order to enrich the data. Discussions have also taken place with the appropriate contact inspectors for those schools (three inspectors in total) in order to assist in the verification of data provided by the headteachers. Further verification has also been obtained from a study of the latest Ofsted reports and the Panda (Performance and Assessment) reports of those schools. These gave some perception of the official, inspectors' view of the schools' standing, and of the headteachers' effectiveness and the schools' achievement in national tests. These measures are linked to the extent to which the headteachers tend to structure the school system with teaching the National Curriculum and performing well in the SAT tests as prime objects. In addition to assisting verification, the views of inspectors allowed the opportunity to check whether the headteachers' interpretations of the expectations upon them at these times coincided with the interpretations of their local authority. This cross-referencing gives some insight into the relationship between the views of headteachers and those of at least one other major stakeholder in the system within which they had been working recently.

Each of these headteachers is at the core of a case study, which is built up with evidence from their interviews with them, and with those with local inspectors and, where further evidence is required, the content of the Ofsted reports. These case studies give an insight into the organisations within which those headteachers were situated at the historical points being considered. Thus, each school is a system which may be considered as a case study with the headteacher at its core, and the detail of that case study relates to both the management of the school system by the headteacher at times of change and the interaction between the individual headteacher and the system at those points. Since these points may be considered significant in the headteachers' professional trajectory over the period under consideration it is important to consider them fully. In order to fully consider the systems at those specific points it is appropriate to take into account the stakeholders that form each system's community, the implicit *rules* which apply to each, the *objects* towards which the headteachers were working, and the *tools and strategies* they employed in their attempts to achieve those objects. Identifying specific points allowed the positioning of the beginning and end of each headteacher's trajectory and the examination of significant points within it. It is appropriate, when identifying and investigating these points, to use the activity triangle as a heuristic device to consider the school, the headteacher's position within the context of that school and the relationship between the headteacher and the other members of the school community, since this allows examination of all the appropriate aspects.

While it is apparent that a study of headteachers' life histories and the use of the activity triangle may not immediately be considered an appropriate combination, since, as mentioned in Chapter 4, they come out of two different paradigms, each has strengths which may be enhanced and weaknesses which may be reduced by the use of the other, and each will be used in a different manner.

It is appropriate to use the activity triangle to determine the beginning and end of the part of the headteachers' trajectories under consideration and to examine the systems, and the headteachers' relationships with those systems, at significant points along those trajectories. Since the life histories of the headteachers will be considered with regard to the contexts within which they have found themselves, it will also be appropriate to use model activity triangles to introduce them to the subject of the interviews, which will direct the focus of their replies towards the systems, contexts and relationships in which they have been involved. Life history research leads to the opportunity for rich, detailed description of those systems, contexts and relationships so that a comprehensive examination of the individual's trajectory through time may be made, which the activity triangle alone does not easily allow. Thus, the two techniques will be used in a complementary fashion; the principle is to work with the strengths of each, not to satisfy the purist adherents of either.

Traditional Life History research methods tend to be about building a narrative account of the individual, as explained by Clandinin and Connelly (1998, p.155) who say that narrative researchers describe people's lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience. These narratives are, therefore, very individually focused. Conversely, activity theory research, of which the activity triangle forms a part, tends to consider the individual as a product of the system, or a member of the collective; indeed, Miettenen and Virkkunen (2005, p.443) suggest that, within activity theory, consciousness does not exist inside the head of the individual, but has its roots in the constant interaction between individuals and the world. They also point out, however, that the interactions between individuals and the objects of their activities are mediated by cultural means; that the individual internalises these means during socialisation and by participating in common activities with other individuals and that forms of action are coded within the brains, nervous systems and bodies

129

of individuals. There is, thus, a common thread connecting the individuals, their histories and activities, the identities they have developed and the contexts within which they are working. These very different notions of the individual, and individuals' interactions with their contexts, with appropriate combination, are, therefore, able to introduce further depth into the study. Setting the life history accounts of the individuals within an activity triangle format will reduce the bias towards the individual and thus allow a richer picture of the context, and their movement within that context, than could be gained from life history alone. It will allow an impression to be gained of how the policy context has shaped the immediate working environment, which, in turn, has shaped the ways in which the individuals have reacted to that environment. The Life History research allows us to follow the trajectory of the individual through time, and consider what it is like to be an individual moving through different systems, which would be extremely difficult using the activity triangle alone. It is appropriate at this point to reiterate that the use of the activity triangle as a heuristic device does not imply the use of activity theory as a basis for the study; the triangle has been judged to be an appropriate way of delineating the periods under consideration in the study.

Thus, the activity triangle allows consideration of how the systems are producing tools and revealing objects, allowing communities to work together on those objects and constraining the options for individual action, and life histories allow a thorough consideration of the individuals and their feelings and actions as they trace their trajectories through time.

The combining of Life History research and the activity triangle, in addition to the points above, lends another dimension to the research project. There is some scope for determining, with relation to this research at least, whether such a combination of theories

130

and techniques from such diverse paradigms has a beneficial or detrimental effect upon the analysis of data and the conclusions that may be drawn from the research.

Sample

Another question which required an answer is: *Who is the object of the study?* To answer this question and develop the appropriate criteria, it was necessary to consider the headteachers. Some of them have suffered from the effects of stress and others seem to have been affected less severely (for which the terms 'more-stressed' and 'less-stressed', respectively have been used). In addition, some have willingly complied with the wishes of policy makers and others have felt the need to resist them ('compliers' and 'resisters'). These points have been combined in a simple diagram (Figure. 5.1). Using this it is possible to see the different areas from which headteachers have been drawn.

Resister

More-stressed resister	*Less-stressed resister*

More stressed ———————————————— **Less stressed**

More-stressed complier	*Less-stressed complier*

Complier

Figure 5.1: Quartiles showing the four types of headteacher which are involved in the study.
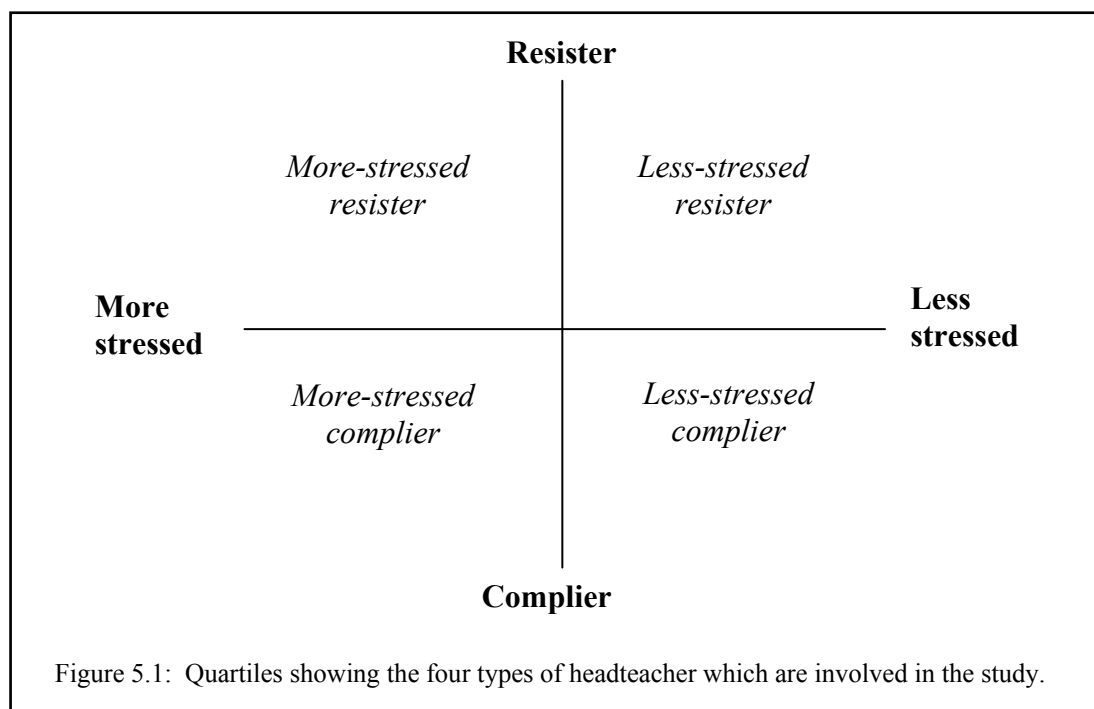
The modes of response to the initiatives (resisters and compliers) mentioned above, are two of the patterns of response, referred to as compliance and non-compliance by Hoyle and Wallace (2005) and by Pollard et al. (1994) as compliance and resistance. They represent

the extremes of a spectrum and are being used as such, so that, if necessary, the intermediate points may be located.

A third point of reference is that there are some headteachers who have been relatively recently appointed and some who have been in post for a longer time ('newer' and 'older'). These occur in each of the four quadrants, giving a total of eight possible headteacher types:

- older, more-stressed resisters (OSR)
- newer, more-stressed resisters (NSR)
- older, less-stressed resisters (OLR)
- newer, less-stressed resisters (NLR)
- older, more-stressed compliers (OSC)
- newer, more-stressed compliers (NSC)
- older, less-stressed compliers (OLC)
- newer, less-stressed compliers (NLC)

Discussions with a senior inspector who had a broad knowledge of the headteachers in the county (see below) led to the conclusion that some of these types are relatively common and others much less common. The intention, however, was to make the sample (of eight headteachers) as representative of each of these types as possible. To preserve the anonymity of the headteachers, they have been referred to by these three-letter codes throughout the interviews and their analysis. This was subsequently changed to names in order to help represent personalities, yet still allow anonymity.

With respect to the selection of these headteachers, initially the local Senior Inspector for primary schools was consulted. He was a long-serving inspector who had a wide-ranging knowledge of the current and recently-retired headteachers in Mercia and was willing to assist with this task. Having been made aware of the categories of headteacher required (Figure 5.1) he was able to provide an initial list containing several headteachers for each

132

category from which the final contact list was taken, with regard to the factors in figure 5.2. When negative responses (and in some cases no response) were received from headteachers on the contact list, the initial list was used to provide further contacts. Requests were then written to these additional headteachers, in an ever-diminishing cycle, until a suitable sample was obtained. At no time was the inspector aware of which headteachers had been contacted or which had confirmed their willingness to participate. Although the senior inspector was involved, there was no compulsion for any headteacher to take part and every effort was made to ensure that no members of the group felt that they were being required, rather than requested, to participate. This group are, therefore, a sample selected by their willingness to volunteer, but from an initial group, the composition of which was selected to give a fair cross-section of the experience and educational outlook required for this research. To some extent, therefore, this was a convenience sample, since it comprised headteachers who are, or have been, working within the local county and are thus easy to contact and who are mostly previously known to the researcher. This is an important factor as it means that they are more likely to be open and frank about their feelings and how they have varied at three specified points selected from within the period under consideration. The possibility that previous knowledge of the subjects may lead to corruption of data through presumption needed to be borne in mind, but prior consideration of this possibility should allow the researcher to guard against this source of error and thus keep it to a minimum or completely overcome it.

As a colleague, known by the headteachers, the researcher is more able to be sympathetic with the stresses and problems which they may have suffered. Since the headteachers are aware of this fact, they are more likely to be relaxed in the interviews and therefore there is less likelihood of any increase in their stress due to discussing difficult times. In addition,

they are more likely to discuss these matters in more depth with a familiar interviewer in a more relaxed atmosphere. Thus, knowledge of the subjects' professional life histories is also an advantage as more emotional understanding, where it is necessary, is available from a colleague than from a researcher who has no prior knowledge of the subjects. This is important in an area where some informants, who have suffered severe stress-induced difficulties, discuss those points that may have caused them much discomfort. An important proviso when working with colleagues, however, is that the researcher must guard against familiarity, which may influence the questioning and responses in the interviews. In order to ensure that this possibility was minimised, the interviews, while taking place in the form of discussions, were conducted as formally as possible and any digressions which may have taken place were considered only if they had a direct relationship to the context of the study.

School / Head	Small		Medium		Large			Heads	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural			
Female	0 (0%)	23 (66%)	5 (56%)	8 (42%)	5 (28%)	0 (0%)		Female	41 (49%)
Male	1 (100%)	12 (34%)	4 (44%)	11 (58%)	13 (72%)	1 (100%)		Male	42 (51%)

School	Small		Medium		Large		Heads	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Male	Female
Pupils	91 (1%)	2522 (19%)	1441 (11%)	2608 (20%)	6318 (48%)	214 (2%)	8255 (63%)	4939 (37%)

Total number of children =	13194

School	Urban	Rural
Pupils	7850 (59%)	5344 (41%)

Small	= less than 100 children
Medium	= between 100 and 200 children
Large	= more than 200 children

Rural / Urban chosen by the size and nature of the community

Figure 5.2: Schools and headteachers in Mercia, December 2005

While this is a convenience sample some steps have been taken to make it as representative of the area as possible. A little fewer than half the primary school

headteachers in the county are female, and about two thirds of the headteachers lead rural schools (fifty-five of the eighty-three schools) mostly with fewer than one hundred pupils. Conversely, about two-thirds (63%) of the children in the county attend schools with a male headteacher and nearly sixty percent attend large, urban primary schools (Figure 5.2). Every effort was made to interview the appropriate proportions of male and female headteachers from large, urban and small, rural schools representing appropriate proportions of pupil populations, and, within acceptable parameters, this was accomplished. While this is not a representative sample and therefore only enables internal validity to be claimed, it gives interview responses from a good cross-section of the heads available and raises issues which may at least resonate with others.

The headteachers were initially allocated one of the categories mentioned above in Figure 5.1, following the discussion with the Senior Inspector. This, however, was not divulged to them as this knowledge may have led to a bias being introduced into the responses if they attempted to align themselves with the allotted category or resist any attempt to assign them to a category with which they were not happy or with which they did not agree. The conduct of the interviews has, however, been sufficiently rigorous, and the content of sufficient depth, to determine the accuracy of the initial allocation and thus whether it would have been necessary to reallocate the heads or, perhaps, consider increasing the number of interviewees in order to achieve adequate coverage of the areas. The number of interviewees did not need to be increased, but if it had, a numeral would have been added to the reference codes to allow the individuals to be identified by the researcher (though not their actual identities by other readers).

Another point, which needed to be considered, was whether each of the selected headteachers made a good informant. Plummer (1983) points out that accessibility of the informant and the availability of their time, in addition to their awareness of their cultural milieu, are also key factors in the researcher's choice of subject. In addition to these points, to access the historical and cultural aspects of the individuals' interaction with any changes in various features of their working conditions it was necessary to select informants from a group of professionals who have been involved in the senior management of schools (though not necessarily as headteachers) for a reasonable proportion of the period under consideration in this project. In order to fulfil these criteria the respondents needed to be serving, or recently retired, headteachers from the local area who were therefore easy to access and with whom a sympathetic and mutually supportive relationship was more likely to be maintained throughout the period being investigated in their 'recent professional life histories.' As most of these subjects know the researcher, who was already aware of a number of aspects of their professional life histories, they may also have been more willing to discuss those points at which their interaction with their context, and more specifically the changes which have occurred within that context, than they would with a researcher who is not known to them. This could, however, have led to the possibility of the headteachers either answering questions in a way that they thought might help the research, or relaxing into a more subjective view of their histories which might have biased the findings of the interviews. In order to introduce some triangulation and reduce these possibilities, with their permission, the contact inspectors for these headteachers were interviewed. The interviews concentrated upon the school systems within which they worked (for example, to what extent the other stakeholders are supportive of the headteachers' responses to government initiatives) and the working practices of the headteachers themselves (for example, the

extent to which they tend to work in a bureaucratic or collegiate manner). In order to preserve anonymity the interviews with inspectors were with regard to a larger group of headteachers, including the subjects, who formed less than half of the overall group. The records of the interviews with inspectors which relate to those headteachers who are not subjects of this study were immediately destroyed so that their right to privacy was also respected.

Further consideration also needed to be given to managing researcher bias, so that the researcher's views regarding the government strategies and preconceptions relating to headteacher identities and the tensions between their wishes and the wishes of the government were not allowed to shape the analysis. Any preconceptions the researcher may have about the headteachers were reduced, since the choice of headteachers had been guided by the local senior inspector, and the responses to interview questions were from both the inspectors and the headteachers themselves. In addition, the theoretical framing of the study, considering the professional histories of the headteachers and relating these to the systems within which they have worked, using the activity triangle, led effectively to a minimisation of the possible effects of any previous knowledge of them and thus should have effectively negated researcher views of the government strategies. Furthermore, self-awareness of bias concerning government initiatives over the past twenty years and of opinions regarding their effects upon headteachers allowed these views to be counteracted. In order to preserve the validity of the research, all efforts have been made to avoid researcher preconceptions and biases colouring the analysis and any findings which follow from that analysis.

The Interviews:

Prior to the headteacher interviews, there was one initial discussion with the senior inspector for the county, this discussion had several goals. The main goal was to work with the senior inspector and obtain a list of suitable headteachers from which to draw those who would eventually take part in the research. It also alerted the LEA that some research was being carried out and, implicitly, sought approval to interview headteachers and inspectors. In addition, it built a rapport with the senior inspector which would allow further, textual, data such as Panda reports to be obtained if necessary.

When the initial list of headteachers had been obtained, two from each category were contacted by letter to determine their willingness to participate. The responses to these initial letters gave an initial list of headteachers in six of the categories. It is interesting that there was only one positive response from each of these categories, so it was not necessary to ask any headteachers to 'be on the reserve list' in order to reduce each category to one headteacher. Letters of thanks were sent to these six headteachers explaining that a telephone call would be made to arrange the details for the first interview. A second set of initial letters were sent to fresh headteachers in the other two categories and these led to a further name being added to the list, giving seven headteachers available for interview. The final place was filled by telephoning an appropriate headteacher (on the assumption that a telephone call was more likely to receive a positive response) and asking her to take part.

Each headteacher was interviewed twice, the time and place for the interview being selected by them in order to allow them to be more at ease. Generally the times and places chosen were: the school and at the end of the school day, when the children had left but the staff were mostly still in the school. Two of the headteachers (both of whom were close to retirement) chose to be interviewed during the school day and one headteacher chose to be interviewed at the Local Authority Education Centre, due to the distance which needed to be

138

travelled in order to reach the school. In an initial interview, lasting about twenty minutes the nature of the research, the structure of the second, longer, interview and the ethical and financial matters were discussed and the basic structure of the activity triangle and the features at its nodes were introduced. A number of basic facts such as the length of career, time as a headteacher and number of schools as a headteacher were also elicited during this interview, in order to help check the categories in which the headteachers had initially been placed.

The second interview for each headteacher took the form of a discussion between colleagues, starting with a short résumé covering the past twenty years of their teaching career, after which the specific points in that career were discussed, and each point was related to the activity triangle and the factors at each node. The headteacher's own feelings regarding various government initiatives were drawn out during this time, as were their tendency to comply with, or resist, the changes which accompanied those initiatives. Following this, the support they had from other stakeholders in that compliance or resistance was discussed, as was the effect upon their working lives (in some cases this led to an effect on their personal lives, which a number were happy to discuss) and how they dealt with any negative consequences which arose.

During these second interviews the headteachers were allowed, at times, to move away from the point of the questions to expand upon their own professional philosophies before being drawn back with a further reference to the activity triangle. This allowed further insight into the feelings, direction and 'professional driving force' (the root object) of each headteacher. Each interview concluded with thanks, a short general discussion about various subjects (depending upon how well the individual was known to the researcher) to allow a reduction in intensity for people who had, in some cases, been discussing times

which had been very difficult for them, and a reference to the opportunity to read and discuss the outcomes of the interviews (in order to help allay any possible concerns about anonymity and check for accuracy) before the completion of the study.

Following the headteacher interviews, a number of inspectors, including the contact inspectors for the headteachers' schools were also interviewed. This allowed a degree of triangulation with respect to the headteachers' views of the contextual systems within their schools. These interviews with inspectors were much shorter as a more direct approach to the work and attitudes of the headteachers could be taken, and began with reference to confidentiality, both for the headteachers and for themselves.   Reference was made at this point to the fact that, to protect anonymity the headteachers in the study were a small part of the overall group being discussed and that the discussions regarding those not in the study would be immediately removed from the files. The activity triangle was, once again, used as a guide to the discussions so that specific points about both the headteachers and the structure and style of their schools could be considered and also so that the interviews could be guided, following the format and subject matter previously planned without excessive digression. Further discussion took place on the tendency of the headteachers to resist or comply with the government initiatives, and on the personal and professional ramifications upon the headteachers of both the initiatives and their compliance or resistance.

Prior to each of these interviews permission was sought, and obtained, for the use of a digital recorder to 'tape' the discussion. This recorder actually has no tape, but connects to a computer and downloads the interview directly as a file, allowing easy storage, repeated reviewing and copying to other computer files and CDs without degradation of quality. Unfortunately it does not allow direct transcription of the files to the word processor; so many hours were still required to transcribe the spoken word to a written format. To protect

the anonymity of the interviewees, these files (spoken and written) are not included as appendices but the written files, with personal and school names and other details specific to individuals changed for their protection, are available if required. The interviewer guidance and interview schedules for headteachers and inspectors are included in Appendix 1 as appendices 1a to 1d.

Drawing themes from transcripts and applying them to the triangles

Following the interviews, the recordings were downloaded on to a computer and then the researcher listened to the recordings several times before repeating them to the typist who drafted the transcripts. This had two advantages; first, by the time that the drafts were completed the researcher had heard the interview recordings several times and was becoming familiar with their content, and second, since the typist had secretarial skills, the transcribing was completed more quickly than if the researcher had typed them himself.

The transcripts were then read and re-read a number of times to ascertain and note common themes, which were then highlighted on the transcripts before they were read again, with two intentions. The first of these intentions was to determine whether there were any further themes which had not been previously been recognised, and the second was to find, and note any further occurrences of the common themes that had been noted in the earlier readings. This approach aligns with the methods called 'paradigmatic-type narrative inquiry' by Polkinghorne (1995, p.5) where several stories are gathered, rather than one, and 'the researcher inspects the stories to discover what notions appear across them' (ibid. p.13) and produces 'taxonomies and categories across the database' (ibid, p.5). Later in the text he points out that the strength of these procedures 'is in their capacity to develop general knowledge about a collection of stories' and says that 'internal validity is in the nature of the

exercise' (ibid, p.15). A section of one of these highlighted transcripts forms part of appendix 4.

The themes which were common to all the transcripts of interviews with the headteachers were: **Ofsted inspections**, changes to the management of schools (called **historical changes** in the list of themes), **SAT tests and associated 'league tables'**, finance (and particularly **LFM**), the **National Literacy and Numeracy strategies**, responses which related directly to the **activity triangle**, and responses which related directly to the **research questions**. Three of the headteachers also gave lengthy responses related to their unhappiness regarding certain situations within particular previous school contexts. Two of these were linked to difficult relationships with previous headteachers. The third was linked to the interviewee (Gillian) not gaining an expected headship after a protracted period as an acting head in the school and feeling that she was not appointed due to 'issues with it being a Catholic school' rather than her abilities as a headteacher.

Each of the themes listed above, which were possible points of tension between these eight headteachers and their school contexts during the periods specified in the interviews, related to relationships between the subject (headteacher) node on the triangle and other specific nodes on the activity triangle. These relationships were shown by arrows on the activity triangle diagrams for each context under investigation. Ofsted inspections concerned the relationship between the *subject* and the *community*, since at the times of inspections Ofsted became a temporary part of the mesosystems, and, thus, the local community. In addition, the reporting procedures for Ofsted inspections relate directly to other members of the mesosystem and therefore these relationships are directly affected. A related theme was SAT tests and their related 'league tables' which, although they were unlike Ofsted as they were a more constant pressure, were, like Ofsted, externally imposed.

These tests and tables caused tensions between the *subject* (and her *object*) and the community, who were expecting improving results and a good position in the 'league'.

A further example would be the changes to the administration of finances within the school which followed soon after the ERA. Ostell and Oakland (1995, p.69) report that the introduction of LFM and the associated changes resulted in role reversal for headteachers; before the introduction, headteachers determined the curriculum, delivery and assessment and the LEAs determined staffing, pay scales, pupil-teacher ratio and spending. After the introduction, central government determined curriculum and assessment (and, with the introduction of the NLS and NNS, delivery) and the headteachers were responsible for maintaining buildings, paying bills, and deciding how much is spent on books and teachers. This caused tensions between the *subjects* of the activity triangles (the headteachers, who were trying to implement the changes with insufficient training) and the (macrosystemic) *community* (the DfES) and also between the traditional *rules* of the school context and both the *community* that was supporting the new system and the *subject*, who was charged with implementing the changes. To some extent this may have also caused tension for the subject with regard to the *division of labour* (DoL) within the school, since the traditional DoL underwent an enforced change while the headteacher was getting to grips with her new role. In later contexts, however, when the headteachers were more familiar with their new roles, these tensions were considerably reduced and the headteachers reported that they felt the introduction of LFM was a positive step.

Where these relationships resulted in tensions, they were shown as broken (lightning-shaped) arrows rather than solid ones. The specific nodes at each end of these broken arrows revealed the precise points in the school context between which tensions existed and

the number of broken arrows gave an indication of the overall level of tension for the headteacher within that particular school context.

Conclusion

The government initiatives since the introduction of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) have increased the pressure on headteachers to a great extent. Menter et. al. (1997) point out that they:

> feel concern about the consequences of such policy changes for managers, in particular as they hold more responsibility in isolation from any educational 'community' such as was offered by the LEA, and as they are positioned at increasing distance from their colleagues. (p. 19)

In order to study the possible reasons for, and effects of, this pressure on individuals, eight headteachers were selected, with the help of the senior inspector, and interviewed. These headteachers were allocated to different categories according to whether they were stressed or unstressed relative to others in the group, tended to be resisters to, or compliers with, the initiatives and the length of time that they had been headteachers. These were each interviewed twice – once mainly to give details of the study and once to gather information about their professional trajectories since just before the ERA and their responses to government initiatives.

The views of these headteachers, particularly with regard to the structures of their schools and their professional attitudes and responses to initiatives, were triangulated using responses from interviews with the contact inspectors for their schools.

The data were drawn out from these interviews using emergent coding from the texts and were analysed with reference to the nodes of the activity triangle, thus allowing comparison of the contexts within which they have worked which gives a guide to their professional development. Although this is an unusual combination of theoretical approaches – a new convergence – it draws upon the strengths of each to complement the other.

This analysis of the data is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6, where the various responses to interview questions from the different headteachers are discussed and coded. They are then considered with reference to the activity triangle to ascertain what comparisons may be drawn, their relevance with regard to the responses of headteachers to the government initiatives, and what tensions this may have caused in their working lives.

The conclusions drawn from it will be explained in detail in Chapter 7.

Research timeline:

This research project has been carried out over a long period. This has been due to the part-time nature of the research and a number of other factors which have caused delays. It has, however, continued on its forward path as shown in table 5.3.

Activity	Months																							
	0-4	5-8	9-12	13-16	17-20	21-24	25-28	29-32	33-36	37-40	41-44	45-48	49-52	53-56	57-60	61-64	65-68	69-72	73-76	77-80	81-84	85-88	88-92	93-96
Research training	⇦	■	■		■	■																		
Literature search (theoretical)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■					
Literature review (theoretical)		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■												
Literature search (methodological)				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■										
Literature review (methodological)				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■									
Writing Chapters 2-4			■	■	■	■																		
Writing and reviewing research design (ch5)									■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■					
Discussions with senior inspector														■										
Headteacher interviews															■									
Inspector interviews															■									
Interview transcription															■	■	■							
Analysis and Chapters 6 & 7																		■	■	■	■			
Writing Chapter 1																	■	■						
Writing Chapter 8 Final literature search																							■	

Figure 5.3: Timeline for this research project

Chapter 6: Data and Analysis 1: The individuals

Introduction

The analysis, due to its nature and the number of activity triangles which it entails, is very long. In this chapter, the unit of analysis is the individual headteacher and the heuristic device is the activity triangle. There are eight headteachers, for each of whom three activity triangles will be used. To ease the burden of continual reading the analysis is divided into three sections; introduction, individuals and synthesis. The introduction and the activity triangles for each of the individuals make up the body of this chapter. In the synthesis, which forms the body of Chapter 7, the researcher seeks to discern patterns derived from the triangles. Although this is a very small number of cases, the patterns will allow an insight into the responses of these headteachers to the changes in their working contexts during the period under investigation. The length of these two chapters, combined with the references to the triangles, also means that there will be some necessity to refer back to previous pages. For this, an apology is offered before the reader proceeds any further through the chapter.

The theoretical basis of the analysis which is to follow, and how biography and the activity triangle will be juxtaposed to enhance the findings using each of them, was outlined in Chapter 4. The principles used to obtain a group of headteachers who were appropriate as the sample in this study, and the characteristics of those headteachers, were explained in Chapter 5. In addition, it has been pointed out previously that, to protect the anonymity of the headteachers, any reference to them will be feminine, and any reference to inspectors, who were also interviewed, will always be masculine, whatever their actual gender.

In this chapter, the findings will be summarised and an analysis carried out to reveal the similarities and differences between the explanations, given by each of the headteachers in

their interviews, concerning their reactions to the government initiatives in the period under examination (between the Education Reform Act 1988 and the interviews which were performed in December 2005). It has been previously suggested that these reactions, and particularly the possible tensions which may arise from them, will depend upon the identity which each of the headteachers has built throughout her career. It will also depend upon the response of the headteacher to the initiatives and the contextual details of the school within which she was working when those initiatives were introduced. Each of the headteachers will have built her own, unique, identity through her training and development as a professional, the philosophical basis upon which her educational principles were developed and her interactions with other professionals throughout her career. This identity will determine the object which underlies her activity as a headteacher. The headteachers' responses to the initiatives fall roughly into two camps: either complying with the requirements, or attempting to resist them. This is, however, complicated by the existence of degrees of resistance and compliance (if they are considered to be the extremes of a continuum) and the possibility of some of the initiatives being pre-empted by the school prior to their introduction. The specific features of the school systems include the historical rules which were prevalent within the schools, the level of support for the headteachers' responses to the initiatives from the other stakeholders, and the established ways of working within the school; whether hierarchical or collegiate and with individual or group responsibility.

When the headteacher is working alone, or her actions are not supported by the other stakeholders, tensions may develop when her preferred curriculum and her educational philosophy, influenced by her professional identity, are in opposition to the activity prescribed by the government initiatives. These tensions can lead to stress and a reduction

in the ability of the headteacher to function effectively. This can be exacerbated by lack of time to develop strategies effectively, by internal feelings of inadequacy, or by external impositions such as 'league tables' of SAT results or Ofsted inspections. This may result in a complete breakdown of health (mental, physical or both) or the headteacher not continuing in her work as a result of 'voluntary' measures such as retirement, or mandatory measures such as those following a school entering 'special measures' or being given a 'notice to improve'.

The relationships between these features, which develop tensions and affect the headteachers' ability to work effectively, may be considered using the activity triangle described in Chapter 4 since it considers the interrelationships between specific contextual features. Eliciting which specific contextual features may have affected each headteacher at particular points during the period under study relies more upon the ways in which the individual has developed, and therefore gathering biographical data is likely to be more appropriate. This study uses a combination of the two; an approach which breaks new ground and has been chosen to draw upon the strengths of each to complement the other.

The initial interviews

The short initial interviews served as an introduction to the headteachers. The general principles behind the study were outlined, but time did not permit the discussion of the theoretical basis of the study in any great detail. In addition, a number of points, and the questions to be raised in the second interview, were deliberately not mentioned in order to reduce the possibility of the headteachers coming to the interviews with statements and answers already prepared. They were, however, given a copy of the activity triangle, the aims and objectives and a sheet outlining the adaptive strategies covered in Chapter 3 in order to allow them to familiarise themselves with specific terms used in them before the

second interview. The first interview also afforded the opportunity to cover points such as anonymity, (lack of) financial incentives, the headteachers' right to refuse to answer a question if they felt unhappy with it and their right to withdraw. In addition, the first interview drew out basic information about the length of the headteachers' careers, the time for which they had been headteachers and the number of schools in which they had been headteachers. This allowed the researcher to verify the 'older / newer' category in which they had been placed. A number of the headteachers used the first interview to discuss, in a general fashion, their careers, their educational philosophies and the different school contexts in which they had worked. This information links the first and second interviews for those headteachers. The transcripts from the first and second interviews for each headteacher will, therefore, be amalgamated so that they may be considered in conjunction to provide the fullest possible overview of her career.

Eight headteachers, chosen from a larger list suggested by the local authority senior inspector, agreed to take part in this study. This number is small, but more than six, which, Morse (1994) suggests is the minimum number of participants where one is trying to understand the essence of experience. These eight headteachers were all from the same local authority, which has been called Mercia, in order to help enhance anonymity. This is in addition to the use of the feminine gender for headteachers and masculine for inspectors which was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. These headteachers were selected to represent a good cross-section according to the school statistics in Mercia, outlined earlier in Figure 5.2. In addition, they were, initially, systematically sorted into groups to give a spread across the three other criteria, also given earlier, in Figure 5.1. These criteria related to the length of time headteachers had been leading a school, a simple suggestion of the degree of stress from which they had suffered, and their perceived tendency to comply with,

or resist, imposed changes. The first of these was a straightforward measure of time. The second was on a simple two-point gradation – high or low. The third categorisation suggested the tendency of each headteacher to accept changes or resist applying them until they were 'proven' or insisted upon. The allocation of headteachers to groups according to the second and third criteria relied upon suggestions from the senior inspector who had worked with these headteachers for a number of years and knew them well. Since part of the study was to consider these last two criteria, the inspector's recommendation was only a starting point, which, it was hoped, would give a good sample with which to work. This was indeed the case, as will be seen later. Each of these headteachers is referred to using a pseudonym, which is more personal than a letter, or group of letters, yet still protects her identity and thus enhances anonymity.

These headteachers, as one would expect, had each been teaching for a reasonably long time and had been headteachers at a varying number of schools. These basic data for the eight headteachers are shown in Figure 6.1, below. One headteacher – Helen – had not become a headteacher through the normal, deputy head, route, but had been working as an advisory teacher for children with specific educational needs for 11 years prior to headship. Although she had no formal deputy headship experience, this period included managerial aspects and training associated with deputy headship, which allowed her to apply for, and obtain, a headship. She comments upon this, saying; "I think the governors saw my strange – well, perhaps strange past, I don't know, but it's not the conventional way of coming to headship – they actually saw it as a positive." The unusual route into headship taken by Helen is denoted in Figure 6.1 as 0 years of deputy headship, then, in parenthesis, 11 years of equivalent work and training.

Variable \ Headteacher	Annette	Barbara	Chloe	Dianne	Emily	Frances	Gillian	Helen
Number of years teaching	34	40	40	32	33	29	28	29
Number of years as a deputy	8	6	8	7	12	10	13	0 (11)
Number of years as a head	16	26	24	21	6	4	8	8
Number of schools as a head	2	3	1	2	1	1	1	1

Figure 6.1 Headteachers' length of service and number of schools

The eight headteachers were divided into four longer-serving (older) and four shorter-serving (newer) individuals. The table shows that the older headteachers (Annette, Barbara, Chloe and Dianne) had a minimum of sixteen years service as a headteacher and the newer ones (Emily, Frances, Gillian and Helen) had a maximum of eight years. Further distinctions were highlighted in Chapter 5 and, at that point, each headteacher was allocated a set of three initials suggesting some of their probable characteristics. Knowledge of the relationship between the names and those initials could have been provided, but it is not essential knowledge and may lead to an increased opportunity for identification of individuals and thus reduced anonymity, and so was not included in Figure 6.1.

Analytical details

The analysis of data from the interviews relies upon a careful reading in which the categories introduced by the informants are used to suggest an emergent coding process. Ryan and Bernard (2000, p.782) tell us that, in grounded theory, "as coding categories emerge, the investigator links them together in theoretical models." Although this process is similar to that applied by researchers who use grounded theory in their studies, it is not, itself, grounded theory, since the data coded in this way will be applied to the activity triangle to give a comparative analysis, rather than constructing a theory from the categories themselves.

This is just one of a large number of ways in which qualitative analysis may be carried out. If these many modes of analysis are considered, then analysis itself could be regarded as consisting of a small number of fundamental branches, each branch may be subdivided into specific areas, and each area into individual schools.

It may be considered that the fundamental, procedural branches of qualitative analysis could be computer-assisted or wholly researcher-based work. In this study it was felt that wholly researcher-based analysis would allow the researcher to become more intimately acquainted with the data drawn out from the transcripts of interviews and thus allow a deeper understanding of the relationships between the headteachers' professional trajectories and their reactions to government initiatives. Computer-assisted analysis (using NUD•IST or a similar program to classify responses) was, therefore, not used and, following transcription of the interviews, they were read and re-read so that emergent themes which were revealed could be marked on the transcripts and recorded for further consideration. In this way comparisons between the headteachers could be made, particularly their professional trajectories, the earlier school systems in which they taught (where they will have developed their educational philosophies) and how they endeavoured to incorporate those in their schools as headteachers. These could then be considered together with the government initiatives which they had been required to introduce and with their feelings regarding these initiatives. This would allow a specific pattern of development and response for each headteacher which allowed comparison to ascertain if there were common features for those who more generally resisted the initiatives or complied with them, and further comparison to determine any links with stress which the headteachers may say they had suffered.

The use of the activity triangle as an analytical tool when considering narrative data collected during interviews has previously (Chapter 5) been described as *'a new convergence'* due to the unusual combination of the two. Although this combination is 'straddling, somewhat uncomfortably, a crucial epistemological divide in trying to marry and use these different perspectives' (Ball, 1994, p.4), it is worth reiterating here that the use of this combination was to allow each to work alongside the other, thus reinforcing strengths and minimising any possible weaknesses to give a more complete analysis. A part of the final review of the study (Chapter 8) is a brief discussion of the success, or failure, of this combination.

Trends

During the interviews with headteachers, a number of themes, or recurrent points of similarity, became evident. The majority of these referred to the Education Reform Act (ERA, 1988) and its ramifications in schools, and subsequent initiatives introduced by successive governments; some, however concerned relationships in schools. These latter themes were not entirely unexpected, but the intensity of their effects was beyond what had been expected.

The post-ERA trends related to the changes associated with the ERA and, in a number of cases, particularly with the rate at which those changes were introduced and the shortness of the time allowed between their introduction and statutory implementation at school level. Comments on this are supported by other commentators such as Campbell and Neill, (1994) and came from longer-serving heads:

> As national curriculum came on board it started to get very, very difficult and particularly the requirements to implement it all so quickly because if it had been done a subject a year or something you could cope with that and teach and be a head and do all the other things you always wanted to do and LMS and so on. (Annette)

154

> Why, for instance, did we have that salary re-structuring come through when we had all the UPS3s and performance management and all that kind of thing coming in and now its only been in twelve months and they are asking us to look at re-structuring and putting in TLRs' … … 'you know what it's like; a new education minister always wants to make their mark. It does seem as if you get a new person at the DfES at the moment they want to make their mark on something, you know, just change, change, change. (Dianne)

And from heads with a shorter length of experience:

> It's a bit like the teaching and learning responsibility points [TLRs] I mean why give us just three or four months to bring it in and then two years to implement it? Do you know what I mean? I mean, why do that? (Gillian)

Another common theme was the introduction of local financial management of schools (LFM), and particularly the lack of training for headteachers when it was introduced. It was mentioned as a possible particular source of tension by all the headteachers except two. One of these was Emily, who had been a head for a shorter period and who spoke at length about relationship problems. The other headteacher was Helen, who had come into headship via a different route from the others, where she had previously dealt with finance and bidding for grants.

> Financial management, bidding, all of those things we were miles ahead of what then happened and it was really interesting to see. I feel that when I got to Mercia it was a long way off where the previous county was but then the previous county always liked to be in the forefront. I felt that it gave me good experience for what was to come. (Helen)

Some of the headteachers regarded the initial period of LFM as particularly stressful, while others, especially those who were leading larger schools, considered LFM as a hurdle to be overcome and talked about their strategies for surmounting the problem. In every larger school this was by employing a bursar, or equivalent, to ameliorate the situation by taking the load off the headteacher. Heads of smaller schools, however, did not have the resources to use this strategy and found implementation of LFM a far greater stress. Annette was able to discuss this from a knowledgeable stance, having been head of a small school

when LFM was introduced, then being appointed to the headship of a large school with a bursar already in place.

> If only a little more assistance had been provided to make sure that teachers did not have to administer it and spend time doing budgets and so on and teachers and headteachers and governors could decide priorities and this is how we want to allocate our budget and so on and somebody else does it and the teacher evaluates – that's what should happen. (Annette)

All headteachers, except Emily, reflecting upon LFM, said that, with hindsight, it had been a benefit, since they now had far greater opportunity to use their finances in more flexible ways for the good of the school, without, what Dianne refers to as, the straitjacket of local authority constraint. In contrast to this, some longer-serving (and, according to their link inspectors, more cynical) headteachers also recognised the opportunity that LFM might afford national government to manage schools from a distance by controlling the grants which they might receive according to their participation in particular initiatives. While there was no firm evidence for this view, it appeared to arise from the extra funding available to some of the schools which were affiliated to the local Education Action Zone (EAZ). The opinion was suggested both by headteachers who were 'outside' the EAZ and those who were part of it, so, in some of the cases at least, it cannot be said to stem from envy.

Without exception, the headteachers regarded Ofsted inspections as one of the greatest sources of stress in their jobs. This is discussed at greater length later, when this inspection regime will be compared with the inspections (or lack of them) during the periods when the headteachers' professional identities were being formed, but it is noteworthy that there was no exception to this. Some of the longer-standing headteachers took some pride in their ability to sway Ofsted inspectors' opinions and influence their decisions through direct

confrontation of their initial conclusions, but even these commented upon the difficulties which inspections brought.

> I almost enjoy the challenge, the combat of situations and in our first Ofsted it was wonderful because one of those situations arose that I could really get my teeth into (Barbara)

> … the Reggie [registered lead inspector] and I, had many conversations on the telephone, he sent me the original one which I scribbled on and said don't agree with this, this contradicts so and so on page so and so, paragraph 6, blah, blah, blah, and I'm very proud to say that I managed to get us from unsatisfactory to satisfactory, I did! I fought tooth and nail and I got it up there. (Gillian)

The extent of this pressure was such that one headteacher mentioned leaving (retiring) before being subjected to any further inspections – and has subsequently achieved this aim.

> The amount of work in the preparation for Ofsted inspection really has an effect and in a way that's one reason why I want to leave, I don't want to go through another full Ofsted inspection, I've done three and I don't want to do a fourth. (Annette)

A further initiative which received universal comment was Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs). Although these were not considered to be high-intensity stressors, like Ofsted inspections, they were, nevertheless, something which was (with their accompanying 'league tables') considered by all headteachers to be a constant, lower-level threat to the equilibrium of the school. It was generally agreed that some form of testing is always absolutely essential in primary schools, but SATs were considered an incursion into the smooth running of the school and one of the greatest curriculum-altering features of the ERA within schools.

> … they affect the way that resources are directed; they affect the sort of teaching that is going on where basically children are taught to the test. I'm afraid it's the truth. (Annette)

> It could be a child that – Oh isn't it awful – gets a level 3 at Key stage 2 then that is absolutely tremendous. Its stupendous so we try and celebrate all those things, even though we are caught up on a parallel conversation with the DfES. (Helen)

> … obviously I want good key stage results, so I've got to follow it quite closely because obviously the tests are put together to respond to the Literacy and Numeracy strategies so I obviously have to follow that, but I've introduced French and French isn't due to come in until 2008. (Frances)

While this was the general opinion of the headteachers, one of the participants (Chloe) felt that the effect in her school was minimal, causing only a small change in some aspects.

> … now when I do the booster classes with year six it's so, so rooted into children learning their tables and knowing their tables that the whole thing is there (Chloe)

This headteacher, and school, also approached the National Curriculum from a very different standpoint compared with the others. This will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and the National Numeracy Strategies (NNS) were also discussed at some length in the majority of interviews. They were generally seen in a positive light and there was very little concern with neither stress associated with the contents of the strategies, nor with resistance to their introduction. Chloe saw the NNS as an initiative which might encourage a return to the traditional teaching with which she was familiar and comfortable.

> When the numeracy hour came in and suddenly we were told that children must learn tables and it was perfectly acceptable for children to rote chant their tables and I wouldn't have gone that far, that was further than I would go because I would say to the staff, I want them to know their tables. I'm not really – there are five or six acceptable ways of doing that – it doesn't have to be, I'm not suggesting and not promoting chanting tables, but certainly that they are able to. (Chloe)

The other headteachers did not display such open enthusiasm, but did consider the content of the strategies, particularly as they were transformed by further initiatives, such as the National Primary Strategy (Excellence and Enjoyment, 2003) to be far more acceptable than some of the other results of initiatives, particularly as that content related to the SATs. Examples of this attitude are displayed by Barbara, who described the NNS as 'a particularly

prescribed set curriculum that's leading towards a crucial test,' and Frances, who said 'what the National Curriculum and particularly Literacy and Numeracy did, was, they did guide teachers into teaching children how to do well.'

Once again, however, the hasty introduction of the strategies was seen as a concern, and the restrictive nature of their initial lesson formats was considered to be unhelpful, but there was not the negative feeling expressed with some of the other themes mentioned above.

One theme which emerged in a number of interviews, but upon which the ERA and subsequent initiatives appeared to have little bearing, was associated with personal relationships within the school. This occurred, in general, in contexts where the headteachers were in previous schools but had already developed their professional identity. They were working in middle, or senior, management roles (mostly as deputy headteachers) and, for some reason, friction developed between them and the incumbent head and there seemed to be no way (in their eyes) in which reconciliation could be made. In these cases the evidence is subjective and, even if the other combatant could have been found, it would have been unethical to discuss the matter with them. Some of the comments made in interviews, however, testify to the difficulties caused by these tensions.

> I was being criticised for everything that went wrong. As I say a classic example was this, it was something happened with a class three trip, in the organisation of the class three trip, and the Head came to me and said, "Emily, why did you let this happen?" … … when I got back I got slated, hauled over the carpet, dragged into the room, shouted at, yelled at, because I'd cancelled this meeting. That was part of the situation, so it was a case of get out, I had to get out. (Emily)

> I've got to admit I had a terrible time at Merrywhite, I (well this is confidential isn't it) I had a terrible time at Merrywhite, because of the people that were in charge of the school, basically. My first head was a little bully, or thought he could but he chose the wrong one, when he came in to try and bully me, but he made life very, very difficult. He was a bully and he was a bully to anybody that he could have power over really. The next head, well, what can you say, he wasn't interested in education basically, he didn't see his role as being the one, the one that everybody else would see. (Frances)

The main themes arising from the interviews, therefore, are; the changes accompanying the initiatives, and particularly the rapidity with which they were introduced; Ofsted inspections and the problems which they cause in schools; testing and its effects in delivery of the curriculum; LFM and its diverse effects; NLS and NNS and their, mainly positive, effects on lessons; and personal issues with respect to relationships within the school.

In addition, judicious probing revealed the headteachers' tendency to comply with, or resist, initiatives and any known (rather than assumed) results of stress that they may have suffered. These themes form the basis of the analytical work in this chapter. The essence of this study, however, which is to determine how the tendency of the headteachers to comply with changes brought about by initiatives, or offer some resistance to them, is linked to their professional identity, which was wrought in their earlier career. This, in turn, will lead to an investigation into the possible links between this professional identity, the tendency to comply or resist, and the outward signs of stress exhibited by the headteachers.

Applying themes to the activity triangle.

In order to proceed with this analysis, it is necessary to refer to a simple representation of the activity triangle (Figure 6.2), and particularly the nodes, or junctions, where specific features of the contexts are represented. When each of these features is considered in turn, for each of the schools under consideration (pre-ERA, 2005, and a point of particular interest between the two), for each of the headteachers, a picture may be obtained of the contexts within which they were working at those times. Consideration of the earlier contexts leads to an awareness of the professional identities of the headteachers and comparing the later contexts gives a basis for consideration of the headteachers' responses to the initiatives.

Applying these combinations of three times and eight headteachers to the triangle resulted in 24 completed triangles (Figures 6.3 to 6.26) from which comparisons between different headteachers and different periods for each headteacher would be drawn. A matrix of the results (Figure 7.1) was then completed to enable clarity for direct comparisons.

The activity triangle representing each context for each headteacher (Figure 6.2) shows some of the common inputs to those contexts. The 'subject' is always the headteacher under consideration (whether or not they were the headteacher in that particular context). The 'object' is that which applies to her, and the 'instruments' those which she would have been using while she was working in that particular context. The (historical) 'rules', the 'community' and the 'division of labour' (DoL) refer directly to that context and might, or might not, have been coincidental with her wishes at that time. The outcomes relate specifically to that headteacher at that time and might be connected with development of her professional identity; compliance with, or resistance to, the initiatives at that time; or points of tension between that headteacher's professional identity and the initiatives or specific relationships or working practices within her context.
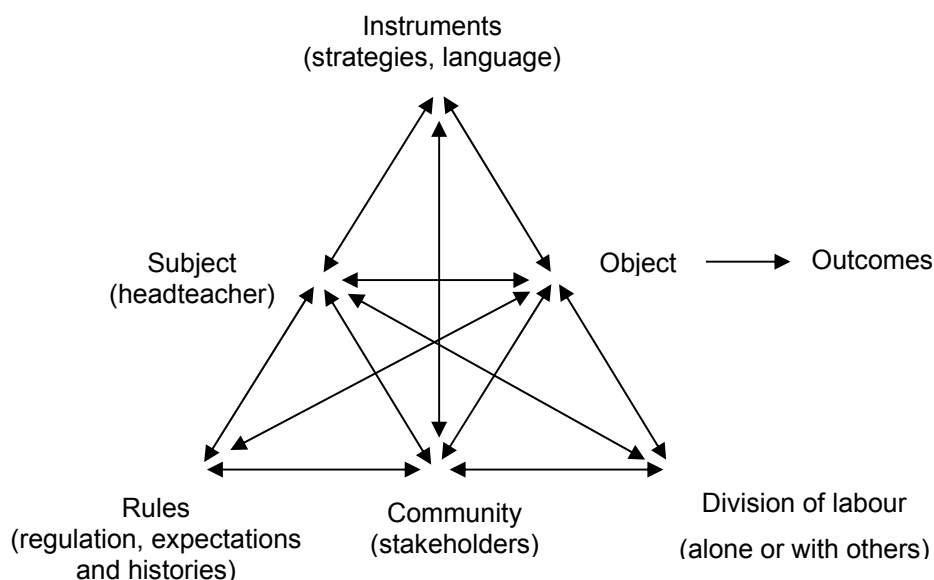

Figure 6.2 the activity triangle (adapted from Engeström) relating to the headteachers

When these headteachers were beginning their professional lives, they were learning the techniques and styles associated with teaching and absorbing the ethos and prevalent philosophy within their schools. Later, as members of the middle and senior management teams, they were doing the same. During these periods they will have built the foundations of their professional identities which may develop further when they are headteachers and which they will use to shape the philosophies of their own schools. Since the ERA, and with the introduction of the numerous initiatives which followed it, however, their freedom to shape the contexts within which they work as headteachers has been curtailed to some extent. Thus, there is the possibility of contradictions between the philosophy of the headteachers, and how they would like their school to function, and the impetus that the initiatives are giving the school in another, perhaps conflicting direction. If there is little disparity between the wishes of the headteacher and the direction required by the initiatives, there should be little difficulty for the headteacher and they will willingly comply with the governmental wishes expressed in the initiative. If, however, there is a considerable discrepancy between the philosophical standpoint of the headteacher and the direction required by the initiatives then these contradictions may, in turn, result in tensions which could cause a negative reaction. This may take the form of resistance to the initiative, which can be physically stressful, the headteacher working very hard, for long hours, to establish her ethos and educational style within the school and to show that it works as effectively as the initiative. It can also take the form of grudging compliance, which can also be stressful, but, while that stress can also be physical, it may have a more psychological, or emotional, expression, since the headteacher is promulgating an arrangement with which she is not wholly comfortable, which may give rise to feelings of inadequacy.

The specific activity triangles which follow for individual headteachers at specific times between 1985 and 2005 lead to an examination of the relationship that exists between the headteachers' professional identities (and thus their educational philosophies) and their responses to the government initiatives which underlie the common themes drawn from the interviews.

Individuals

Relationships between individual headteachers and their school contexts

1. Annette

It may be seen from Figure 6.1 that Annette is one of the more experienced headteachers, with 16 years as a head in two schools. The first of these posts (9 years) was as a teaching head at Cross Gate, a small country school, and the second (7 years) at a much larger urban school, King Offa, with no teaching commitment. At the time when the ERA was introduced, and for some time before, Annette was a deputy headteacher at Merrywhite, a large primary school in the same neighbourhood as King Offa. In 1985 she had the opportunity to be acting head of Merrywhite for one year while the incumbent head was seconded to the LEA.

King Offa was part of an Education Action Zone which then became an Excellence in Cities group. Annette had been fully involved in these, being a member of the steering group and a number of committees. This work was in addition to her role as a headteacher and had often extended her daily working hours well into double figures. A little over a year before the interview for this study Annette had suffered a nervous breakdown which resulted in some weeks off school before the summer holiday; a term on 'light duties', sharing the headship responsibility with her deputy, until the Christmas break; and large, but gradually

reducing, doses of anti-depressant drugs which she stopped taking shortly before the interview. Annette describes herself as a complier, saying of the initiatives

> The whole thing is focused towards actually achieving better levels in English and maths. That is not child centred at all, that is a central government, a purely central government agenda, it's not a school agenda it's one we are compelled by law to follow.

And later;

I don't break the law and I don't encourage anyone to do it, so I go along with it.

This view is supported by her link inspector (who also happens to be the senior inspector) who says that her agenda has come from the national initiatives, and "if she had a free hand she would have had a very different approach."
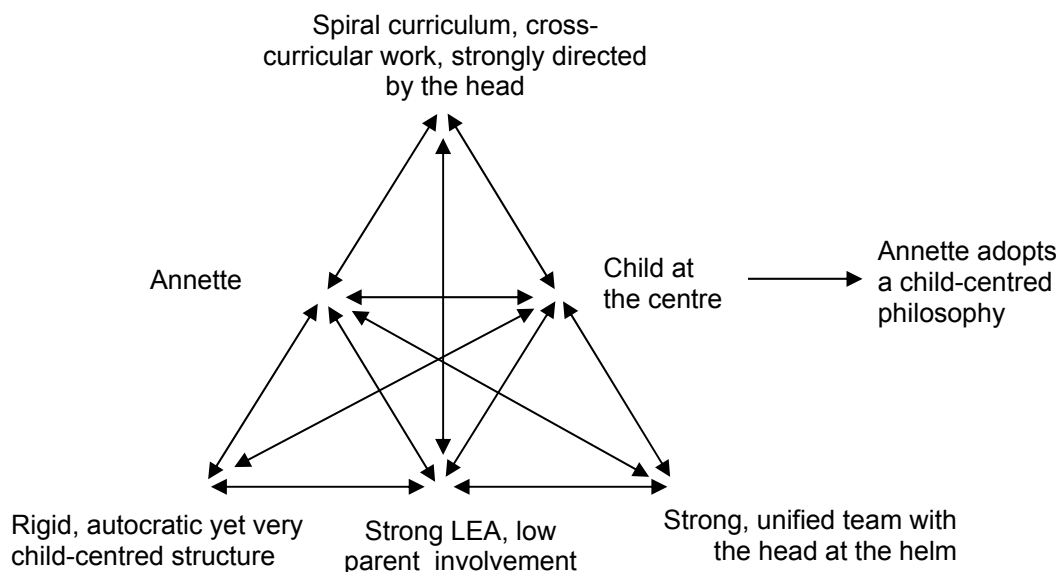
Figure 6.3 Annette, prior to the ERA (Deputy at Merrywhite School)

At Merrywhite School, Annette was subject to two strong influences, to which she responded in different ways. The child-centred influence, espoused by both the headteacher and the LEA, which was the overwhelming ethos of the school, had a positive response from her and a developmental effect on her professional identity. It became the foundation of her educational philosophy and was incorporated into all her professional ideals. The very

autocratic nature of her headteacher (described by Frances as 'a bully') in that school, however, had a negative response, causing her to say I do *not* want to lead a school in that manner, but also had a positive effect, leading her to adopt a more collegiate management style as part of her professional identity.

National curriculum, subject-based work, grudgingly directed by the head

Annette

Attempt to put child at the centre of subject-led curriculum

Tensions between philosophy and actuality

Traditionally, a collegiate school with strong leadership

Strong DfES, weaker LEA, low parent involvement

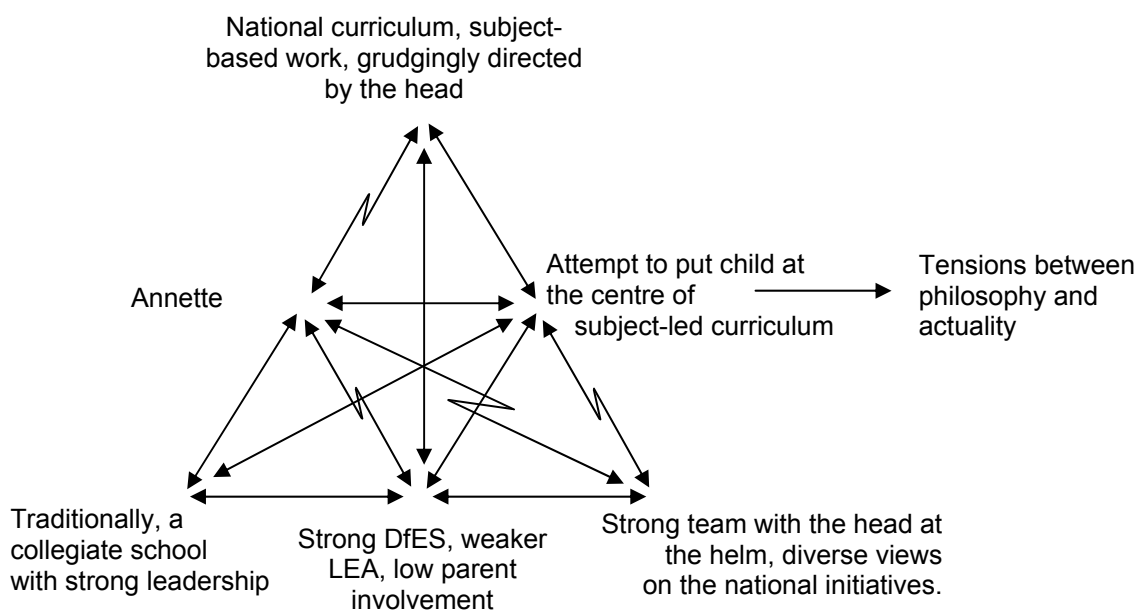Strong team with the head at the helm, diverse views on the national initiatives.

Figure 6.4 Annette in 2005 (Head at King Offa school)

It may be seen from the activity triangle (Figure 6.4) that in 2005, about the time of the interviews, Annette was in a situation where a great deal of tension existed in the school context within which she was working. Each of the broken arrows represents one or more points of conflict between her professional identity and either the activity taking place within the school or the wishes of other participants in that context. Although this was after what she refers to as her "nervous breakdown caused by stress" it is evident that there is still considerable pressure within the school. The main differences between the point just prior to her illness and this point are that she had now decided to retire (and was counting the days) and that she had now learned to "say no, I'm not doing any more and that's it, …

because there's nothing more important, as you discover when you think you're going round the bend, there is nothing more important than keeping on an even keel".

National curriculum, subject-based
curriculum but work approached in a
child-centred way

Annette

Child still at the centre,
but reference to
the National Curriculum

Increasing pressure
on headteacher but
sufficient support

Traditionally a child-centred
school but moving towards
a curriculum-based
approach

Strong DfES, strong
governor involvement,
strong parental support

Small but strong team, very
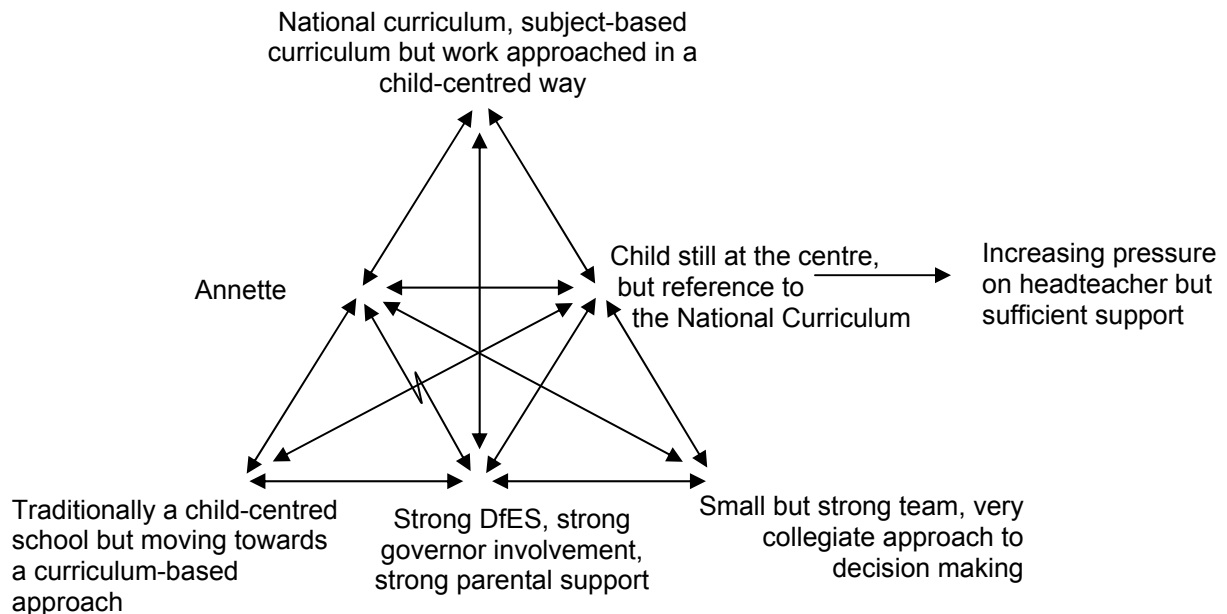collegiate approach to
decision making

Figure 6.5 Annette, head at Cross Gate School, after the ERA

When Annette became headteacher at Cross Gate School the National Curriculum had already been established and the Dearing revisions had been introduced. The parental involvement was high and governors were "far more questioning" than at Merrywhite, and "were very, very, very involved in the school on a daily basis, not as a critical friend but working in the school, they knew what happened down to the tiniest detail". Conversely, she says that at Merrywhite, before the ERA, the governors were very supportive, but "really did not have the power they do now, since, 'um' the LEA were omnipotent". The high level of governor involvement at Cross Gate seems to have been a very important feature of the school management, as Annette mentioned this, without being prompted, three times during the main interview. The governors at King Offa are also mentioned, and are considered to be very supportive, but more compliant than at Cross Gate, whereas the governors at Cross Gate School were more involved and the whole team (governors, staff and parents) were, as

a group, more supportive than at the other two schools. In addition, the parents at Cross Gate were keen to help their children and to support them through SATs, since test results seemed to be more important to them than at King Offa. She alludes to this when she explains the difference between test preparation at Cross Gate and King Offa schools.

> I can remember when national curriculum tests first came in which was when I was at Cross Gate. We just did them and didn't do any preparation whatsoever, they just came in one day and did the tests, and that was it, no preparation, never seen a paper like it before, they just did it, and my attitude was it will show what they are actually capable of. Now that is how tests should be done, but tests don't work like that.

This extra support from governors and parents combined with the lack of further initiatives, such as the EAZ pressure, NLS and NNS in the early days of the National Curriculum and the simpler test regime will have served to minimise the stress upon Annette at that school. This is shown in Figure 6.5 by the small number of conflicts compared with Figure 6.4. The broken arrow in Figure 6.5 represents two points of tension at Cross Gate School, a small, organisational difference with governors (regarding time and length of meetings) and the increasing pressure for a curriculum-based approach from the DfES, which, at that time was not yet intensified by further initiatives. The first of two factors serving as a catalyst for Annette's nervous breakdown at King Offa School was the comparatively reduced support, particularly from parents, occurring at the same time as extra pressures from further initiatives. The second was the increased tensions caused by more disparity between her professional identity and the curriculum-based context of her work.

2. Barbara

Barbara was the longest-serving headteacher in the study, having been a head for 26 years and had led three inner-city schools in areas of higher-than-average deprivation. She says this was her choice, and she could not have been a teacher or headteacher in a different area.

That's certainly been by choice, because my absolute determined vision for working in school and working as a teacher is to ensure that we have high expectations of children in deprived areas, and with those high expectations to actually help support pupils, parents and school develop so that pupils develop to their very highest – in the round – we're not just talking totally academically but that is perhaps the highest priority always, that pupils will have their highest level of achievement.

At her first school, St Jude's in Birmingham, there was a great deal of support from the LEA and the inspectorate, yet she felt that there was sufficient autonomy for her, "as a headteacher to develop St Jude's, not simply a primary school". This allowed her to draw on her own professional identity to develop the educational philosophy and ethos for the school. This philosophy encompassed a child-centred approach, stressing motivation and enjoyment and, in addition, high expectations.

Seeing pupils succeed, being happy and enjoying and moving on to other things, and meeting them later in their life and seeing what they have achieved. … So the objective of being the headteacher, really, is to ensure that the pupils coming in are given the *best* possible opportunity with the highest level of expectations so that they leave as highly motivated pupils to their high school and you were left, probably to your own devices too much to determine how that would come about.

At the time when Barbara was headteacher at St Jude's School, she felt that the power of the governing body, and of individual governors, was far less than it has become in more recent years. In addition, she felt that the balance of power between the LEA and the DfES (so far as the day-to-day running of the school was concerned) lay far more towards the LEA end of the spectrum than the DfES; and that the parents, at that time, had far more respect for, and gave far more support to, the professional decisions of the teachers and the headteacher.

When these features of the school context are shown on the activity triangle, they suggest that, once again, during the period just before the introduction of the ERA the perceived autonomy of the headteacher allowed the structure of the primary school to have fewer conflicts and therefore lower stress for them. Her object, the motivation for her work, was

the motivation of the children. This was very strongly expressed and reiterated a number of times.

> To ensure that each pupil coming in, goes out to high school with the highest expectations, motivated and still keen to learn and not feeling that education is about receiving lots of information that they have to process.

Moreover, this was the focus of her relationships with the staff and the driving force behind her collegiate management style.

> I don't think that any person in a school should have any presumptions about hierarchy or their role other than supporting that absolutely main objective. Whether they are an NQT or a trainee, or the headteacher, whoever it is, that has to be the driving force of going into that building each day. So the role of the headteacher, in a sense, is to motivate the team she's working with and ensure that objective is kept uppermost, so the children matter most.

Cross-curricular work,
directed by the head

Barbara

Child at the centre
and emphasis ⟶ on motivation

Barbara develops
her child-centred
philosophy

Headteacher leads a
collegiate, child-centred
structure

Strong LEA, high
parental support,
headteacher autonomy

Staff work as a team and
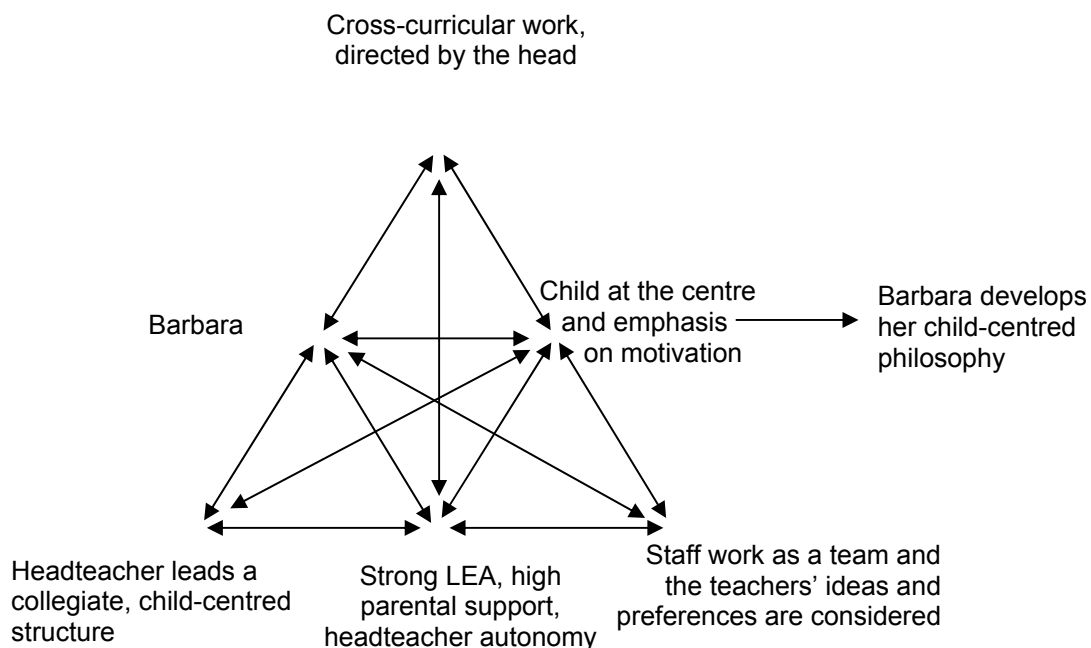the teachers' ideas and
preferences are considered

Figure 6.6 Barbara prior to ERA (Head at St Jude's School)

The detail which Barbara gave about her second school, King Edwards, was rather more sketchy than her details about St Jude's or Eastfield. She does point out, however, that her object, approach and relationships at this school were similar to those at St Jude's. This means that the activity triangle is similar, but there was less autonomy for the headteacher

and the power of the LEA was diminishing and the power of the DfES growing. Although

Barbara worked in a similar way, with the same drive at this school, she was not as happy

here as at either of the other schools. The reason for this may not have been the changes

occurring after the ERA, but more to do with it being a first, rather than a primary, school.

> In some senses it was a mistake because although it was a big school and in a sense it
> was a promotion because there were five hundred pupils there – um – being a first
> school the pupils left at the age of nine, and suddenly I found myself, for those six
> years, missing the ten and eleven year-olds who you could see them at the age nine
> they were just really ready to motor and really move on with their - their English and
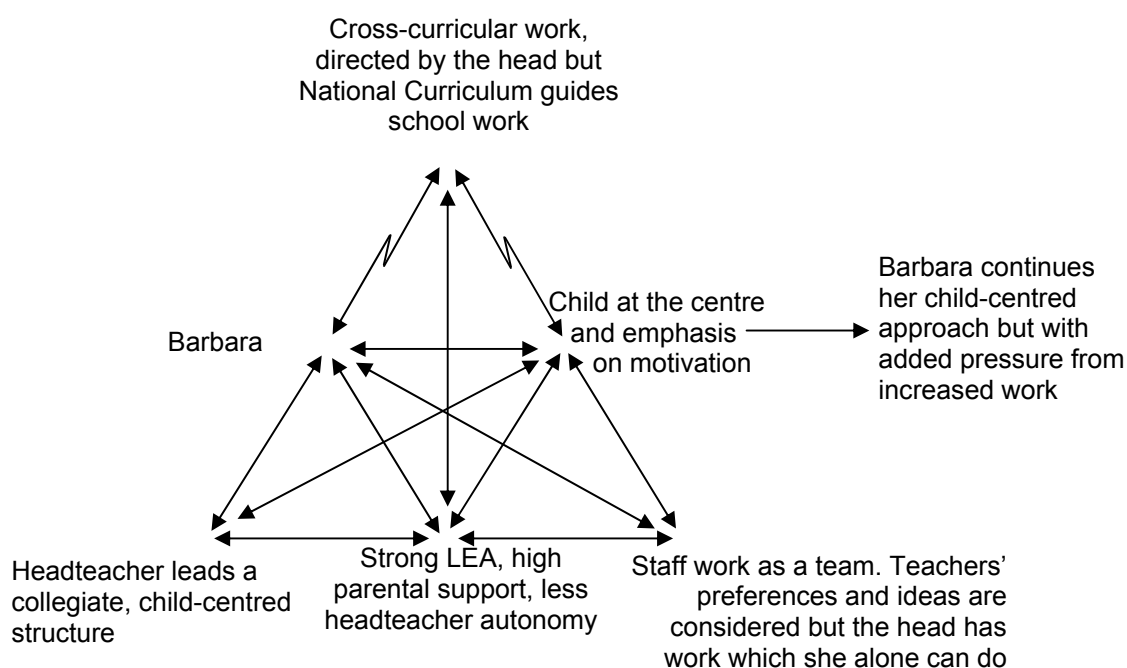> their maths and other areas and you could feel – whoosh – they'd gone.

Figure 6.7 Barbara early ERA (Head at King Edwards School)

One point Barbara made about being a headteacher this period was that the intensity of

the changes, the rate of introduction of further initiatives and the time allowed to introduce

them into the school, was very high, and the work involved increased the headteacher's load

immensely. The particular initiative which she regarded as needing a great deal of time was

the introduction of LMS, and the lack of training that accompanied it. She went on to say,

however, that it has been one of the most positive steps made post-ERA as it has allowed

headteachers to plan and organise their schools in far greater detail.

So to have control of the budget was a very big step forward – very big step forward, and gradually, as time has gone on, it has enabled schools to really plan their staffing, their resourcing, and providing the resources have been substantial enough – that's ok.

A further point she made, not directly to do with initiatives, was that King Edwards School was in a less deprived area, which detracted from the satisfaction she derived from the job. This had two effects; first, she said "that made me more determined to do a good job of work there and I must have taught, at that time, for at least half of the curriculum time," which, at a time when more organisational work was needed, caused a greater workload. Second, she looked for a more fulfilling position in an area where she felt that she could be of greater benefit.

> At King Edwards First School there were elements of deprivation but it was nothing like the deprivation we experience here at Eastfield and nothing like the deprivation in other schools I've worked in. So I wasn't getting that level of professional – you know – buzz that I get here and in other places, yes. … When I saw a job come up in Mercia at Eastfield, and I knew the background to the school I thought, "I'm *really* going for that job," and I was very lucky and was appointed.

Barbara was appointed to the headship of Eastfield Primary School in 1993, as the pressure to comply with government initiatives was increasing and Ofsted inspections were becoming a regular feature at schools in Mercia. Soon after she arrived at Eastfield the school received its first Ofsted inspection and a situation arose where the registered inspector had a difference of opinion with her regarding teaching to the National Curriculum in reception classes. This led to a disagreement, about which she says; "I almost enjoy the challenge, the combat of situations and in our first Ofsted it was wonderful because one of those situations arose that I could really get my teeth into," … "I quite enjoyed that, it was nice to have that sort of conflict going on – you know – cop this mate!" This incident demonstrates Barbara's tendency to be a resister; a point which she makes, but qualifies; "I am a resister, on balance, but there have been, throughout the years, very high levels of compliance as well, because there has been no choice." This resistance where it is possible

(and appropriate) but compliance where it was necessary, or where she felt it was suitable, is

different from Annette and led to different consequences regarding health.

More curriculum based
work. National Curriculum
guides school work

Barbara

Child at the centre
and emphasis
on motivation

Barbara continues with
a reduced child-
centred approach and
further added pressure
from increased work

Headteacher leads a
collegiate, more
curriculum-led structure

Strong DfES input, low
parental support, little
headteacher autonomy

Staff work as a team. Teachers'
preferences and ideas are
considered but the head has
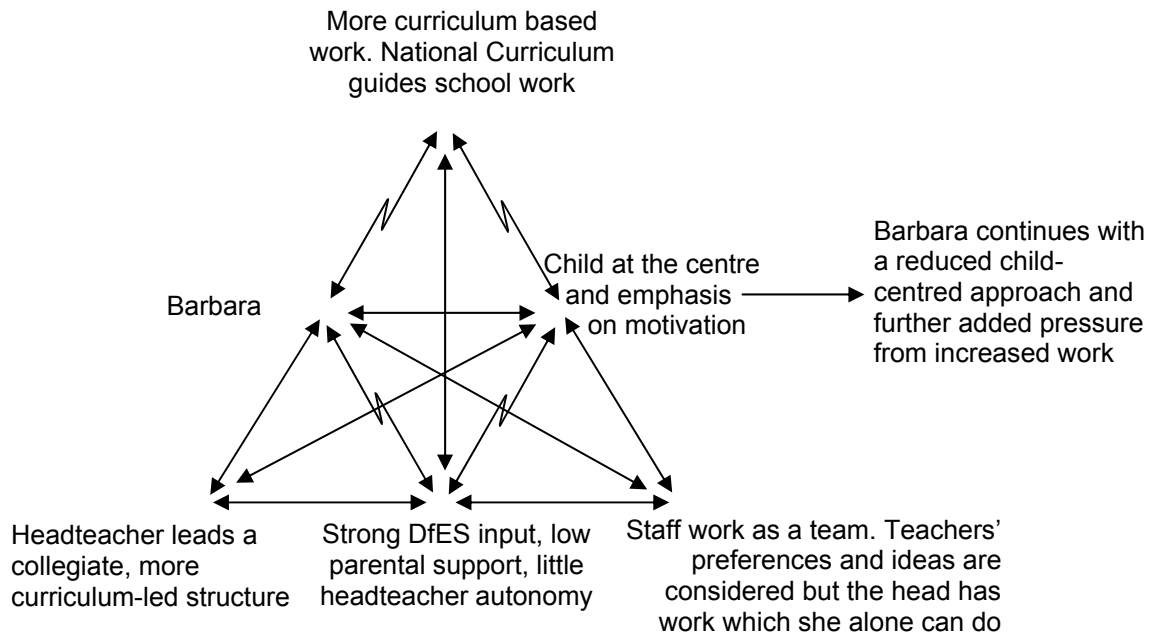work which she alone can do

Figure 6.8 Barbara 2005 (Head at Eastfield School)

It may be seen from Figure 6.8 that there were areas where considerable conflict existed

between Barbara's professional identity and the context in which she was working. Since

she was a resister, this led to her working much harder to overcome these difficulties. This

extra effort and tension, combined with her striving to be continually, and immediately, 'on

top of' anything happening in the school led, eventually, to constant hypertension which

precipitated heart problems, a reduction in working hours and premature retirement.

> I just love the buzz the moment I arrive, I just love the assemblies, meeting parents,
> meeting people, discussions, going into classes, from 8 o'clock in the morning until
> whenever, it just goes on and on daily. The cardiologist, when I described what my
> life was like, said, "Adrenalin when it's flowing is not healthy if you have it all the
> time at those sort of levels" He said, "you might think you are enjoying it but it's
> having its wear and tear impact in a way that you just don't realise" You might come
> away from the day thinking oh that was fantastic, but you've maintained those
> adrenalin levels for too long and too many years and it's time to say hang on a minute
> your body is not going to take it.

3. Chloe

Unlike Annette and Barbara, Chloe had only been a headteacher in one school, but that headship had lasted 24 years. She had taught at three schools in her career; two as a teacher, and then one as deputy headteacher, after which she was promoted to headteacher in the same school. Her career path also differs in the regimes in the schools at which she taught. These could be considered 'traditional,' or autocratic, curriculum-led establishments. This early teaching experience would suggest that Chloe might develop a similar professional identity and thus have a fairly autocratic leadership style and a curriculum-centred approach to teaching and learning. This was, indeed, the case.

Since Chloe had been a headteacher at the same school since 1981, well before the introduction of the ERA, she was in a similar position throughout the three points considered by this study. Any similarities and differences in the activity triangles, therefore, might be particularly pertinent in judging the effects of the government initiatives, since other factors were fairly stable. Conversely, the curriculum-led style adopted by Chloe might ameliorate other factors which caused difficulties for headteachers with a more child-centred approach.
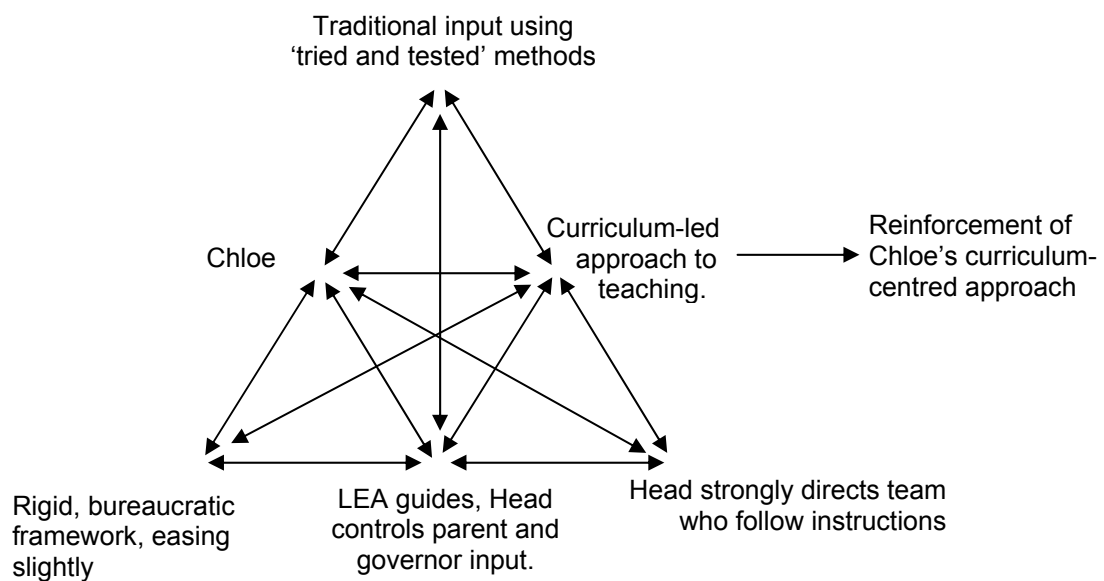

Figure 6.9: Chloe's context prior to ERA (Barnfield School)

When Chloe had taught in Barnfield School as deputy headteacher for eight years the previous headteacher retired and Chloe became headteacher herself. At that point she began to make some changes to make the whole curriculum more accessible to all children, overcoming, to some degree, the inequality of provision which existed for girls and boys.

> It's a bit unnerving to actually think that there was a culture of; for example its really difficult to imagine and say this, but it was deemed appropriate at some stage when I came into the school that the boys actually did Science and the girls did something else and that's really quite unnerving to actually … so I'd actually begun to sort of change that

While these changes were important and fundamental to the curriculum within the school, they did not affect the curriculum-centred nature of the ethos. Chloe's professional identity had developed in schools with this type of ethos and she continued to concentrate on the curriculum as the essential focus for the development of the children. The introduction of the ERA and the initiatives which immediately followed it reinforced this curricular focus and strengthened Chloe's curriculum-centred approach. There were some initiatives which caused a little difficulty, but these did not conflict with Chloe's object and therefore the tension between her professional identity and the direction dictated by the ERA was low.
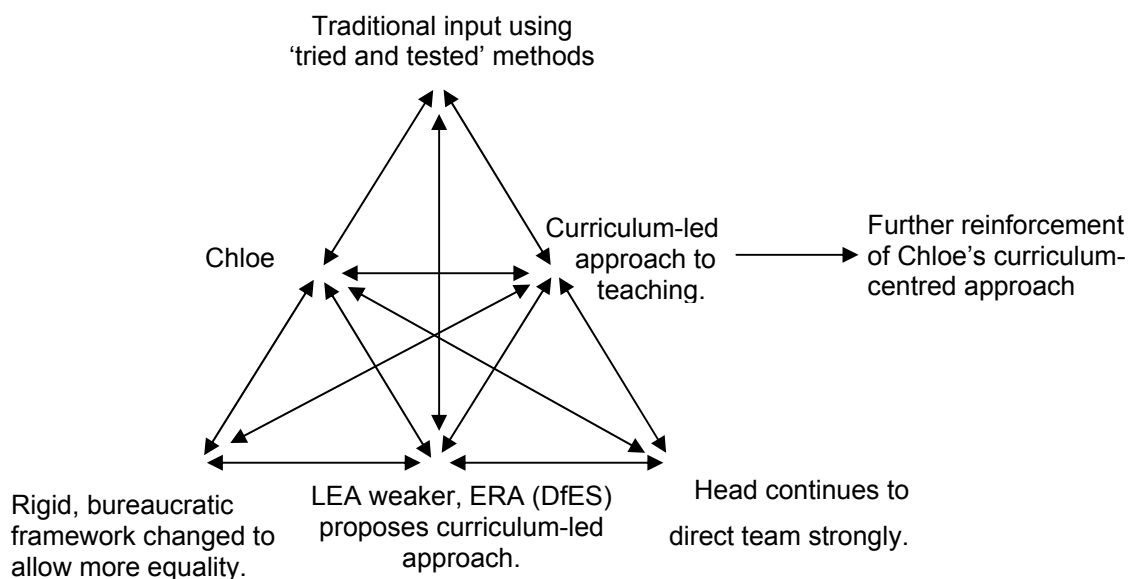
Figure 6.10: Chloe after the ERA (Barnfield School)

Chloe considers her current management style to be very different from that which she had when she started as a headteacher.

> when I sort of had my first headship well, this headship, there was no training as such you actually adopted or took on board the model that I suppose you had worked under and that tended to be sort of very autocratic … the style of management that I have now … is totally different … there is greater ownership right across the staff spectrum.

When she compares her current style with her previous management techniques, therefore, she recognises that it has become far less autocratic and now there is much more potential for staff involvement and consideration of other people's ideas. When compared with other current headteachers, though, she is still seen as wielding a firm hand where management of the school is concerned. This was the impression given by other headteachers, who, when discussing their own management styles, cited her as an example of autocratic management, and also by the link inspector. When asked about Chloe's style of management he said:

> Autocratic – trying to create the impression that it is collegiate, that there is consultation, but that is not what I believe from my discussions with the headteacher and it is not what the staff tell me.

While Chloe is comparing her present style with her own style in the past and the inspector is comparing her style with other headteachers that he knows it is evident that there is a difference in Chloe's perception of her management and the actuality. The impression given by these apparently conflicting views is that while the headteacher may have mellowed from being initially dictatorial, she currently still has a rather autocratic management style. This impression is reinforced by the latest Ofsted report which comments upon the "very clear, strong management by the headteacher."

Figure 6.11 reflects this current clear, strong management style, and the lack of tensions within any of the three activity triangles for Chloe is an indication of the closeness of her curriculum-centred approach to that introduced by the ERA and the National Curriculum.

The few concerns which she did have with the initiatives, other than the lack of training for LFM which was common to most longer-serving headteachers, was where they may have suggested that some move towards a more open, less traditional approach might be needed. One of these was the suggestion in early National Curriculum maths that there might be a diminution in the 'learning of tables.' The other was the possibility that Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) might teach classes while teachers had their PPA time. Chloe stressed that she would find a way to ensure that PPA time was covered by qualified teachers, while at the same time she always referred to teaching assistants (whatever their status – whether TA or HLTA) as 'classroom assistants', thus keeping the words 'assistant' and 'teaching' separate at all times.

Traditional input using
'tried and tested' methods

Chloe

Curriculum-led
approach to
teaching.

Further reinforcement of
Chloe's curriculum-led
approach by test results
and Ofsted report.

Continuing, but
possibly reducing
bureaucracy.

DfES curriculum-led
approach continues with
head directing input from
other stakeholders.

Head continues directing
team strongly but suggests
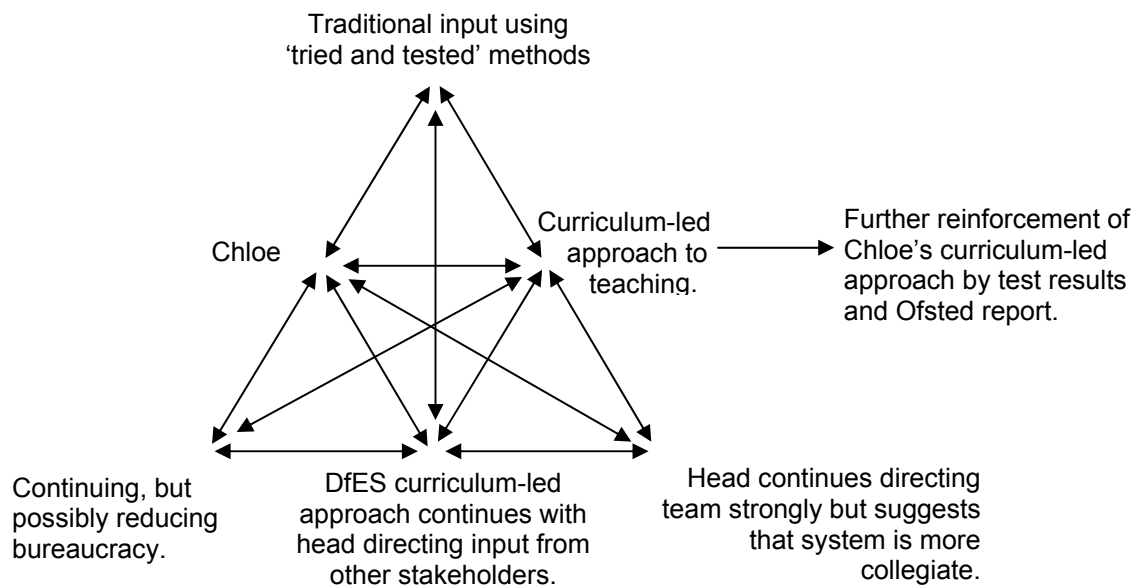that system is more
collegiate.

Figure 6.11: Chloe's current school context

Chloe's position as a previously curriculum-centred headteacher led to her acceptance of the ERA and the National Curriculum along with the other, accompanying initiatives. This suggests that she is a natural complier, since, for her there is little to resist. When asked, however, she considered that she would be neither complier, nor resister, but pre-empter,

since she was advocating many of the approaches before the advent of the National Curriculum.

4. Dianne

Dianne is the fourth longer-serving headteacher. The first two years of her teaching experience was abroad, in Hong Kong, and then she moved back to Britain and took up a post in a large primary school in the Home Counties. This was, in her own words, "a very left-wing school" which was in the vanguard of the child-centred movement, where "the care side of things was absolutely phenomenal." At this school, she says that:

> I re-learned how to be a teacher and forgot everything we had ever done before because there was a very enigmatic headteacher … and he had birds and animals of all varieties which the children were encouraged to look after, and in the same way that the children were encouraged to look after the animals in the community, the adults were encouraged to look after the children – as a 365 day job as it were.

This re-learning developed her educational philosophy which she said that she had retained throughout her career. She describes this school as being extremely tightly controlled by the left-wing headteacher, who was, nevertheless, open to the suggestions and opinions of others, providing they were in harmony with his philosophy.

From there, she moved, within the same local authority, to another school at the other extreme of the political and educational spectrum. This, she describes as being "appointed politically, to the furthest right-wing school in the county as deputy head." This school was run on historically tight, curriculum-led principles and "had the best results for [children passing the 11+ and thus] going to grammar school" in the county. It was a culturally diverse school with an intake which was growing so dramatically that, although a new purpose-built school building had been opened, the old site continued to be used. As deputy headteacher in this old building, with the headteacher on the other site, Dianne says that she

was, at this point, effectively a teaching head. In addition, during her time at this school she updated many of the resources which she thought were outdated and bigoted and felt it was her 'responsibility to bring up-to-date and to make acceptable.' This, she achieved, giving her a sense of achievement despite being in a school where the philosophy conflicted with her professional identity. In addition, her relationship with the headteacher of this school was both professional and friendly, so she felt that she could use her powers of persuasion to influence some of the decisions, thus enhancing her feelings of success and professional effectiveness and reducing feelings of failure which may have given rise to stress. Although Dianne spent some time at this second school, her professional identity and educational philosophy were forged at the first. She says that she has retained this – "A lot of my education philosophy, as it were, now – has come from that time."
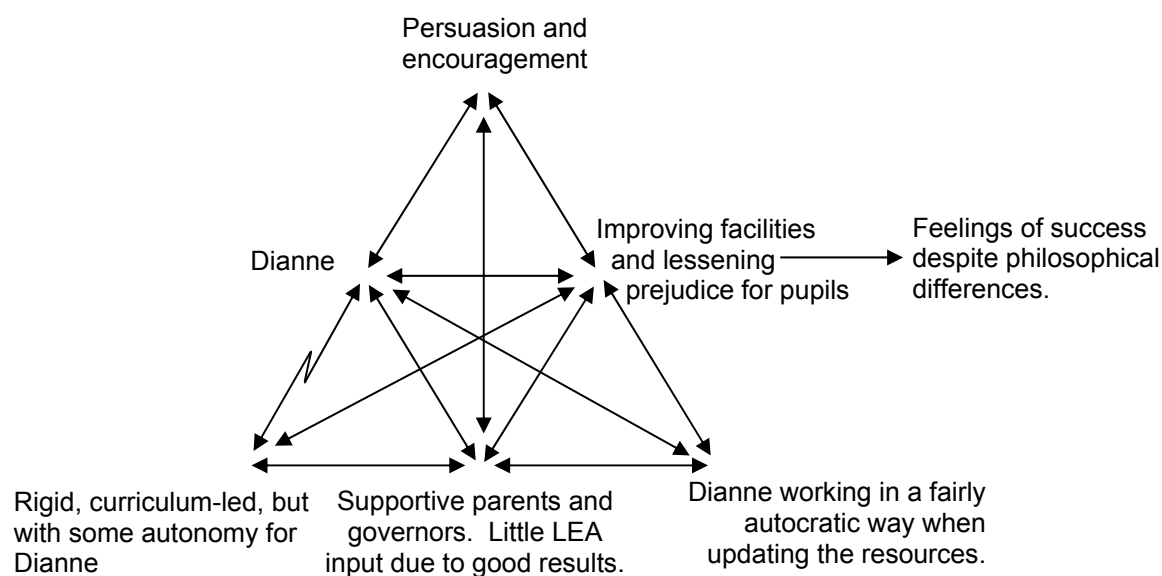

Figure 6.12: Dianne prior to ERA at split-site school.

The initial context, for the purposes of this study (Figure 6.12), when Dianne was at this split-site school, shortly prior to her move to Mercia, was a time when she was settled, but there were a few difficulties in her professional life. First was the clash between her professional identity and the school philosophy. This was somewhat relieved by her

autonomy as 'effectively a teaching head,' although in some ways it presented a challenge to her professional status in that school since it brought about the feeling that she was, indeed, a suitable candidate for headship. Furthermore, she spent a great deal of time commuting between the sites for meetings and to avail herself of the secretarial services which were at the other site, except for two half-days a week when one of the school secretaries visited her site. These negative feelings were offset by the positive relationship with her headteacher and the professional success that she achieved.

In time, however, she applied for headships and in 1989 was appointed as the headteacher of a school in Mercia, just after the National Curriculum documents had arrived. This school was historically open, but a number of changes were needed, to update both the facilities and the procedures. She says, however, that, "we've made a lot of changes in the school here, but again my predecessor said 'I don't care what you do, as long as you keep t' atmosphere good' (said with a Lancashire accent) and that's what I've been trying to do." This tendency of the previous headteacher of the school to resist change was further demonstrated by the fact that they were one of the last schools in the country still teaching reading using the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA) system. Further evidence of this tendency to resist change was the National Curriculum documents which were secreted away in a drawer in the head's office. Recalling this, Dianne said:

> I opened the drawer and all the national curriculum documents were in a pile bound up with a bow and a post-it sticker on the top which said 'it makes interesting reading, he gets killed in the end'.

The school was, Dianne felt, another which was in need of change, but she made the decision that the two most necessary could not be accomplished together. She spoke to the staff and then persuaded the LEA that it would be necessary to defer the introduction of the National Curriculum for two years in order to phase out ITA within the school. At the time

179

she felt this was the best way forward and that, if necessary, she could defend it if questioned by Ofsted. To her delight it was, in the end, the correct approach as it meant that the school did not undergo the traumas associated with the precipitous introduction of the National Curriculum followed by the changes which rapidly ensued. They established the National Curriculum within the school after The Dearing Report's recommendations had been introduced, thus avoiding much of the stress suffered by teachers and headteachers in other schools.
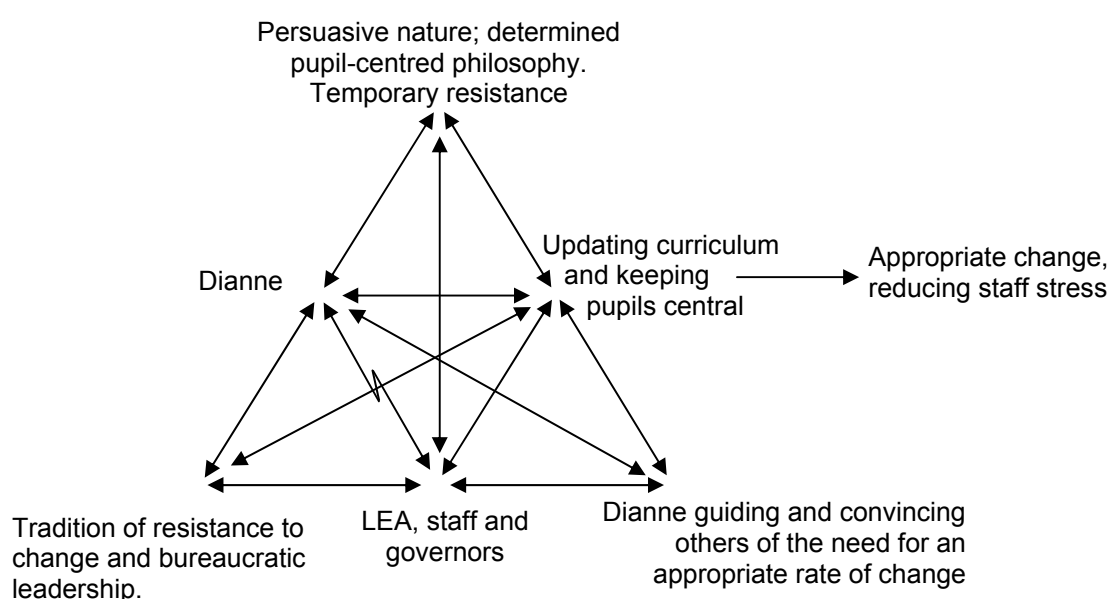

Figure 6.13: First two years in Mercia

This period was not without its tensions for Dianne. She recalls that "the LEA were pulling their hair out with me, the first two years I was appointed, they thought I was a maverick because I refused to start the national curriculum." She also recalls, however, that the LEA noticed how happy her staff were compared with other schools, though this did not stop them putting pressure on her to hasten the introduction of the National Curriculum. During this time she also needed to convince the governors periodically that her delay was appropriate, and although they backed her it was still a source of stress. In addition, during this period, she found it necessary to suspend (and ultimately dismiss) a member of staff,

which also caused some stress, but ultimately won her the respect of the staff, governors and LEA.

Gradually, during this period, Dianne says that she also introduced a more collegiate style of management than the previous headteacher, which also gave the teaching staff more confidence and a more professional, whole-school outlook. Dianne's descriptions of her caring approach and collegiate style were reinforced during the interviews with inspectors, although this was tempered by the impression that she had become less efficient, missing appointments and misplacing documents. The inspector pointed out that this had been the case for some time but had increased recently and *certainly* increased in times of stress. It is interesting to note that about three months before the interviews Dianne's school had been the subject of an Ofsted inspection.

At the time of the interviews Dianne was feeling very tired and felt that the pressure on her seemed to be mounting.

> I don't know whether it's my age, or the thousands of initiatives or whatever, but I feel tired. I think I intimated to you before that this is the worst start to a year I have had, and I've never felt the pressure like it.

Her feeling was that both the pace of initiatives had increased and that the time available for consolidation between them had decreased, and also that the variety of changes had recently become greater, rather than being related to curricular issues.

> That was curriculum and there's always more than one way to skin a cat, so we can approach things in a different way, but the curriculum still remains the curriculum. The kind of things coming in now are far closer together many of them and going into every walk of school life, managing and teaching; through the PPA time, through the restructuring of staffing, through all the things that we are busy doing for inspections; nothing stays, you know, you're happy with your self evaluation at any one time but then they allow you to do that for a very short period of time before they change – now we want to do it this way and so everything now needs re-jigging to go in there, its stopped being self evaluation and you should never do that but it's the method for some bureaucratic reason. It's driven by bureaucrats.

Dianne felt that she was essentially a complier and that her initial, temporary resistance to implementation of the National Curriculum was necessary to allow the children to benefit from it in the long-term. This was, however, in contradiction to other points she made during her interview and to the opinion of the local inspector, both of which suggested that she was essentially a resister who would find ways (some rather devious) of delaying implementation or even of not implementing parts of initiatives which she felt might not necessarily be advantageous to the children. She felt, though, that it was necessary to comply with the changes current at the time of the interview since they were statutory and that, as many were managerial changes, they would not cause any difficulties for the children or staff.
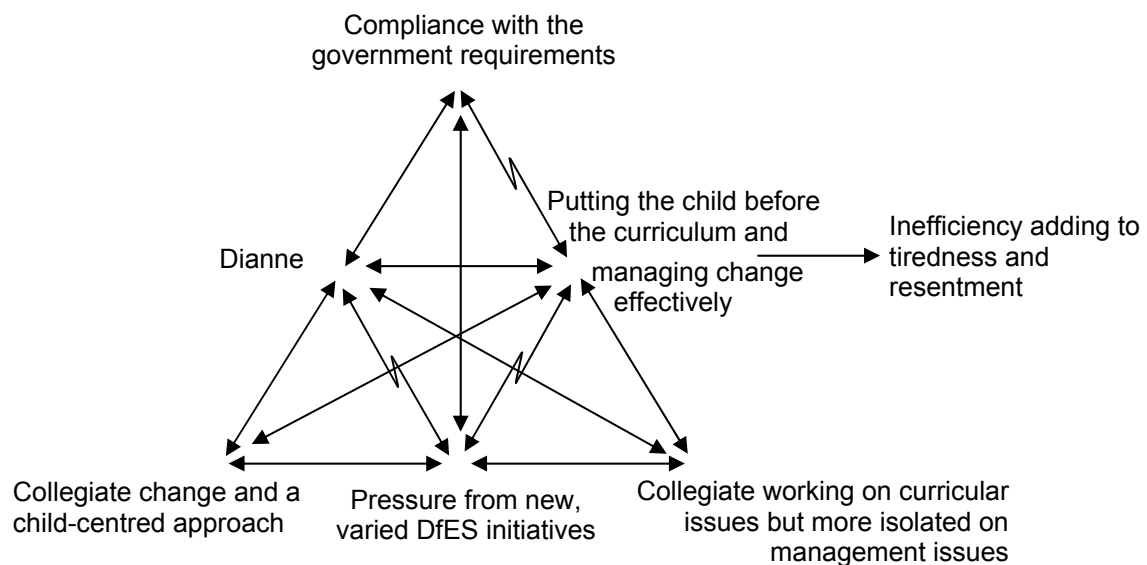

Figure 6.14: The current situation with high stress levels

While curricular change was still considered in a collegiate fashion, she felt that the managerial changes, such as the introduction of PPA time and completing ever-changing self-evaluation forms for Ofsted, were duties which she could only carry out individually or with a small group of senior staff. The pace of these changes had caused her to give up some work she was doing with trainee teachers, which she had particularly enjoyed, and this

was another cause of dissatisfaction with the educational system which, she felt, was continually adding to her burden. This pressure, tiredness and dissatisfaction with the system had combined to cause her to consider retiring from headship and move into full-time teacher training.

5. Emily.

At the time of the interviews, Emily was a fairly new headteacher who had previously been an acting head for over a year in a different part of the country following the death of the previous head for whom she had been deputy. Prior to his death, the previous head had a particularly bureaucratic style of management which, as acting headteacher, Emily had sought to gradually change. Her professional identity was based upon principles laid down in her early career and, before that, through parental influence. These principles suggested that the correct approach to any job was to work hard, do your best and please others. In addition, she had previously worked in a school in which the child-centred principle of encouraging curiosity and a love of learning had been prevalent. This had influenced her professional identity and given her a tendency to put the child before the curriculum, though this was marginalised at times by the stronger principle of pleasing others.

Follow routines but
encourage a love of
learning in pupils

Emily   Hard work and   Low stress situation with
                         pleasing   substantial professional
                         people.   development

School is a closed   Headteacher bureaucratic   Headteacher works
system ruled by the   and other stakeholders have independently and
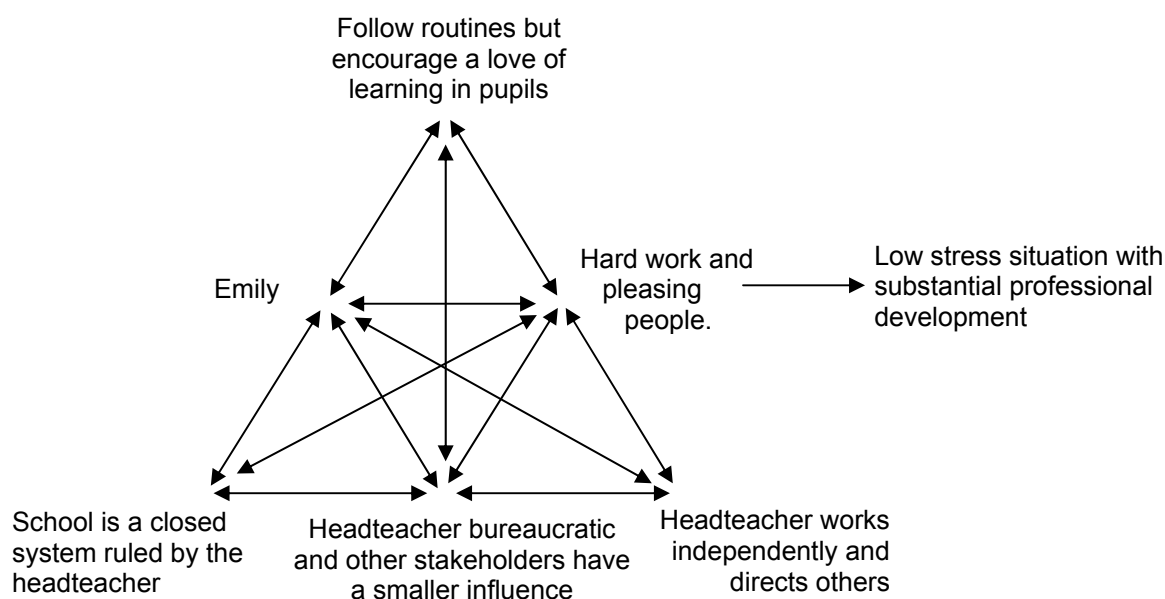headteacher   a smaller influence   directs others

Figure 6:15: Emily pre-ERA; bureaucratic context

Although Emily had a long tenure as acting headteacher, she had not secured the
headship when interviews were held. She had subsequently moved from that school after
friction between her and the new headteacher who had been appointed at that time. This
was one of the most traumatic periods of her professional career and the repercussions of
this are dealt with in more depth later. About the time of the ERA she was still at that
school and was suffering from poor health, some of which was physical in nature (for which
she underwent a number of operations in quick succession) and some of which (such as the
onset of asthma) she is sure were related to the stress which she was under due to her poor
relationship with the headteacher.

> So the pressures of this meant that probably I didn't sleep that well because you'd lie
> in bed thinking "Oh dear," so your sleep patterns were disrupted. Eh, I just tried to
> work harder and harder, you know, this 'try hard' again, trying to please people
> without actually getting anywhere and as I say eh, I don't know, I seemed to come
> down with a lot in those days, I was diagnosed in that particular spell with asthma and
> that started in those days, blood pressure although it's only recently been confirmed
> but there were some signs that it was increasing then, and I put those things down to
> the pressure I was under.

184

Additional sources of stress during that period were the breakdown of her marriage and declining relationships with her children, which, at least to some degree, she also thinks were related to her work situation.

> I think through that time I went through a divorce and again although it probably wasn't the primary reason it certainly contributed to it … and although I was probably quite irritable with my children they were at the stage where I suppose they were hormonal you know, teens with the boys and that, they wanted to get to be king of the roost. But I behaved in ways that were probably out of character for me so, heightened levels of aggression I suppose and lowered levels of tolerance, yes.

This difference between the pre-ERA and post-ERA situations is uncharacteristic for the headteachers in this study but serves to demonstrate another possible source of stress for headteachers which can occur before they are appointed to headships. Another headteacher (Frances) related a similar story during her interview.
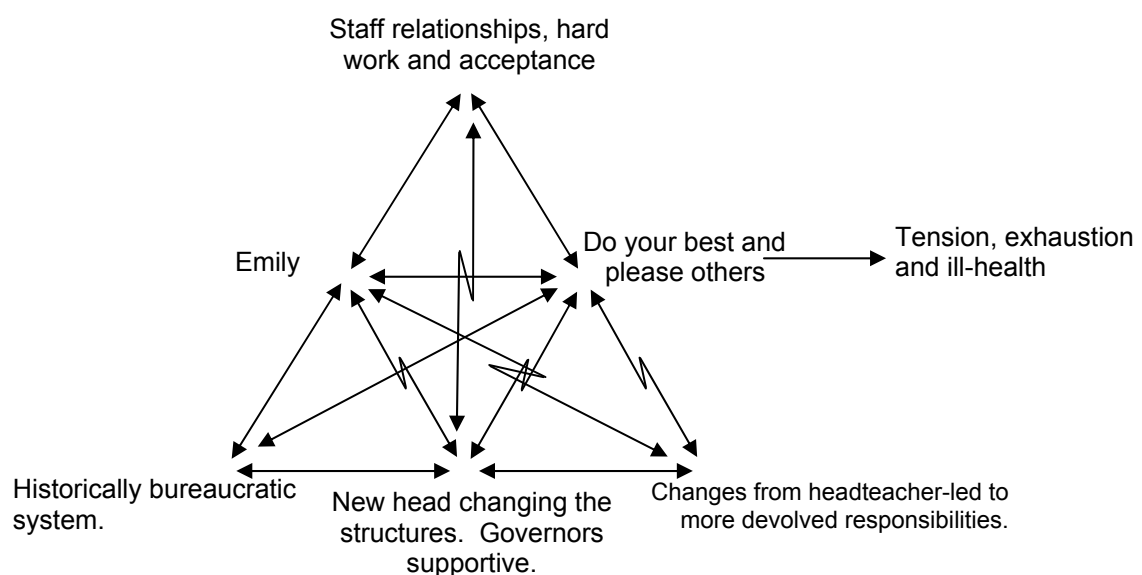
Figure 6:16: Emily post-ERA; high-stress context

Emily continued to work in this school for some years before moving to Mercia, where she started working as a supply teacher in a number of schools across the area before being asked to take on a one-term contract at King Offa Primary School. This extended to a one-year teaching post, towards the end of which she felt sufficiently well to start applying for local headships.

Her experience, coupled with her masters degree in school management put her in a strong position and she obtained a headship at the second school to which she applied. This was the school which she was leading at the time of the interviews. When asked for a third context, between the pre-ERA school and the current one, Emily felt that the current situation and the high-stress context were sufficient. This may be the case as the length of time she continued at the first school and the problems that she suffered at that time allow this context to be both pre-ERA and a time when she suffered very great tension. The pre-ERA bureaucratic context and the post-ERA high-stress contexts have both been included, however, to illustrate the extent of the change between the two contexts.

Her current school is a small, rural primary school where she is a teaching head; part of a teaching staff of six. Her object is still the same (work hard and please people) and she feels that her leadership style is collegiate. She did, however, point out that a recent survey of staff (conducted as part of her LPSH) suggested that her style was not as inclusive as she initially felt. This was supported by the interview with her local inspector who said that her style was more bureaucratic than she thought. One possible explanation for this is that she is comparing her style with that of the headteacher whom she replaced as acting head, who had a very bureaucratic, almost autocratic, style.

She feels that she is currently a little too easy-going with the staff, wanting to please them and not appear to be the hard-headed leader. This, she feels, is affecting the way in which the teachers perceive the current focus on pupil achievement and results in the end-of-key-stage tests. She describes this as her future being 'devil-horns'.

> I was explaining to someone yesterday, my future is, you know, devil horns just being a bit harder you know being a bit more of a devil and measuring with rulers that's sort of where I want to go because I'm very much aware that I am a please person and it worked to a certain extent but I need to be a little bit more task orientated person.
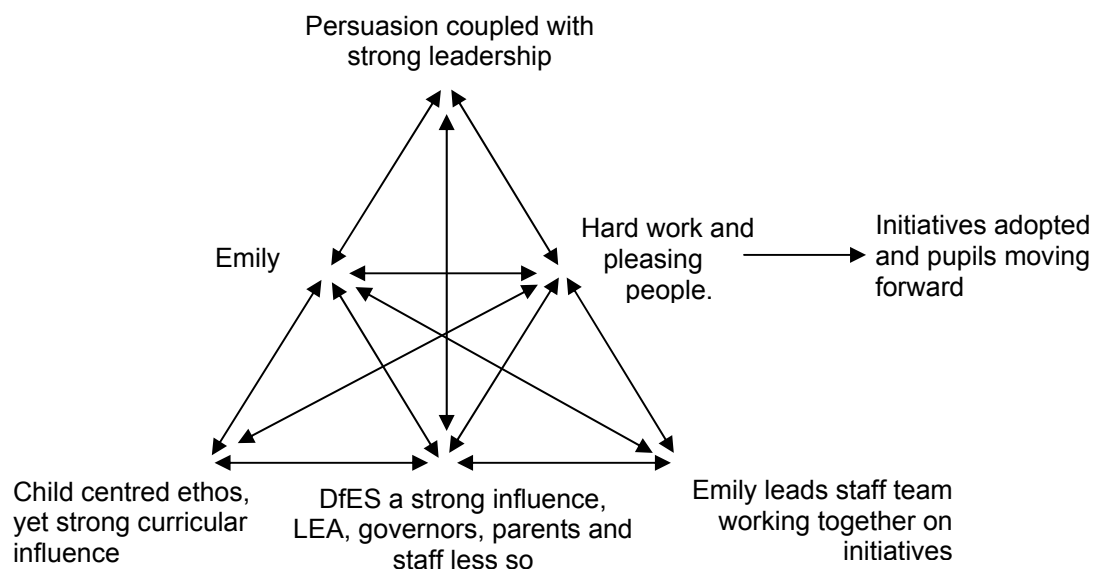
Figure 6.17: Emily in her current context

She also feels (and has been told by her staff) that she takes on too much of the work herself and does not delegate enough to them. This is part of her 'work hard and please people' ethic which directs her into completing tasks herself when they could be entrusted to another person. In addition, she tends to be a complier – she said this herself and a number of other comments she made also point to her compliance with government initiatives.

6. Frances.

At the time when the ERA was being introduced, Frances was just completing her 'primary re-orientation' course in order to move from secondary to primary teaching. She had asked a local inspector if she could make a career change and he had arranged for her to attend the course at a local college. Prior to this she was working in special education, as head of a unit for excluded children, but had felt that this was taking too much out of her and that she needed to change the course of her career.

187

I was basically burnt out in my opinion, so I went to one of the inspectorate at the time in Mercia who was coming up to retirement and I said, "Is there any way I can be seconded because I would like to train and go into primary education, I've had enough of the type of work I'm doing." I think I would probably have left education if he had said "no." So he got me onto a full time course, and they are extremely rare now, obviously, and it was called "Primary re-orientation."

Although she had been successful in this job, providing career opportunities for the majority of teenagers who attended the unit, the work was exhausting and Frances felt that it was absolutely necessary that she made this change.
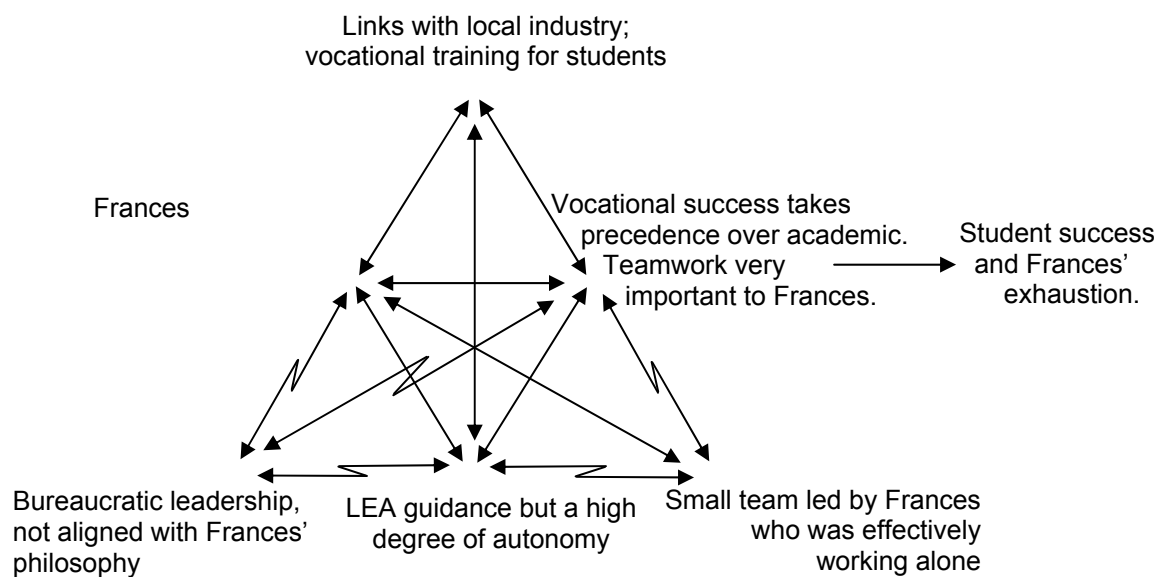

Figure 6.18: Frances prior to ERA in 'exclusion unit'

One of the placements for Frances during her primary re-orientation course was at Merrywhite School where, following the course, she was offered one term's supply work, which she took rather than returning as head of the exclusion unit (which was also an option since her course was regarded as secondment). This led to a job as a class teacher at the school, where, after two years, she became acting deputy headteacher. This was subsequently made a permanent appointment when a new headteacher was appointed. A little later the school also moved into a new building so there were substantial changes to the system.

During the development of the new school building and after the move into it the new headteacher took on the role of 'ambassador' for the new school and spent a great deal of time dealing with management issues and attending various meetings. Frances felt that this was the role that the headteacher wanted, rather than leading the school, and that he relished this work and left the educational side of the work to others.

> When that new school came along really he rubbed his hands in glee and went off and did his own thing basically and left the school. I don't think he ever, although the new school came I don't think he ever came back, in his mind, to be in charge of it. In fact I think I'd go so far as to say that he didn't ever want to be in charge of the education part of it, he liked being in charge of the building and the people but he didn't see his role as being the one, the one that everybody else would see.

Frances also felt that this being 'in charge of the building and the people' led to the headteacher being excessively demanding, to such a degree that she considered him to be coercing her into having an excessive workload.

> … he started not coming to school during term time but then would be there all holiday – and then started trying to insist that I'd be there in the holiday as well which certainly created conflict. At one point he tried to change my contract so that I could be contracted to work in the evening as well as my teaching commitment.

There would seem to have been some degree of animosity between Frances and her headteacher at that time, which may not necessarily have all been caused by the head. The inspector who worked with her at that school commented that her stress manifested itself in "a breakdown in communication between her and the previous headteacher which led to a hardening of views and an intolerance of being asked to do something," so that while Frances considered that the headteacher was being intolerant, he thought the same of her.

Working to set criteria in
order to oppose the head

Teamwork for
the children's
benefit

A high degree of
stress and growing
intolerance

Frances

Rules unstable with
new head and new
buildings

Headteacher – poor
relationship

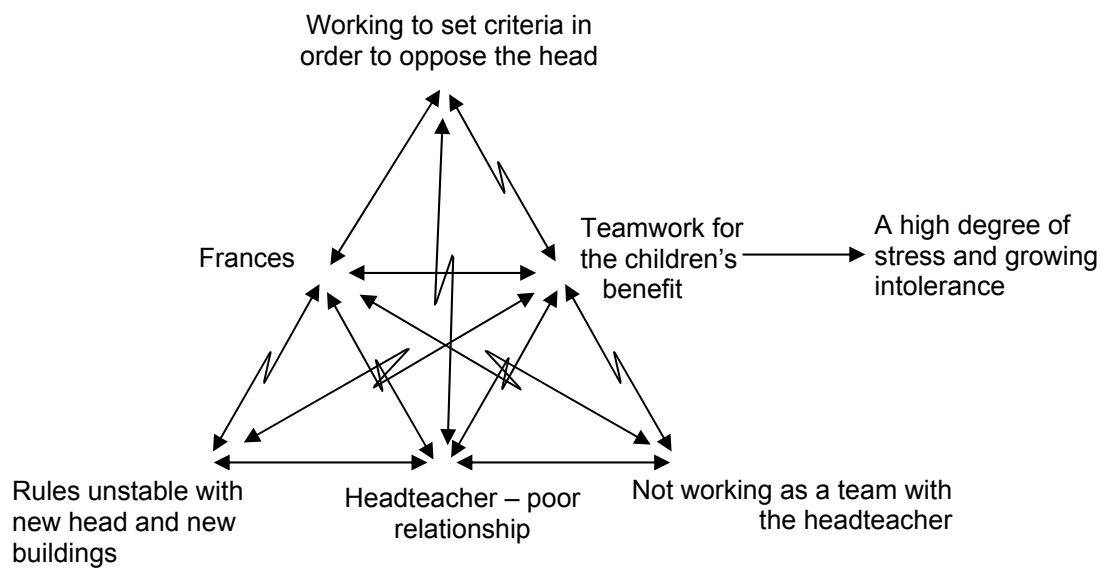Not working as a team with
the headteacher

Figure 6.19: Frances after the ERA

As Figure 6.19 suggests, this poor relationship put a great deal of stress upon Frances. She fervently felt that her object was to build a strong, supportive team with a common focus for the benefit of the children. In this situation she was not only unable to work as part of a team but found herself taking actions which conflicted with, and thus undermined, this professional identity. This led to her considering leaving teaching in order to withdraw from the situation which was causing her such difficulties.

> I nearly left teaching actually. But it got to a stage where I thought I either get a headship or leave … and one of the things that was happening, and I am still recovering from it to be honest, is that my self-esteem was destroyed in all of this and I was applying for headships and I was getting less and less confident.

Before Frances could leave teaching she was appointed to the headship of St Thomas' Primary, a small school where she says that she was slowly recovering her self-esteem. In addition she had developed a strong team with a collegiate leadership style and was making progress towards building a school where each individual was valued and every child made significant progress. The local inspector points out, however, that the school is not managed

with quite such a collegiate style as she likes to think and she does admit that she is 'quite outspoken really' and likes to manage in her own style, being 'a bit of a control freak'.

She is much more at ease in this current post and feels that she has built a strong team at St Thomas', although some of her statements on this matter are rather contradictory and point towards a more bureaucratic leadership style. She also feels that the major stress with current initiatives is the lack of training to carry out the extra work which accompanies them.
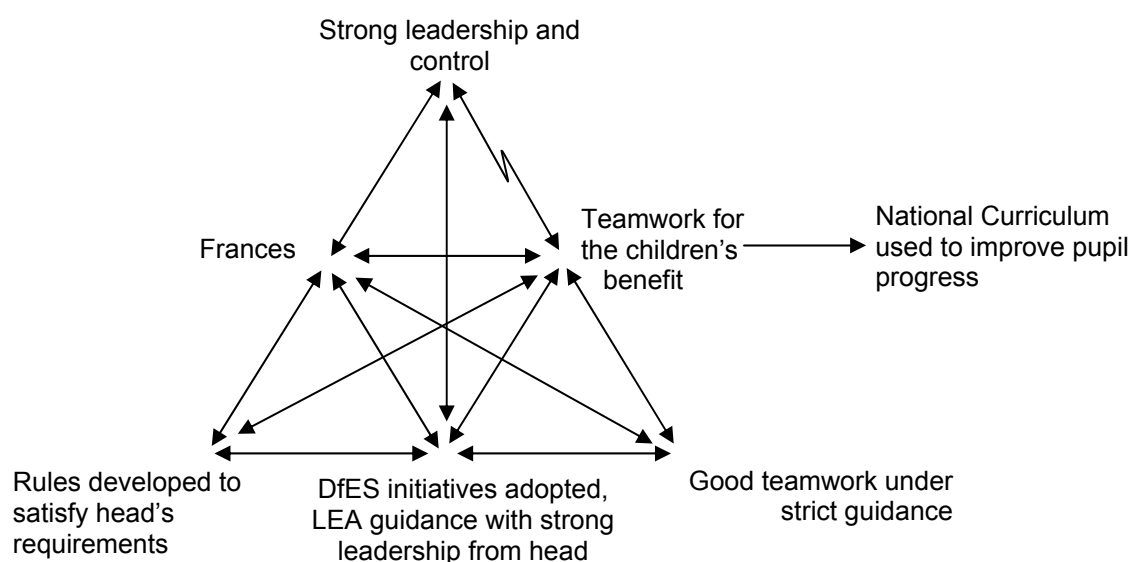

Figure 6.20 Frances' current school

While Frances is a resister, who scrutinises the requirements of initiatives before introducing them into her school, there are some areas where, like Dianne, she considers that the initiatives are more likely to affect school management than the children's education. She feels that these government initiatives are 'a tool for an end' and that she is, like most of the teaching profession, a pragmatist who will comply with initiatives, saying, "We'll have a go at that then. We'll do our best".

7. Gillian

Gillian is the headteacher with the shortest overall teaching experience (28 years) but at the time of the interview she had been a headteacher for 8 years and before that was a deputy head (and, at several schools, an acting headteacher) for 13 years. Immediately prior to the introduction of the National Curriculum she was acting headteacher of St Francis, one of the Mercia Roman Catholic Primary Schools. This was a temporary promotion after one year as a deputy head while the headteacher was seconded to complete a master's degree. Since she was aware that this was a temporary position, Gillian 'didn't do anything innovative' but she still found the situation 'quite a daunting task'. She was, however, strongly supported by the LEA and local church and by the end of the secondment, however, she felt that she was beginning to acquire the appropriate skills for headship and that it was a position to which she could aspire. Her object is to see the children happy, safe and enjoying themselves while they are achieving. She was as happy to use government initiatives to further this end as she is to focus upon the centrality of the children in the school.
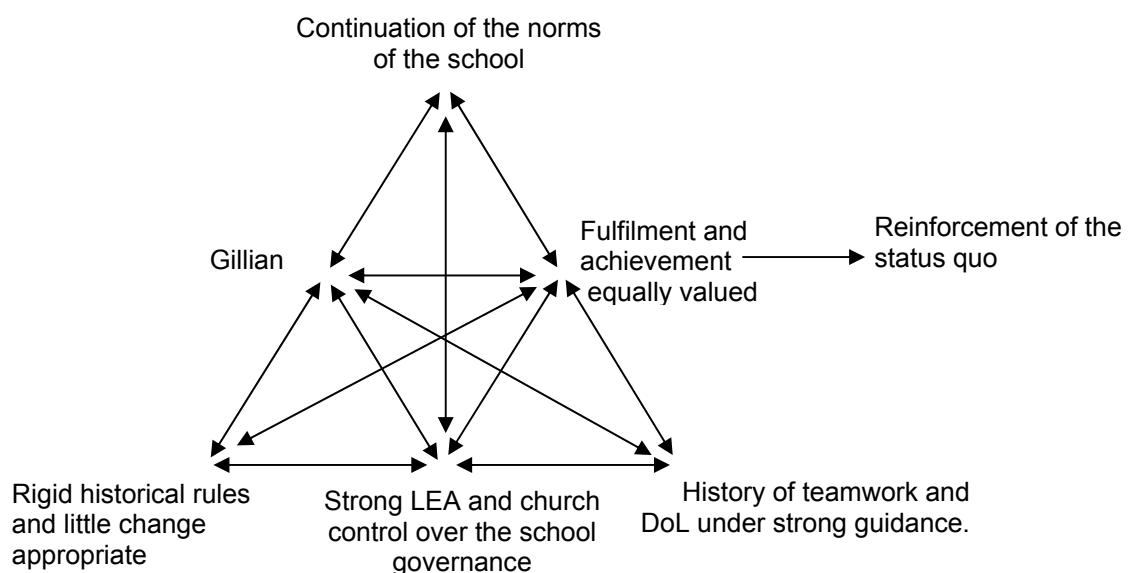

Figure 6.21: Gillian's acting headship prior to the ERA

192

This was a relatively stress-free introduction to headship since it allowed Gillian to become involved with headship routines, prior to the ERA, without encountering the difficulties involved with making fundamental changes to the school practices. The existing practices also dovetailed neatly with her professional identity and so little, if any, tension arose between that identity and the practice.

Following the period as acting headteacher, Gillian returned to her duties as deputy head but some time after the introduction of the National Curriculum there were some difficulties. The headteacher was, according to her, 'the old-style head' who would effectively say "I am the leader; you do as I tell you, and you tell the others what I tell you." This caused some friction between the headteacher and some of the staff and governors and put Gillian in an invidious position since she was the 'go-between' in this situation. She did her best to remain professional in this situation and, unlike Emily and Frances, did not have relationship problems with the headteacher, but there were tensions caused by the unresolved situation in the school. This situation lasted some time but eventually the headteacher was asked to 'take some time off and consider the future' and Gillian was asked to resume the acting headship of the school. This was a sudden revelation, which was a complete surprise for her as she had no idea that there was a move to change the leadership until it happened, early on a Friday morning.

> We had a new parish priest, and he was asked whether he would take some time off to think about what he wanted to do in the future, so I was greeted – I can remember it being a Friday morning and the chair of governors was waiting for me outside the school, about quarter to eight in the morning and he said "Gillian, we'd like you to take over the running of the school" and he said "all I'm asking you to do is get morale back up please."

During this period, when the head was still in post, the National Curriculum was introduced and Gillian felt that there were certain facets which were easily introduced and

others where additional training should have been provided, but the major consideration at the time was dealing with the pressures caused by the internal functioning of the school.
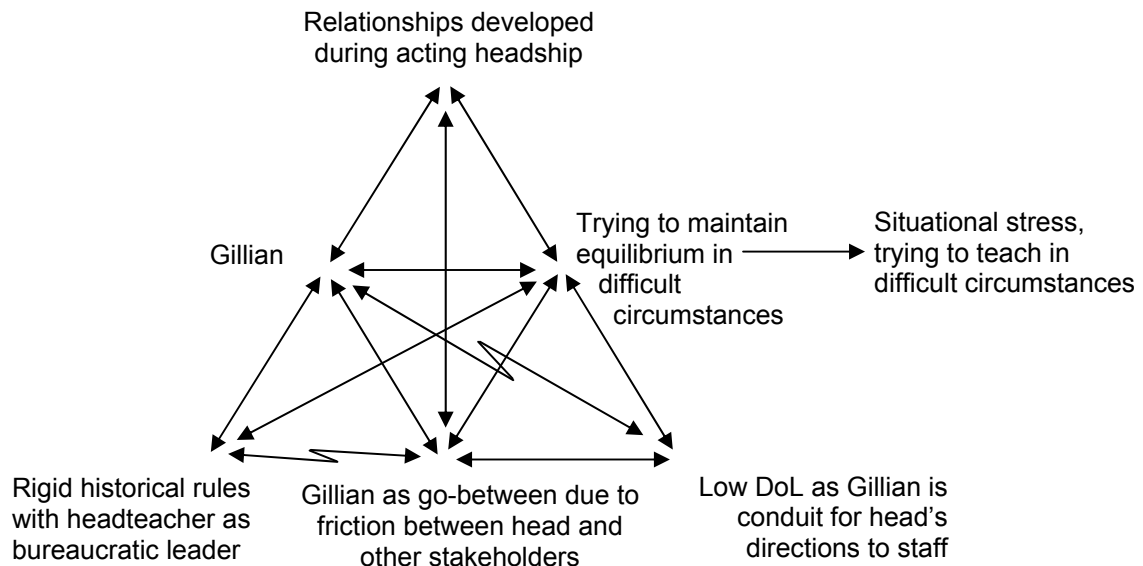

Figure 6.22: Difficult situation after ERA

Gillian was acting headteacher for another 14 months, after which she applied for the headship but another headteacher was appointed. She describes the period following this appointment as 'the low point' of her career. There were no difficulties with the new headteacher, but she felt that she had been passed over due to 'issues with it being a Catholic School'. This made her consider leaving, but home circumstances dictated otherwise.

> … the new head came in and I went back to being a deputy and for the first six months I considered giving up, I thought I've had enough of this I've had a kick in the teeth and I just thought, you know, why am I here? And – but I had two children and a home so I had to, we'd just moved house and everything was conspiring against my leaving.

The local senior inspector, however, telephoned Gillian shortly after and asked her consider taking on the acting headship of St Mary's, a small school where the head had just retired, and this rekindled her enthusiasm and gave her another opportunity to lead a school.

After a year at St Mary's Gillian was appointed to the headship at her current larger school (also called St Mary's). When Gillian had been in post for three or four weeks the school was the subject of an Ofsted inspection and she found that the previous headteacher had not produced some of the documents required, so this was a stressful start. Although Gillian produced the documents in a short burst of intensive work, the inspection outcome initially placed the school in the 'unsatisfactory' category. She then had a number of discussions with the lead inspector where she referred to contradictions in the report and, she says, 'I'm very proud to say that I managed to get us from unsatisfactory to satisfactory, I did!' Following this hectic start Gillian settled into the school and has been a successful headteacher; she now manages the school but also teaches part-time and carries out some other duties. This diversity of activities is, to some extent, due to financial considerations, but also partly in keeping with her professional identity as a teacher and partly to overcome non-teaching staff shortages. This is a potential source of stress which would result from tiredness rather than a direct mismatch between professional identity and the requirements of the job.
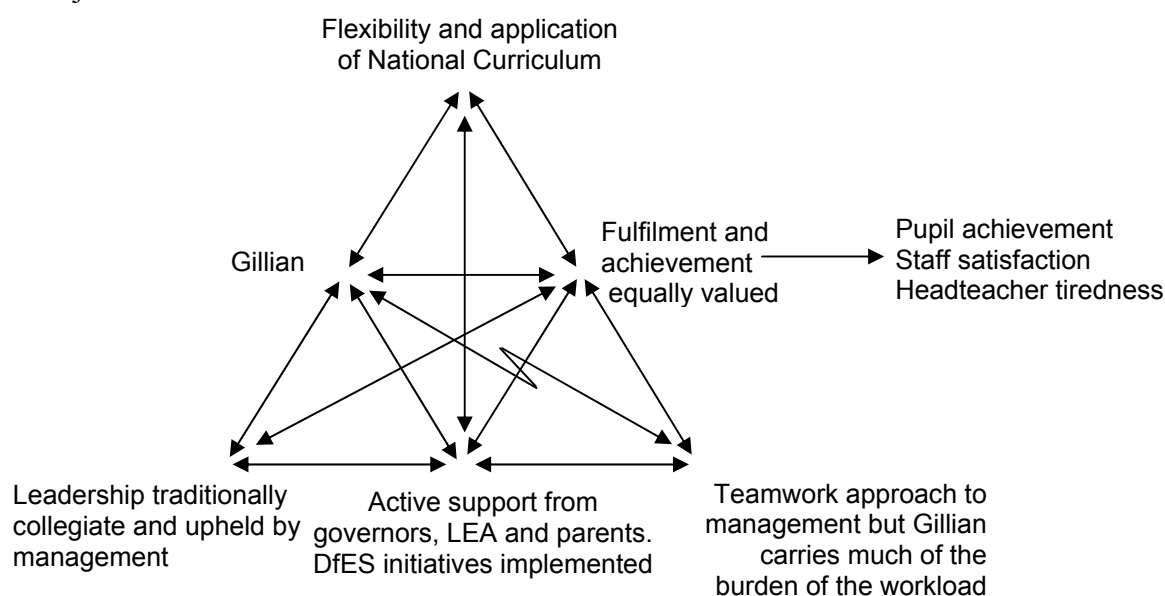
Figure 6.23: Gillian's current school system

195

8. Helen

The route which Helen took to headship was unusual. She started as a teacher and then moved into management via teaching in three schools as a teacher for children with specific needs, and then running the specialist service in two counties.

Helen describes the school in which she was teaching immediately before the ERA as one which had a great sense of community and which she remembers with great fondness. It was a bureaucratically-run school with a young staff and an older, more experienced headteacher and deputy head. The headteacher exuded enthusiasm but worked in a strictly top-down fashion with the curriculum as guidance for the teaching staff who could then work flexibly within the parameters he had set.

> The Head had – he saw his role as being very authoritarian. The school was directed by him, although he had an enthusiasm and a joy in the work that young teachers did, he was really supportive, but I think it was the trend in those days that the Head wrote the curriculum, there wasn't much negotiation. The staff meeting would be that he had written the History curriculum and we'd sort of talk about it, and then we'd go away and do it, but within that there was a lot of flexibility to pursue things that we really enjoyed doing.
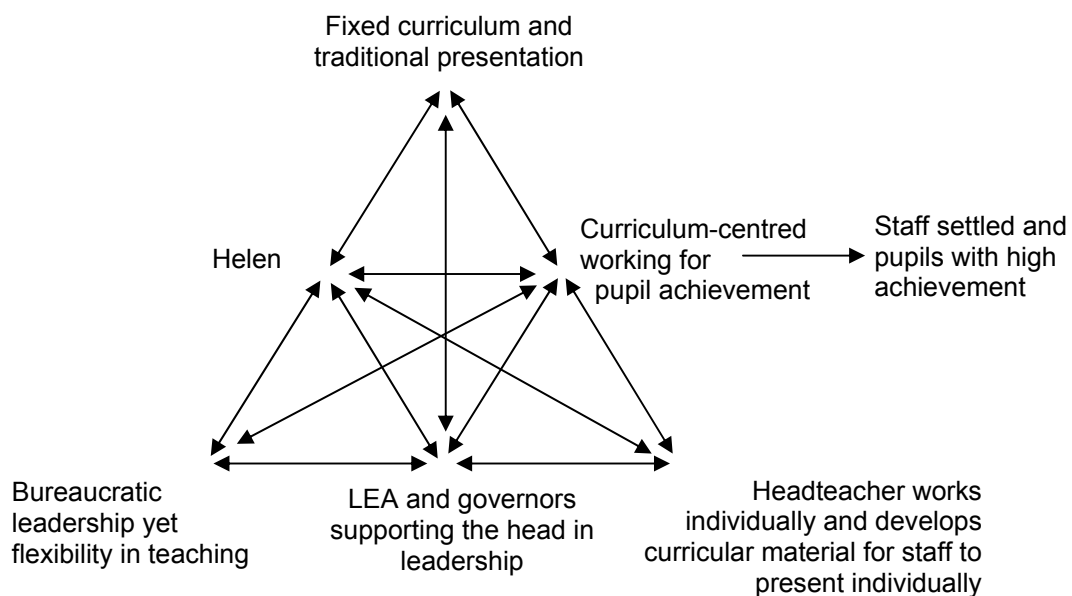
Figure 6.24: Helen's initial, traditional, school

Helen felt that this type of school management was the norm for that period and easily settled into the routines of the school while she worked there. This helped develop a professional identity which was more curriculum-centred than those of some other headteachers who started teaching at about the same time. This is tempered by another impression; that teachers should 'try and remove barriers and encourage and enjoy' which Helen developed much earlier, from her own background 'which is from a Council Estate and parents who were afraid to go into a school.' It does not negate the curriculum-centred identity, but guides the way in which it is applied in the school.

The post-ERA system within which Helen worked was partially teaching and partially administration within which a number of sources of stress were apparent, but which she says prepared her for the administrative pressures and the accountability of headship.

> It was the DfEE then and it was a section grant and actually ran the services and that was very directed in terms of doing what we are doing now. You had to provide a self-evaluation of your service and although this is a long time ago, eight or nine years ago, you had to provide a financial breakdown and surveys of your stakeholders; analyse the evaluation forms and questionnaires that you got from various people, come up with results and write a report on that.

There were also Ofsted-style checks while she was working in the specialist service, which she says prepared her, to some extent, for inspections and thus reduced, but not eliminated, the pressures which accompany them.

> In those days the DfEE was very instrumental particularly in its demands and of course a big inspection – I think it was every three years – certainly honed your skills at evaluating what you were doing.

This was a particularly developmental era for Helen and there are aspects of her current headship which are made easier and less stressful by the experience she acquired while teaching in this system, and particularly while managing the service.
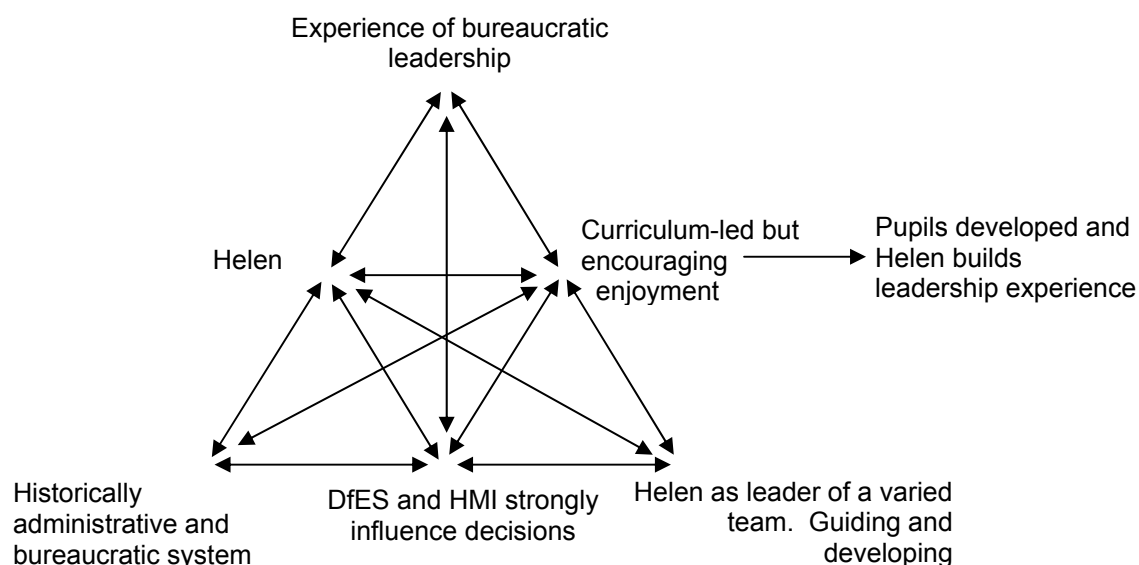
Figure 6.25: Helen in first administrative post

At her current school Helen initially said she had developed a more collegiate approach and a collaborative management style than at her first school or the service she managed. She then went on to say that this approach had, however, been tempered and although it was collaborative she still guided the way in which the school was managed.

> My style I would say is not authoritarian but tending more towards the collaborative, very collaborative, but I've actually shifted direction … I've got to be more specific in my views in terms of honing down what it is we need to do and who is going to do it and where. So I'm much more specific *and state exactly where we are going in a **directed** collegiate fashion.* (My emphasis)

Helen felt that she was working effectively, but continually needed to make pragmatic adjustments to the running of her school in order to keep up with the changes which continuous initiatives had brought about.

> They can be linked into it but those sorts of things that you can't really select, you know, you are pushed in that direction rather than sticking to your own priorities in your school improvement plan. That becomes frustrating.

These initiatives did not completely coincide with her professional identity, but she felt that it was necessary to implement them regardless of the tension between the two. One

example she gave of this was the timetable changes required to effect the changes which were necessary to implement PPA time for teachers.

> I'm having to pull together the vision and state it more often because everything has become rather fragmented with PPA time and two-week timetables. There's this feeling – you've got frenetic, it's frenetic activity but there's such a lot, we all know it happens, in September, but suddenly more initiatives on the go and they are not always, which is really frustrating, to do with the vision that I have.

These statements suggest that, while the direction for the school suggested by Helen's professional identity did not completely coincide with the direction dictated by the government initiatives, she was generally curriculum-led, and a complier, and therefore changed her management structure to accommodate the initiatives. This was building tensions which were causing stress but at the time of the interview Helen did not report any physical or emotional signs of the stress. Initiatives which concerned the curriculum were not such a cause of tension for Helen, since her professional identity was more curriculum-centred and generally in line with the requirements of the DfES guidance.
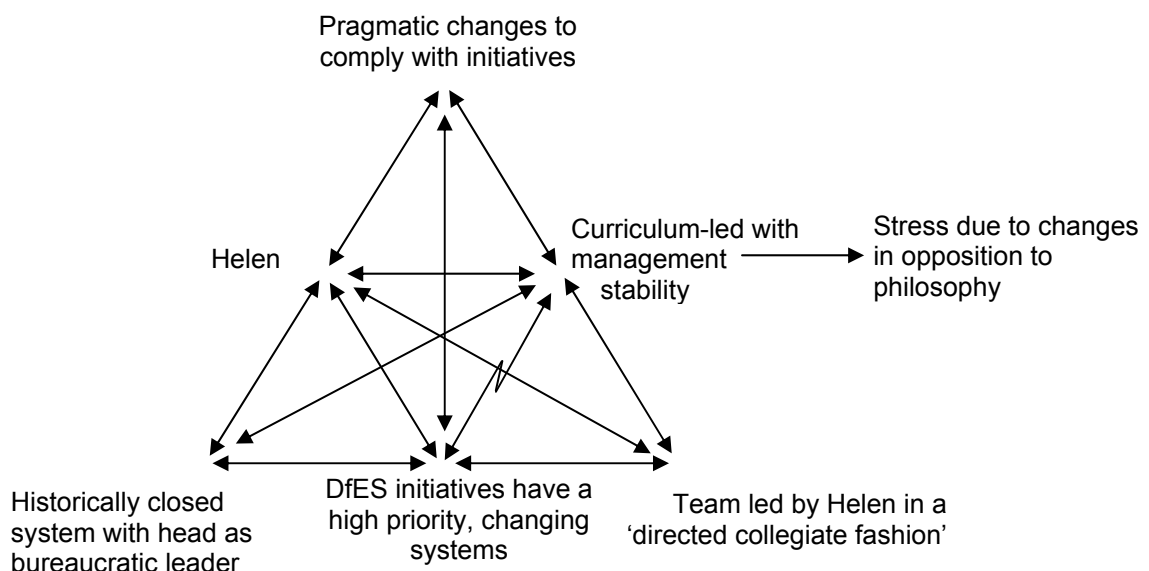

Figure 6.26: Helen's current school system

In addition to generally being a complier, one comment which Helen made suggested that the threat of Ofsted tends to keep her focused on implementing the initiatives in order to remain in her post.

> I'm not saying that, [I would ignore initiatives and go my own way] because you've always got the double check of Ofsted and you know what they are going to be looking for, so unless you want to retire very early you have to have a sensible check on what the rules of the game are.

A common feature of the comments made by the headteachers related to the pressure exerted by Ofsted. The compliers, like Helen, tended to remark that the fear of a negative inspection result made them feel coerced into implementing initiatives, even when they did not coincide with their professional identities. The resisters tended to convey a mixture of the disappointment that they felt having to implement some initiatives with which they did not necessarily agree and pride because they had opposed the judgements of Ofsted inspectors and achieved what they saw as a positive result.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the activity triangle, as an analytical device, has been used to compare the headteachers' responses. This comparison has revealed a number of common features in the experiences of the headteachers. A significant proportion of the headteachers suffered, at some time during their careers, from stress due to poor relationships with other, usually more senior, members of school contexts within which they were working. In a number of these cases, the more senior person had been promoted to a position for which the headteacher in question had applied. In addition, initial considerations suggest that headteachers who were more focused on a curriculum-centred approach suffered from far less tension with the more recent contexts than those who were more focused on a child-centred approach. Comparison of the activity triangles also suggests that headteachers who

had worked as more junior teachers in bureaucratic school contexts tended to be compliers, rather than resisters, when they were dealing with government initiatives. Furthermore, the initial analysis suggests that the physical and emotional results of stresses suffered by the headteachers varied according to whether they were compliers or resisters; though this will need to be thought through more carefully in the next chapter.

In the next chapter, the features of these triangles will be further compared after they have been set out in a matrix (Figure 7.1) for convenience and clarity. This will give the opportunity to look more closely at features of the headteachers (such as whether they were compliers or resisters) and the systems within which they have worked (such as whether they were bureaucratic or collegiate) and reveal any commonalities and differences. In this way the research questions can be applied to the findings to give a more considered conclusion.

Chapter 7: Data and Analysis 2: Synthesis

Introduction

Chapter 6 drew together the aspects from each headteacher's career at specific points; before the ERA, at about the time of the interview (December 2005) and a point between the two which she felt was a personally important time for her. The aspects of each school system were applied to individual activity triangles which were used as heuristic devices to relate these aspects and find points of tension in each system which may have acted as stressors for the headteacher. Since each headteacher had built her own professional identity throughout the years she had been in the profession, it was originally suggested that points of tension would relate to changes in the systems which were in conflict with this professional identity. This part of the thesis originates from evidence derived from the literature search and needed to be tested, and the activity triangles used in Chapter 6 lead to a conclusion which, in part at least, supports it. As a result of some of the interview responses, however, it is apparent that a proportion of the tensions within the systems were, rather, a result of the headteacher's intrinsic stressors. This difference in expectations changed the structure of the systems to some extent but also reinforced the relationship between context and professional identity which was originally postulated.

This chapter continues the analysis, considering the themes which arose as a consequence of the interviews and of applying the contextual features described by the headteachers to the activity triangles for each of the time frames described earlier. In order to simplify the comparison of these features for the headteachers, they will be set out in a matrix with each of the appropriate points cross-referenced to the headteachers and the times that they had chosen to specify in their interviews. This will place the salient points alongside each other so that patterns may be more easily identified. The matrix described above, however, will

not be the only device used in this second part of the analysis; the twenty four activity triangles provide more detail than could be easily contained in the matrix, so reference will also be made to them. In addition, some points mentioned by all the headteachers, such as the 'Ofsted effect' mentioned towards the end of Chapter 6, were not easily included in all the activity triangles, so it will also be necessary to refer to the interviews at points throughout this chapter.

The Matrix

The matrix in this chapter represents an accumulation of findings from the interviews and the activity triangles discussed earlier. It depicts a great deal of information gathered together in one small, rather complex figure. This information includes the names chosen to represent each of the headteachers, details of the school contexts within which they were working during the period under investigation (1988 to 2005), significant changes which may have been taking place at those times and points of tension for the headteachers within those school contexts. Reactions of headteachers to those changes related to their professional identities, which, in turn, related to their tendency to be resisters or compliers; these factors have, therefore, been added to the matrix. While the headteachers fell mainly into two camps – tendency to comply and tendency to resist initiatives – none were wholly compliers or wholly resisters. Most said that while they would normally comply (or resist), there would be particular circumstances where each of these would not be the first reaction, but may make them think about the alternative course. They admitted, however, in most circumstances, that they would eventually follow the course that they would normally choose as a natural response. Annette was the exception to this occasional lapse from the norm, she said that "… it's not a school agenda it's one we are compelled by law to follow …" and "… I don't break the law and I don't encourage anyone to do it …".

The main stressors varied according to the previous experience of the headteachers and the time frame being discussed; these are also included. These stressors are related to, though different from, what has been called the root of tensions. An example might be that the main stressor was the introduction of local financial management (LFM), for which little or no training had been given, while the root of the tensions was overwork due to the introduction of LFM and other initiatives in rapid succession. Ofsted inspections were, undoubtedly, the most common cause of stress mentioned by the headteachers; their reactions to inspections and relationships with Ofsted inspectors, however, appeared to vary according to whether they were resisters or compliers. Ofsted reactions have therefore been allocated a column in the matrix. Whilst the matrix is a convenient method of displaying and comparing the findings and it contains some information which is not apparent in the activity triangles, it is not the only analytical device for this information, since it relies upon the activity triangles for much of the information it contains. In the same way, the activity triangles neither contain, nor allow analysis of, all the information obtained in the interviews. These heuristic devices, together, will allow more detailed analysis, although it will still be necessary to refer to the transcripts of interviews from time to time. Chapter 8 contains comments on the applicability of these analytical devices to this study.

It is important that the matrix which contains all this information (Figure 7.1) is displayed on a single page, so that cross-referencing is an easier task. In order to compress all this information on to one page, it is necessary to use abbreviations. The meanings of these are on the following pages, and are repeated, where possible, in the matrix to allow more straightforward comparisons between the various features of the headteachers' careers.

Abbreviations used in the matrix

Time context	*Pre*	=	Pre-ERA (shortly before 1988)
	Post	=	Post-ERA (a time of importance between the ERA and 2005)
	2005	=	At the time of the interview

Resister or complier	*Res*	=	Tends to resist initiatives
	Com	=	Tends to comply with initiatives

School type	*P*	=	Primary
	S	=	Secondary
	F	=	First
	Sp	=	Specific Needs Education
	e	=	Excluded pupils
	L	=	Large
	s	=	Small
	m	=	Multiple schools

Role	*T*	=	Classroom teacher
	DH	=	Deputy headteacher (including acting headteacher)
	HT	=	Headteacher
	A	=	Administrator

Ethos	*Aut*	=	Autocratic leader
	Bur	=	Bureaucratic management
	Col	=	Collegiate management style
	Cur	=	Curriculum-centred
	Chc	=	Child-centred

Significant changes	*NL*	=	New leadership
	NS	=	New school context
	ERA	=	Education Reform Act (1988)
	Init	=	Recent government initiatives

Main stressors	These have no abbreviations as they vary throughout the list.	

Tensions within the context	*H*	=	High
	M	=	Medium
	L	=	Low

Root of tensions	*Rel*	=	Relationship problems
	Mis	=	Mismatch between identity and context
	Ow	=	Overworking
Result of stress	*NB*	=	Nervous breakdown
	Np	=	Nervous problems (low self-esteem, self-doubt, etc.)
	BP	=	High blood pressure
	Ht	=	Heart problems (including heart attack and angina)
	As	=	Asthma
	Ex	=	Exhaustion
Stress reduction strategies	*ER*	=	Early retirement (retreatism)
	LPc	=	Leaving the profession - considered (retreatism)
	Rel	=	Relocating (self-actualising)
	Red	=	Role-reduction / redefinition (downshifting)

Head teacher	Resister or complier	Time context	School type	Role	Ethos	Significant changes	Main stressors	Tensions within context	Root of tensions	Result of stress	Stress reduction strategy	Ofsted reactions
Annette	C	Pre	P, L	DH	A, Chc	None	Autocratic head (bully)	L	Rel	None given	None	
		Post	P, s	HT	C, Chc	ERA, NS	Curric-cent move, Ofsted	L-M	Mis, Ow	Ex	None	Comply, stress
		2005	P, L	HT	C, Chc	ERA, Init	Curric-cent move, Ofsted	H	Mis	Ex, NB	ER	Comply, stress
Barbara	R	Pre	P, L	HT	C, Chc	None	'Tough' area - parents	L	None	None	None	
		Post	F, L	HT	C, Chc	ERA, NS	Wrong school type	M	Mis	BP	Rel	Argue, stress
		2005	P, L	HT	C, Chc	Init	Ofsted, Initiatives	M-H	Mis, Ow	BP, Ht	ER, Red	Argue, stress
Chloe	C	Pre	P, s	DH	A, Cur	NS	'Settling in'	L	None	None	None	
		Post	P, s	HT	A, Cur	ERA	Rapidity of change	L	None	None given	None	Comply, some stress
		2005	P, s	HT	B, Cur	Init	Ofsted requirements	L	None	None given	None	Comply, some stress
Dianne	R	Pre	P, L	T	B, Cur	DH	High workload, curric-led	L	Mis	Ex	None	
		Post	P, L	DH	C, Chc	HT	Revising outdated practices	L	Ow	Ex	None	Resist NC, worry
		2005	P, L	HT	C, Chc	HT	Managerial changes	M	Mis, Ow	Ex	ER	Comply
Emily	C	Pre	P, L	DH	B, Chc	NS	Headteacher illness	L	Ow	None given	None	
		Post	P, L	DH	A, Cur	NL	'Bullying' head	H	Rel, Ow	As, Ex	Rel	None
		2005	P, s	HT	B, Chc	NS	High workload, curric-led	L	Mis, Ow	BP, Ex	None	Comply
Frances	R	Pre	S, e, s	HT	C, Chc	None	Wishing to move to primary	H	Mis	Ex	Rel, LPc	
		Post	P, L	DH	B, Cur	ERA, NL	Bullying head, lack of support	H	Rel, Ow	Np, Ex	Rel	Comply
		2005	P, s	HT	B, Chc	NS, Init	Initiatives, time, training	L	Mis, Ow	BP, Ex	None	Comply
Gillian	R	Pre	P, s	DH	B, Cur	NS	Acting headship	L	Mis	None given	None	
		Post	P, s	DH	B, Chc	ERA, NS	'Distant' head; intervention	M	Mis, Ow	Np, Ex	LPc	Argue, stress
		2005	P, s	HT	C, Chc	Init,	Ofsted, budget, long hours	L	Mis, Ow	BP, Ex	None	Argue, stress
Helen	C	Pre	P, L	T	A, Cur	NS	Settling in', moving on	L	None	None	None	
		Post	Sp, m	T, A	B, Cur	NS	Multiple work places	L	Ow	None given	None	Comply, some stress
		2005	P, L	HT	B, Cur	Init	Staff redundancy, changes	L	Rel, Ow	None given	None	Comply, some stress

P = prim
S = sec
F = first
Sp = Spec..ed.
e = excl. pup.
L = large
s = small
m = multiple

T = teacher
DH = deputy head
HT = headteacher
A = administrator

A = autocratic
B = bureau'tic
C = collegiate
Cur = curr-c
Chc = child-c

NL = new leadership
NS = new school / post
ERA = Ed Ref Act
Init = new initiatives

H = high
M = medium
L = low

Rel = relationships
Mis = mismatch
Ow = overwork

NB = n - breakd'n
Np = n - probs
BP = hi bld pres
Ht = heart probs
As = asthma
Ex = exhaustion

ER = early retirement
LPc = leav prof con
Rel = relocating
Red = role reduc/redef

NC = National Curriculum

Figure 7.1: A matrix showing the main points revealed by the activity triangles.

The comparisons available in the matrix together with the contextual details presented in the activity triangles provide access to answers to the research questions, thereby giving some possible insights into the attaining of the aims and objectives of the research. These insights, enhanced by reference to the individual interview texts will, therefore, allow a variety of explanations for possible connections between headteacher stress, contextual tensions and government initiatives to be made.

In order to reduce the necessity for the reader to look back through the text to review these aims, objectives and research questions they are summarised here.

Aim 1:   To reveal the agreement or disagreement between what primary school headteachers want for their schools and communities and what they perceive to be the expectations of them held by policy makers.

Objective 1:   To identify the points of agreement and/or disagreement.

Question O1:1 How did the headteachers perceive the policy demands?

Objective 2:   To discover how individual headteachers resist and/or comply with what they perceive to be the expectations of policy makers.

Question O2:1 Did the headteachers aim at resistance to, or compliance with, policy change?

Question O2:2 What did the headteachers do to resist, or comply with, the policy changes?

Question O2:3 Who helped them?

Aim 2:   To consider the impact of that [agreement or disagreement between their wishes and the perceived expectations] on their satisfaction with their professional lives.

Objective 3: To identify the differences between those headteachers who mainly comply and those who mainly resist.

Question O3:1 How did those contradictions and conflicts (or their absence) impact upon the headteachers' own work in taking their schools forward?

Objective 4:   To consider what features of the working contexts of headteachers appear to allow their resistance or compliance.

Question O4:1 How did they interpret the expectations of 'local' stakeholders?

Question O4:2 What contradictions and conflicts emerged in the school as a system?

Objective 5:   To establish the implications for the retention of headteachers who aim at resistance and are met with strong demands for compliance.

Question O5:1 What practical steps, if any, have the headteachers taken to reduce these tensions and contradictions?

At the time of the interviews, the headteachers were all still in post, and, although some of them had taken steps to reduce tensions and contradictions suffered in other schools, there were a number who revealed their intentions regarding future possibilities. These have now gone on to take these steps, so question O5:1 will be amended to allow discussion of this factor for those headteachers. This revised version of question O5:1 is: *'What practical steps, if any, have the headteachers taken – or are they proposing to take – to reduce these tensions and contradictions?'*

Findings

The interviews with the headteachers and local inspectors provide an accurate assessment of the inclination of the headteachers towards being compliers or resisters, and their tendency towards a collegiate, or a more bureaucratic style of leadership. Both of these factors appear to be linked to the contexts within which headteachers' early teaching or management training took place. Where this experience was within a school context with an autocratic management style, the headteachers tend to be more acquiescent, and are thus more likely to be compliers. Where this early experience was in a more collegiate school context the

headteachers tend to be more resistant to simple acceptance of the initiatives. This tendency includes headteachers who were initially in bureaucratic contexts which may, perhaps, be regarded as tending towards collegiate or, as in Dianne's case, although bureaucratic, allowed some managerial freedom and/or followed a period of teaching in a collegiate context. In addition, as would be expected, Chloe, who had taught all her career in curriculum-centred contexts and continued to promulgate this more formal approach to education, tended towards strong compliance with curriculum-centred government initiatives.

A common feature of the response of the headteachers towards the policy demands, for both compliers and resisters, was a marked frustration due to the extreme rapidity with which they followed each other and the shortness of the time allowed for their introduction. Coupled with this, the lack of training provided for headteachers meant that they felt poorly equipped to introduce the initiatives in their schools.

> As National Curriculum came on board it started to get very, very difficult and particularly the requirements to implement it all so quickly. *Annette*

> All that [change] seems to be coming in at such a rate, so powerfully embedded that there is no way, at the moment that we are going to change that, but that has really obstructed and clouded the key purpose of what I think we do in our job. *Barbara*

> I think the trouble with LMS was that they suddenly decided that they would give over more or less total control of budgets to schools but they didn't really give you enough training to do the job. *Gillian*

> I mean why give us just three or four months to bring it in and then two years to implement it? Do you know what I mean? I mean, why do that? *Gillian*

These comments from interviews reinforce the findings regarding the main reasons for tensions within the school contexts, which arise from the activity triangles and are displayed in the matrix. These findings show that the majority of the headteachers (6 out of the 8) suggested that the greatest cause of stress shortly after the introduction of the ERA was

210

overwork, due to the rapid changes and the lack of training. This was exacerbated, in a number of cases, by the mismatch between the headteachers' wishes and the direction in which the initiatives were leading them. This was a sentiment which was clearly expressed by some of the interviewees, particularly Annette and Emily both of whom were compliers but had objects stemming from child-centred professional identities. "Philosophically nobody wants to do that but everyone is being pressurised." (Annette); "Id like to make the point that I don't agree with it and I don't want to do it but, um, if the bottom line was you do it, then I do it." (Emily). Two of the headteachers were experiencing extreme relationship problems within their school contexts at that time, and one other was experiencing relationship problems to a lesser degree. Each of these three headteachers, however, also cited overwork as a major difficulty within their school contexts shortly after the ERA. The problem with overwork suggests the possibility that this source of tension associated with the introduction of the ERA could be the cause of an underlying increase in stress before other problems are added. This intrinsic, underlying tension thus increases the level of the base upon which further stress is built, so problems which may not previously have caused difficulties seem to be beyond the coping capacity of the headteachers. This base level for the tension within the school context will be referred to in future comments as the 'background tension'. In support of this principle, there are several headteachers who had worked in previous schools with other headteachers who they referred to as autocratic, inflexible or even bullies prior to the introduction of the National Curriculum but said they suffered little or no ill effects, whereas after the introduction of the National Curriculum these relationship problems caused some to move to other schools and even consider leaving the profession. These relationship problems were not confined to either resisters or compliers; both types of headteacher had suffered from these in their earlier careers.

The ways in which the two different categories of headteacher (compliers and resisters) had dealt with these relationship problems in previous schools, however, did appear to have some connection to which category they were in. Those who were compliers, referring to the way they dealt with the relationship difficulties, used phrases such as "You'd take avoidance tactics" (Emily) or "you need a staff who feel valued and who feel supported and that side of it wasn't always as it should be, I felt. So I learnt a lot" (Annette). These phrases, signifying avoidance, or the use of the situation as a vehicle for self-development suggest that the complier will find an alternative to confrontation, even when this might mean extra work or causing other difficulties for themselves. The resister with relationship difficulties, however, painted a completely different picture; "he chose the wrong one, when he came in to try and bully me" and "I complained to my union and had to go and meet the senior inspector and a few other people with my union representative" (Frances). These phrases suggest that the resister, due to her inbuilt tendency to oppose rather than conform, will challenge the people with whom she has the relationship problems. This may not cause the same problems that occur with the complier, but can, at times exacerbate the problem and cause the relationship problems to deepen. Eventually, the only course open to her is to remove herself from the situation. Frances reports this quite plainly: "I nearly left teaching actually. It got to a stage where I thought I either get a headship or leave!"

Helen, the one headteacher who admitted to relationship problems continuing in her current headship said that these were not due to difficulties with staff, but with a redundancy situation which was occurring where she had to choose from a co-operative, reliable staff team.

Each headteacher's perception of the policy demands and how they align with her wishes for the school seems to have had a significant effect on her response to them and her post-

ERA tension in the school contexts where she was a headteacher. The evidence from the interviews and the activity triangles suggests that those headteachers whose previous experience led them to a curriculum-centred approach had far less post-ERA tension than those who had adopted a child-centred professional identity. Although it may seem self-evident that those headteachers with a curriculum-centred approach would be happiest with curriculum-centred initiatives, the importance of this with regard to the background tension in the various contexts should not be underestimated. Chloe and Helen were the two headteachers with the most curriculum-centred approach and each of them suggested that the only contextual tensions they suffered were due to lack of training for the changes and the stress of Ofsted inspections. This suggests that their background tension was lower than the other headteachers and thus the overall level of tension caused by the introduction of the other stressors in addition to the background tension was therefore lower than that experienced by the other headteachers.

The headteachers who resisted some of the initiatives tended to examine them first, take them to staff and governors for consideration, and then, if they were continuing resistance, either find an alternative to them or a reasoned argument (for the Local Authority and Ofsted) why they should not adopt them. This course of action is, by its very nature, stressful; since those headteachers are, therefore, more likely to be in a high-adrenaline state, ready for action should they be challenged about their decisions regarding full implementation of the initiatives. This can also lead to an increase in the background tension and so, for those headteachers, raise the base upon which other stresses build. Having examined and considered those initiatives, an alternative course used by some of the headteachers was to adopt them in part, or wholly, but put systems in place (such as the use of structured schemes) to ease the burden for teaching staff and, if possible, increase the

child-centeredness of the approach. If the reason for the adoption of the initiative, or parts of it, is agreement with its principles, then any increase in tension should be associated with its introduction and therefore short-term. If, however, the underlying reason is pressure from other stakeholders, the interpersonal tensions are likely to increase in proportion with the disparity between the headteacher's professional identity and the course directed by the initiative. Examples of these tensions for Annette, Barbara and Dianne are explained in Chapter 6 and may be seen in Figures 6.4; 6.8 and 6.14; and to a lesser extent in Figures 6.5 and 6.7. It is also apparent in Chapter 6 that these tensions were absent, or much lower, for Chloe and Helen, who had developed objects based upon curriculum-centred professional identities and wholeheartedly adopted the curricular initiatives, although they were less happy about some of the managerial changes.

When the interview responses and the activity triangles are considered, it may be seen that the headteachers' views of who supported them in their compliance or resistance, and to what extent they were assisted, varies greatly. There is, however, a tendency for those who were curriculum-led compliers to feel that they were strongly supported by staff, governors and the Local Authority, and that there was little opposition to the way in which they were moving forward; these headteachers tended not to mention parents. The child-centred compliers, on the other hand, felt that they were more strongly supported in the very local context, by staff, governors and parents, but that there was some opposition to their forward momentum from the DfES and, to some extent, from the Local Authority, who, they felt, were, at times, to be considered as DfES 'local enforcers'. This feeling was even more strongly held by headteachers who were resisters, although, both of these groups considered that some Local Authority inspectors supported a child-centred approach through encouragement of some actions and/or failure to discourage others. In all cases, the DfES

were seen as introducing curriculum-led approaches and Ofsted as imposing conditions to support them and at the same time introducing a high level of stress into the context.

It may be seen from the activity triangles, and the matrix which summarises them, that the child-centred headteachers, whether they were compliers or resisters, tended to suffer from stress-related problems which appear to have been connected in some way to the imposition of government initiatives within their schools. In some cases this was directly, through the contextual tensions generated by the mismatch between their wishes and the direction they were obliged to follow by the initiatives. In other cases the increase in tension acted indirectly, through the elevation of their background tension which elevated other problems, which may normally have not been overbearing, to heights where they became extremely difficult to cope with.

It is also apparent that there is a causal link between the different ways in which compliers and resisters respond to the mismatch between their wishes and the government initiatives and the different stress-related problems that compliers and resisters suffer. It is clear from the matrix that the child-centred compliers tended to suffer from emotionally-based difficulties such as nervous breakdown, nervous problems, including reduction of self-esteem and loss of confidence, and short-term asthma. Resisters, on the other hand, tended to suffer from physical difficulties such as hypertension (high blood pressure), angina and heart attacks. Both groups reported that, at some time, they had suffered from a degree of physical exhaustion, though the compliers tended to consider it a shorter-term problem, whereas the resisters saw it as an ongoing difficulty.

The compliers, as the term suggests, acted in accordance with the government initiatives to a far greater extent than the resisters. Those compliers whose prior experience had led to

a professional identity which espoused a curriculum-centred approach to education had few points of disagreement with the initiatives and so found no great difficulty in doing this and therefore suffered little or no ill effect. The activity triangles show that those headteachers who had developed a child-centred professional identity, however, were working in local contexts with a high degree of tension between their wishes and the direction that the initiatives were guiding them. At times this led to compromise and, at other times, it led to grudging compliance, both of which caused the direction suggested by their professional identities to be subjugated in favour of the direction dictated by the initiatives. This constant tension and inability to move the school in the direction that they would like tends to cause the feeling that they are not in control of the situation, which then leads to what Kyriacou (2000, p.4) calls "unpleasant emotions, such as anger, frustration, anxiety, depression and nervousness, resulting from some aspect of their work." Kyriacou's definition of stress, defined here, leads to the suggestion that these emotions, brought about by tensions in the local context, giving rise to a feeling that the individual headteacher has a particular lack of control, bring about the sort of stress-induced difficulties suffered by reluctant compliers. These emotions and the resultant difficulties were also suffered by those headteachers who reported relationship problems (when they were deputy headteachers) with their previous headteachers. This was a similar contextual situation, where they felt that they were not in control of the course of their professional life, which was being directed by somebody other than themselves. In these cases it was the previous headteacher, whereas in the case of the initiatives it was the DfES, the result, however was similar, since the situations were comparable.

Those headteachers who were more inclined to resist the changes that did not coincide with their wishes for the progress of the school tended to expend a great deal of time and

effort in each of two areas. The first area was the implementation of their child-centred policies and activities as well as the many additional administrative tasks introduced by the initiatives. This often included a teaching commitment, since these headteachers still saw themselves as teachers and felt that, in order to do their job properly they had to be intimately involved;

> … you really have to be in amongst the children, in amongst the staff, working and motivating and to do it effectively you need that constant contact with the pupils. (Barbara).

The second area was the support of their policies and their resistance to certain initiatives. They were careful to ensure that discussions took place with staff and governors (even in the more bureaucratic schools) and that the parents were informed of their decisions. In addition, they spent some time and effort with other stakeholders such as, for instance, Local Authority inspectors and Ofsted inspectors, trying to convince them that the course they were taking was the best for the children. At times the headteachers said that discussions with these stakeholders proved to be stressful, since they took the form of providing justification and upholding principles to others who did not necessarily adhere to the same principles; on occasion, with Ofsted inspectors, leading to prolonged, heated discussion.

The result of this ceaseless activity in the implementation and support of their policies was the twin problems of a persistently high adrenalin level and constantly raised blood pressure (hypertension). As previously discussed in Chapter 3, Ostell and Oakland (1995) suggest that these are two of the possible results of working in situations where high tension exists as a permanent feature of the context and that they may lead to angina and heart attacks. This suggests that those headteachers who were resisters were more likely to suffer from these disorders and this is supported by the evidence shown in the matrix.

Three of the headteachers, who had suffered with relationship problems as deputy headteachers in previous schools, had already taken steps to reduce the tensions they had experienced. Frances and Gillian had both considered leaving the profession if they could not obtain a post at another school and Emily said that while she had not considered leaving the profession, she had simply resigned, moved to Mercia from another part of the country and downshifted from a deputy headship to being a supply teacher for a time. Gillian resolved her problem by obtaining the headship of a small school locally, while Frances was offered secondment to the short-term acting headship of a school and obtained another headship while she was in that post. Each of them, as deputy headteachers, reduced the tensions in their situations by relocating, one by also downshifting. In the posts current at the time of the interviews, the headteachers were considering differing strategies for reducing their contextual tensions. Chloe and Helen were not considering any strategies, and each suggested that the low tension context meant that she would not need to consider any. The other three longer-serving headteachers; Annette, Barbara and Dianne, were all considering early retirement as a means of stress reduction. Annette was already approaching her retirement and said that she would not consider any work within the education system once she had retired. Barbara intimated that while she might be willing to return to a specific, low-pressure role this could not be until her heart problems had been alleviated. Dianne suggested that she might consider moving into teacher training once she had retired. The other three newer headteachers; Emily, Frances and Gillian, who had already relocated to reduce tensions, said that they had no plans to take any further steps at the time of the interviews, but that they would still consider other strategies if they should become necessary.

Conclusions

The analysis carried out in Chapters 6 and 7 leads to a number of findings with regard to the headteachers; (i) as individuals, (ii) in relation to their local contexts, (iii) in relation to macro-contextual stakeholders such as the DfES and Ofsted and, (iv) with regard to the changes brought about by government initiatives. These will be grouped under these headings as they are summarised in this conclusion and while full referencing would be unwieldy, some of the appropriate page numbers will be added in parentheses in order to aid the reader when referring back to particular points.

As individuals:

As suggested initially, the previous experience of these headteachers tends to guide their professional identity. They have a tendency to adopt the ethos which was prevalent in the schools in which they received their early teaching or management experience (163-4,168, 173, 187). Two of the headteachers also mentioned the effect that parental guidance had upon their professional identities (173, 187). The matrix (197) also suggests that those headteachers whose early experience was in a child-centred context tended to promulgate a child-centred ethos themselves.

Those headteachers who had previously worked in more bureaucratic schools tended to be compliers and those who had previously worked in more collegiate school contexts tended to be resisters (188, 190-1, 200).

The problems resulting from excessive stress tended to be polarised, with curriculum-led compliers suffering little, or no, stress; child-centred compliers tending to suffer more from emotionally-based difficulties and resisters, who, in this study, were all child-centred, tending to suffer more from physical problems (152, 191, 205-7).

In relation to local contexts:

All the headteachers suggested that they were supported by their local stakeholders, and although some had experienced pressure from previous governors (156, 170) all felt that there were currently no problems.

With respect to relations with the Local Authority (LA) there were some points such as recognition of the decline of the power of LAs (146, 204) and the support of the local inspectorate in various ways (177, 184, 204) which were common to all the headteachers. A minority of the headteachers, however, occasionally referred to the role of the LA and local inspectorate as enforcing, locally, the wishes of the DfES in relation to specific government initiatives (204, 207). More common was the inference that the LA had been slow to offer training as the initiatives were introduced, causing headteachers to begin implementing them with little or no experience and inadequate knowledge of procedures and encouraging feelings of inadequacy (180, 183-4, 200, 203). This was particularly the case with respect to local financial management of schools (145, 160, 165-6, 194, 200).

The importance of poor relationships for some of the headteachers (particularly relationships with the incumbent headteacher when they were deputy headteachers) with regard to the tension within the local context and the subsequent effect upon their stress levels should not be underestimated. It was a major feature of their interviews and has been examined in detail throughout the analysis (145, 149, 174, 179, 188, 190, 201-2, 206, 207-8). The importance of relationships within the local context was reinforced by other headteachers who said that the effects of some difficulties had been reduced by their good relationships with previous headteachers, or that they had specifically built good relationships amongst the staff in order to reduce possible tensions (159, 167, 168).

In relation to wider contexts

All of the headteachers, whether child-centred or curriculum-led, resisters or compliers, agreed that the direct influence of the DfES had increased considerably since the introduction of the ERA (158, 159), that the changes had been many and rapid (145) and that the initiatives since the ERA had tended to move schools in a more curriculum-led direction (157, 189, 205).

The introduction of SAT tests following the ERA was seen by most of the interviewees as being one of the most powerful incentives for headteachers to move schools towards a curriculum-led ethos (147-8, 149, 176) and, to some extent, SAT results as a yardstick for Ofsted to make comparisons and/or draw conclusions about school effectiveness.

The headteachers also all felt that the increase in stress brought about by Ofsted inspections was one of the greatest problems. Some of the headteachers, mostly the compliers, reported this as simply a source of stress – although that stress, as mentioned above, had an extreme effect (146-7, 169, 185, 190, 194, 203, 205, 207) whereas resisters tended to also report that Ofsted inspections were a source of dispute with the Ofsted representatives (146-7, 161, 194, 207). While the new, shorter Ofsted inspections were generally seen as an improvement, the school self-evaluation form (SEF), and particularly the rapid changes in its format, were seen, once again, as unnecessarily convoluted (171, 172). The exception to this was Helen, who had dealt with DfES self-evaluation forms in the past and so was familiar with their format (187).

In relation to the changes

The changes between the pre-ERA and the post-ERA activity triangles for each headteacher imply that, with two exceptions, the tension present in school contexts increased noticeably after the DfES initiatives began to be introduced in 1988 (154-189). One exception was

Chloe, who had developed a strongly curriculum-led approach and the other was Helen, who was not in a simple school context immediately post-ERA. In addition to the contextual change brought about by the initiatives, the large number of changes, their rapid introduction and the speed with which they were revised (144-5, 150, 160, 171, 200) increased the tendency of most of the headteachers to feel inadequate and thus increased their stressful feelings even further (139, 152). Furthermore, the lack of training provided (directly by the DfES or indirectly through the LA) to implement some of these changes also increased these feelings of inadequacy (145, 160, 165-6, 180, 183-4, 194, 200, 203).

Summation

The initial premise behind this study was that, for some headteachers, the contextual changes required by the government initiatives following the ERA would be in conflict with their wishes for the progress of their schools. These wishes were influenced by their professional identities, which, in turn, were dependent upon their early professional contexts and their development within them. It was proposed that his conflict, or mismatch, between the headteachers' wishes and the direction dictated by the initiatives would have increased the tension within the school contexts and thus would have increased the stress levels of those headteachers for whom a mismatch was evident.

The evidence appears to support this premise, but has added further facets such as those mentioned immediately above. In addition, it appears that the mismatch has increased what has been referred to as the background tension within that context so far as the headteachers are concerned. This rise in background tension has meant that the base level, upon which other stresses have built, has been increased, so that those stresses which might have previously had minor effects have subsequently become major issues.

A further issue considered, but not yet covered in this conclusion is the steps which the headteachers had taken, or considered taking to reduce the personal tensions which existed in their situations. These possibilities were covered in some detail in Chapter 3 and, during the interviews, each headteacher was asked what steps they had considered, or might consider, taking in order to reduce the tensions. In some cases this was both retrospective and prospective, since some of the headteachers had suffered high stress levels in past posts and had considered, or used, strategies previously. The headteachers fell, generally, into three camps; those mentioned who had previously considered strategies, those who were considering them and those who had not yet considered any.

Those who had previously considered, or used, strategies said that the situations at the time were so difficult that they had considered leaving the profession. None had done this, but two had relocated (and been promoted to headships) and one had opted for relocation and temporary role reduction in order to allow time to overcome stress-related illness. These three individuals were headteachers with a shorter length of experience, who were no longer considering any strategies, since they were coping in their school contexts at the time of the interviews.

Three of the longer-serving headteachers were, at that time, actively considering early retirement as a stress-reducing option. These were the headteachers whose professional identities were more child-centred, and who considered that their ethos was contradicted by the curriculum-led school that was being espoused by the initiatives. Two of these had taken steps to initiate early retirement and were waiting to finish in their posts and one was considering early retirement, but had not, at that time, taken any further steps.

The other two headteachers, one longer-serving and one shorter, had not considered any of these options and said that they were not likely to do so. Chloe, the longer-serving

headteacher said that she would probably retire at the normal age, while the shorter-serving one (Helen) said that her most likely next move would be to the headship of another, larger, primary school.

The findings revealed in this analysis will be summarised further Chapter 8, where some of the ideas promulgated in this chapter will also be expanded. Following this the findings will be considered in the light of texts used earlier in the study and more recent texts on the subject. The 'new convergence' making use of two differing approaches within one study, one directing the data collection and the other being used as an analytical framework, as described in Chapter 5 (pp 119-122), will also be discussed and the possible points in favour of, and against, this combination will be considered.

Chapter 8: Summary and Conclusion

> The large variation in response to the questions asked, due to both personality and context, demonstrates that there is no simple, clear pattern of headteacher responses to centralist legislation. The population of headteachers is not filled either with those who are all able to manage in a principled manner, centralist incursions into their practice, nor is it filled with those who feel they must simply comply with such steerage. Moreover, it seems also very clear that such variation will and must remain, for it is precisely the interaction of personality with context which is the reality of headship. (Bottery, 2007, p. 106)

This study was based upon the premise that the plethora of government initiatives since the Education Reform Act (ERA, 1988) had been accompanied by a perceptible increase in the rate of stress-related problems in the teaching profession and a well-documented exodus of experienced headteachers. A number of texts had been written about the effect on teachers and the teaching profession in general, but there was very little evidence of research into the effects of the initiatives on headteachers. This small-scale piece of research was, also initially, an attempt to redress the balance. As the study proceeded it became evident that the previous experiences of the headteachers, which led to the formation of their professional identities was an important factor in understanding the possible tensions which might exist between the headteachers and the initiatives. Goodson and Adair (2007, p. 6) explain, 'professionals create intra personally an individual, private and personal script which guides crucial parts of their life', and it is the tension between this personal script (the professional identity) and the imposed changes which have been examined. This personal script relates to the work of Goodson et al. (2006) who consider nostalgia (and thus, as argued in chapter 2, identity) to be 'a source of resistance to changes that threaten patterns and purposes teachers have cherished for decades.' (p. 43.) They also point out that:

> mid- to late-career teachers' resistance to change is not only a consequence of age and stages of life and career, it is also related to what teachers experience generationally – memories formed and situated in particular historical periods that retain and sometimes increase in importance as these teachers mature. (ibid)

This relationship between professional identity and resistance, where the changes threaten these patterns and purposes, and thus oppose professional identity, supports this study in two areas. First, it suggests that the choice of 'resisters' and 'compliers' as categories for the headteachers was appropriate, linking, as it does, the reactions of teachers and resistance to change. The second area relates to the finding that curriculum-led headteachers tend to comply with the changes; this may be expected, if those changes are upholding, rather than threatening the patterns and purposes that they have cherished for decades.

Another important factor for consideration was the particular school contexts in which the headteachers were working, where they were endeavouring to implement the principles of those professional identities in practice. These school contexts could provide support for the headteachers' compliance with, or resistance to, the changes, or could contain factors which opposed them.

These factors, however, are usually considered individually using theories from different paradigms. The study of individual professional identities is frequently analysed using biographical narrative, whereas studies of contextual activity are more likely to use a cultural-historical approach such as activity theory. In order to locate the individual headteachers within their contexts and investigate the relationships between them, an approach using features of both biographical narrative and the activity triangle (an element of activity theory) was employed. This was given the title, 'a new convergence' which, although rather grandiose, adequately describes the novel combination of the two methodologies.

The first three chapters introduced the study, described the historical changes in education and investigated the possible causes and effects of stress. Following these introductory chapters, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 set out the theoretical considerations and the

research design after which Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 described the analysis and revealed the findings. This, final, chapter summarises those findings, reflects upon their pertinence to the research questions, considers them in the light of recent texts on the subject and evaluates the use of the new convergence of narrative and the activity triangle which are generally applied to different approaches.

The findings outlined below relate to the knowledge provinces (Gunter and Ribbins, 2003) described in Chapter 4. They add to the knowledge base of those knowledge provinces, and particularly to the humanistic area, since they provide new insights to the relationships between managers (the headteachers) and their school contexts, particularly where there are points of tension between those headteachers and aspects of their local contexts that are being driven by external pressures.

Findings

This was a small sample, consisting of eight primary school headteachers from a single county, so it is only possible to claim internal validity. However, this small sample has nevertheless provided some interesting and informative patterns and, according to Polkinghorne (1995, p. 15), the 'internal validity is in the nature of the exercise'. The clarity and reliability of these patterns may be considered to be a feature of the careful selection of candidates, according to pre-defined groups, the readiness of these headteachers to speak about their experiences and the candour with which they described their feelings. In addition, while the sample consists of only eight headteachers, the longitudinal nature of this study and the data derived from it are of particular interest. This small sample may be considered a weakness in the design of the study, the findings of which would have been easier to generalise if a larger sample had been used. The depth of the interviews, however,

meant that transcripts in excess of 70,000 words were produced for the eight headteachers and a much greater number of interviewees (and equivalent increase in transcription) may have caused problems for a lone researcher. The professional identities of the headteachers, how their relationship with their contexts changed over the years between 1988 and 2005 as the government initiatives were introduced, and how they sought to resolve tensions these initiatives may have brought about, were the main aspects under consideration. How the professional identities and the resolution of tensions were related to the tendency of the headteachers to be resisters or compliers was also considered.

It was suggested in Chapter 7 that one of the fundamental issues determined by the analysis of interviews and the determination of the relationships between the individuals and their contexts within this study was related to the proposal that there might be a basic level of tension which is inherent within any particular context. This intrinsic tension, upon which other, more specific stressors build to create a personal level of stress for the individual, has been called the *background tension* within this study.

In order to illustrate this principle more fully, the use of an analogy might prove helpful. All people, wherever they live, are subject to background radioactivity as a result of natural emissions of radiation from the Sun, rocks and other emitters. This background radiation varies from place to place, depending on the particular characteristics in that location. Thus, there is a low background radiation in Derbyshire, a sandstone area, while the background radiation in Cornwall, where granite is the prevalent rock, is far higher. Within these broad areas, there may be specific contexts where the background radiation varies from the norm; so workers in a nuclear power station in Cornwall may be subject to a particularly high background radiation due to the specific context within which they work. Upon this background radiation, additional sources such as X-rays, emissions from old luminous

watches and gas mantles, or even fallout from the Chernobyl disaster might build until the total radiation to which an individual is subjected rises above the threshold at which the consequences for the health of that individual are injurious. Had a worker employed in a gas-fired power station in Derbyshire been subject to the same amount of additional radiation from the same sources, the lower background radiation upon which the others are built would probably not lead to the same problems. This is, however, subject to the sensitivity of the individuals to radiation and their own, particular, resistance to the effects of radiation, which must be taken into account.

While this is a rather simplistic model of a complex system, it serves to exemplify the correlation between the level of the background tension within particular contexts and the effects of additional stressors on the individuals within those contexts, particularly when those individuals might be more liable to suffer from stress-related problems. There is evidence within this study, and derived from other texts (Campbell and Neill, 1994; Dunham, 1992; Grace and Lawn, 1991; Ostell and Oakland, 1995; Troman and Woods, 2001) to which previous reference has been made, that, following the introduction of the ERA, the background tension in many school systems generally rose to a higher level than it was pre-ERA. This meant that the background tension was at such a level that additional stressors caused some of the headteachers to suffer adverse effects from those stressors whereas they might not have suffered so badly before the ERA. In the years between the ERA and this study the rapid and continual introduction of further initiatives has either further increased the background tension in those schools, or served to maintain that high level of tension. If there had been fewer, or less frequent, initiatives this high level might have been reduced through the implementation of in-school modifications which could have otherwise reduced some of the contextual tensions and/or shorter-term stressors.

Where the curriculum-led ethos required by these government initiatives was already established, in more traditionally led schools, the ERA and the initiatives which followed it did not serve to raise the background tension as greatly as in those schools where a child-centred ethos was formerly prevalent. This evidence further supports the principle of background tension, since these headteachers reported fewer problems than child-centred headteachers when they were talking about coping with shorter-term stressors such as Ofsted inspections or the introduction of LMS with little or no training. This may be considered to be due to the similarity between the object of the regime in schools prior to the initiatives and the requirements of those initiatives. The proportion of headteachers experiencing difficulty with the changes (six of the eight, or 75%) is generally in line with that found by Ostell and Oakland (1995, p. 94) who reported that 'almost three quarters (73%) of heads stated that educational changes in recent years were a major source of difficulties in the job'. Considering the ten-year gap between their study and this one, this similarity could be a reflection of the continuing high level of problems. It could, however, be due to the small sample used in this study, where each headteacher represents 12.5% of the total. This naturally leads to a small number of possible ratios of headteachers finding little or no difficulty to those experiencing problems.

Bottery (2007, p. 106) quoted at the beginning of this chapter, refers to headteachers who manage centralist incursions and those who feel they must simply comply, (which may be considered equivalent to the 'resisters and compliers' categories used in this study) pointing out that these are not the only categories. They do, however, represent the two ends of a spectrum described by Hoyle and Wallace (2005), and it is these two ends that are considered by this current study. This may be thought, by some, to be unduly prescriptive, and, to some extent, restrictive, but they provided a secure reference point from which

headteachers responses could be studied. Also, as will be seen in the following findings, the consideration of these two categories (resisters and compliers) provided a number of relationships within the data that appear to lend support to their use in this study.

With regard to the differences between the headteachers who tended to generally comply with initiatives and those who were more likely to resist them, some clear patterns emerged from the study.

Headteachers who had early teaching, and/or management, experience in autocratic schools or in schools where the leadership was very bureaucratic tended to be compliers. This was the case whether the previous schools had a child-centred or a curriculum-led ethos. The management style of the schools in which they developed their professional identity, therefore, appeared to be a determining factor in their predisposition to be either a complier or a resister. There is, however, no current literature to support or refute these findings so, in the light of this, without the support of further research it should be treated with some wariness.

Headteachers who were resisters were more likely to 'fight their corner' when Ofsted inspectors made judgements with which they did not wholly agree and, in the cases under investigation in this study, they often managed, through reasoned argument, to persuade the Ofsted inspectors to amend their judgements. Although their description of the final Ofsted judgement could be (and was) checked using the inspection reports for those schools, no check could be made on their opinions regarding the initial Ofsted findings, so these may be regarded as subjective, although there is no reason to doubt the credibility of what the headteachers reported.

Those headteachers who suffered from the physical problems related to stress, such as high blood pressure or angina, were also more likely to be resisters. This appeared, in this

study, to relate to their high-adrenalin professional lifestyle which included long hours, a more 'hands-on' approach (described by Barbara as being "in amongst the children, in amongst the staff, working and motivating"), being constantly alert for times when they might have to support their standpoint, and the debates with Ofsted inspectors which were mentioned above. The one complier who has also recently suffered from high blood pressure also had a 'hands-on' approach and a teaching commitment for half the school week. This led to her trying to manage the implementation of initiatives throughout the school in the half of the week when she was not in the classroom. Other compliers in smaller schools had reduced their teaching commitment to a minimum in order to concentrate on the managerial aspects of their work. Headteachers in this study who were compliers in larger-school contexts did not have any timetabled teaching commitment and so this aspect of stress management was not a problem for them.

The four headteachers who were compliers fell into two categories; two had a curriculum-led approach to education and two had a child-centred approach. Each pair consisted of one longer-serving headteacher and one who was newer to the role of the headteacher. Both headteachers who were of the curriculum-led persuasion had a noticeably lower, contextual, background tension than those who were child-centred. Although they were concerned about Ofsted inspections, the rate of introduction of new initiatives and the possibility of insufficient training for those initiatives, these concerns were ameliorated by their awareness of the school being broadly in line with the requirements of past initiatives, and therefore, in all probability, being in line with any new ones. Thus, the curriculum-led compliers had a lower base upon which day-to-day stresses could build than either the resisters or the child-centred compliers. These two headteachers reported that they had no significant problems due to stresses within their working contexts.

The two headteachers who were child-centred compliers gave responses which suggested significantly higher background tension than the curriculum-led compliers. Each of these child-centred compliers reported that they suffered ill-effects from stressors which would, prior to the ERA, have had less disastrous effects. Annette reported that multi-level involvement in a large number of local educational initiatives had principally contributed to her nervous breakdown, whereas she had a similar involvement prior to the ERA, when her background tension had been lower. Emily had worked as a deputy head with two similar, very bureaucratic headteachers (both of whom she found quite difficult), yet after the ERA, when her background tension was higher, she suffered from asthma and eventually felt that she "had to get out" and so moved to another area and underwent role reduction for a period. In this case, an additional factor was that she felt that there was a singular lack of trust from the second headteacher. She felt this conflicted with her work ethic and so it, too, not only served to raise the background tension, but also exacerbated any difficulties she may have had with her headteacher at that time. Nias (1989, p.165) also found that conflict occurred between incumbent deputies and new headteachers, particularly where they had differing values. She did not, however consider the role of differences in trust between the previous headteacher and the new one (with whom the deputy had problems) and as this may be regarded an important factor in the headteacher-deputy relationship it may be considered to be a significant omission. Since her work was carried out at the very beginning of the post-ERA era, she also says nothing about the possibility that the new headteacher trying to implement initiatives that conflict with the incumbent deputy's professional identity could be a factor that exacerbates the differences between them. While the date of publication means that this may not necessarily be considered an omission, it is still a factor which

needs to be considered in this study, which has more than a decade of post-ERA school experience upon which it can draw.

The strategies used by the headteachers to permanently reduce the tension under which they were working varied less according to whether the headteachers were compliers or resisters and depended more upon whether they were longer-serving or newer headteachers and whether they were child-centred or curriculum-led. The longer-serving headteachers have all now retired, but Chloe, the curriculum-led complier retired two years after she had reached the status required for achieving a full pension, whereas the child-centred headteachers – Annette, Barbara and Dianne – whether they were compliers or resisters, all took early retirement. The suggestion here is that Chloe did not feel the need to retire early, or even when she had achieved the relevant status, since her background tension was so much lower than the other longer-serving headteachers and she was, therefore, suffering less from the effects of stress. This, however, must be subject to the possibility of researcher subjectivity as the supporting evidence in the interview transcript suggests this possibility, rather than referring directly to it. The three newer headteachers who had a child-centred professional identity had all, after the ERA, moved schools; one by obtaining a headship, one by moving area and taking role reduction and the third after being offered an acting headship by her local inspector after contacting him about her concerns. Each of them stated that at the time they moved to new contexts they were even considering leaving the teaching profession as a means of reducing their contextual tensions. The one newer headteacher who had a curriculum-led professional identity had not considered, and is not considering, retirement or any other form of exit strategy.

Although it does not apply to any of these eight headteachers, it is worth noting that one of the original candidates for interview; a newer, child-centred resister in a similar post to

Emily, where she was a highly active teaching head with a very high background tension; was unable to complete her involvement in this study. Unfortunately she had to withdraw as she was found to be suffering from breast cancer, for which stress is considered by some authorities to be a contributory factor.

Research Questions

The relationship between the findings and the research questions was considered at some length in Chapter 7, however, a summary is presented here to review the main points and enhance clarity.

The responses from the eight headteachers to the imposition of government initiatives effectively separated them into three categories with respect to research question O2:1 (*Did the headteachers aim at resistance to, or compliance with, policy change?).* These three categories were; child-centred resisters, child-centred compliers and curriculum-led compliers. Each of these three categories tended to have a somewhat different response with respect to the other research questions, so these categories are used, rather than simply resisters and compliers, in the summaries for other questions. This increase to three categories has enhanced the original group to some extent, but is still a small number and still relies on the original supposition that 'resisters' and 'compliers' are the categories that are appropriate to this study. This presumption may, of course, be incorrect, but since the findings suggest that there are perceived differences between the responses from these categories of headteachers, then it may be considered that it has been worthwhile using them.

Regarding question O1:1 *(How did the headteachers perceive the policy demands?)* the two curriculum-led compliers saw them as a justification of their stance and as general guidance for the development of the curriculum over the subsequent period. The child-

centred compliers saw them as a statutory imposition, which they needed to introduce regardless of their own preferences. The child-centred resisters tended to perceive them as, at least, very strong recommendations which they needed to consider and then act upon, whether that action was to find powerful reasons for the prevention, or at least the delay, of the introduction of the initiatives or to dismantle them and introduce those parts which were considered to be appropriate for their schools.

Questions O2:2 and O2:3 *(What did the headteachers do to resist, or comply with, the policy changes?* and *Who helped them?)* can be summarised rather less easily, since the individual headteachers responded in different ways, according to the context they were in at the time and their individual professional identities. In general, however, curriculum-led compliers tended to be more bureaucratic in their introduction of the initiatives, carrying staff, parents and governors with them and drawing support from the local authority. Child-centred compliers tended to discuss the initiatives with staff and governors before introducing them; the discussions being more about the mode of introduction than the possibility of resistance. They, too, drew support from the local authority, and in some cases used discussions with parents; although this was more for dissemination of information than eliciting parental support. Child-centred resisters also tended to discuss the initiatives with staff and governors (and in some cases, parents) but this was as much to consider which parts, if any, of the initiatives should be put into action as it was to elicit support.

Question O3:1 *(How did those contradictions and conflicts (or their absence) impact upon the headteachers' own work in taking their schools forward?)* has been considered in rather more detail and the impact described fully in chapters 6 and 7. The contradictions and conflicts were revealed in the various tensions which existed between the headteachers and the contexts within which they worked, and the impact upon their work in taking the schools

forward was affected by the levels of these tensions. In addition, the work of the child-centred groups of headteachers, whether they were resisters or compliers, progressed in a more curriculum-centred direction than their professional identities were suggesting a school should be moving. In both these cases, the tensions were exacerbated by this disagreement between what the headteachers wanted for their schools and the perceived expectations of the policies; the results of these increased tensions for the resisters, however, were different from those for the child-centred compliers. The details of these differences are covered in previous chapters.

Although the responses showed a variety of possibilities for detailed answers to question O4:1 *(How did they interpret the expectations of local stakeholders?)*, depending on each headteacher's stance and the contexts within which they were working at the time, there was also a similarity in the general attitudes. Parents were generally considered to be compliant where school plans were concerned while it was considered that staff should be consulted – even if their views were subsequently over-ridden. The local authority inspectors, however, despite most headteachers considering that their authority had declined, were seen as local stakeholders who had a strong professional input and people to whom a listening ear should be directed and on occasions as a DfES 'local enforcer'. The stakeholders referred to in this question, however, while relating to the school contexts as a whole, did not relate to the level of tension in any headteacher's responses, and in most cases they did not seem to regard them as a high priority. Only one of the headteachers (Gillian) referred at length to relationships with parents. In all cases the only stakeholders who related to tensions were the DfES (via initiatives) and the (temporally local) Ofsted inspectors. These responses suggest that it may be suitable to ask, 'was this question really necessary?' and the answer

would be 'probably not' but it was better to start with the question in mind than start without it and possibly miss a vital aspect of the school contexts.

The contradictions and conflicts mentioned in question O4:2 *(What contradictions and conflicts emerged in the school as a system?)* were different for each of the schools that each of the headteachers discussed in the interviews. These are covered in detail in Chapters 6 and 7, where similarities and differences are described along with the consequences of the contradictions and conflicts.

The revised question O5:1 *(What practical steps, if any, have the headteachers taken – or are they proposing to take – to reduce these tensions and contradictions?)* are also discussed earlier, but in general, longer-serving child-centred headteachers, whether they were compliers or resisters, have taken early retirement and the longer-serving curriculum-led complier has also retired, but unlike the child-centred headteachers she continued several years after her full pensionable service had been completed. Of the newer headteachers, the three who were child-centred had all moved schools to reduce tensions and contradictions, whereas the curriculum-led headteacher had not moved and said that she had no intention of doing so.

While these questions were all given equal weight in the original research design, it is evident from the responses that the headteachers considered some to be more important than others so far as contextual tensions were concerned. This had not originally been considered and is, perhaps, something that should have been. Any future study will consider the possibility of the respective questions having a difference in weight, or emphasis, from the outset, and the effects this might have on the conduct of interviews.

Textual considerations

The texts relating to stress which have been previously quoted in this study have concentrated mainly on the effects of these tensions on teachers rather than headteachers, though in some headteachers have been included as a subset of the teaching profession. Nevertheless, the reflections upon background tension in this study would relate to teachers and deputy heads in similar ways to those which have been outlined here.

Nias (1989), using the terms satisfier and dissatisfier, taken from work by Herzberg (1966) says that satisfiers tend to be intrinsic to the nature of the work while dissatisfiers tend to be contextual, and that the removal of a satisfier is not equivalent to the addition of a dissatisfier, and vice-versa. While this nature of work versus contextual separation of satisfiers and dissatisfiers may be regarded as broadly accurate, the separation of their effects denies the continual reciprocal relationship between the individual and the context which underlies the everyday experience of that individual within a specific working context. In this aspect, Nias and, particularly, Herzberg seem to have omitted a particularly important factor. In apparent contradiction, Wertsch (1994, p. 203) points out that 'human action and sociocultural setting [are] analytically distinct, yet inherently interrelated' and Valsiner (1998, p.352) suggests that although the organism (person) is distinct from its environment (social world) there is a dynamic interdependence maintained between the two. This interdependence between the individual and the context leads to the suggestion that while the removal of a satisfier may not directly increase problems, as a short-term stressor, it is contextually related and can, therefore, be a factor which helps to increase background tension so that the negative effects of shorter-term stressors originate from a higher initial plane. Furthermore, in contradiction to Herzberg, Nias suggests that dissatisfiers are contextual whilst satisfiers are related to the nature of the work, and this does move towards

the notion, suggested here, that there are, indeed, longer-term contextual tensions. It is upon the foundation of these contextual tensions, the combination of which is called background tension in this study, upon which other shorter-term stressors may build to raise the individual headteacher's stress level beyond the point where she has the ability to cope.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, Campbell and Neill (1994) and Dunham (1992) point out that the requirement for teachers to work a minimum of 1265 hours in a working year, "with such additional hours as may be needed" (Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act, 1987) had certainly increased the workload of teachers and headteachers. This general increase of both the workload and the time needed to accomplish the required duties served to increase the background tension for the majority of headteachers. Those who were previously curriculum-led and therefore already had systems in place to implement the appropriate working practices were less likely to be adversely affected by this increase, while the headteachers who were child-centred and needed to make significant changes were those who were more likely to have the greater increase in workload and, therefore, also likely to need to input the greatest time in order to make those changes. Campbell and Neill, however, also predicted that, with time and familiarity, this workload would reduce, and this does not seem to be the case for headteachers, since nearly 20 years have passed and the responses in this study suggest that the pressures are still evident.

While the consideration of 'difference dilemmas' as a basis for evaluation of stress by Norwich and Kelly (2004, p. 2) adds little to the suggestions mentioned here regarding background tension, it does shed a little light upon the consideration of the differences in the responses to tension exhibited by compliers and resisters. It was suggested in Chapter 7 that resisters tend to suffer from physical problems while compliers suffer more from emotional problems. The notion of difference dilemmas, where the negative aspects of stigma and

devaluation underlie the problems caused by excessive stress, corresponds closely with these differences between resisters and compliers. Resisters tended to suffer from problems related to exhaustion, excess adrenalin and/or blood-pressure, but not from problems related to the negative aspects of stigma and devaluation. Compliers who had curriculum-led professional identities reported very few stress-related problems emanating from feelings of stigma or devaluation since they suffered few, or no, problems with difference dilemmas. Compliers who were acting in accordance with imposed government initiatives that were not aligned with their professional identities, however, felt that they were being required to behave in ways which contradicted those professional identities. This could be expected to arouse feelings of stigma and devaluation in those headteachers, who did appear to be far more likely to suffer the psychological and emotional consequences of difference dilemmas. These feelings of stigma and devaluation relate strongly to the findings regarding Emily and the change of headteachers in the school where she worked during the period immediately pre-ERA and post-ERA. The leadership and management styles of the two headteachers were both strongly bureaucratic to autocratic in nature, yet as was shown earlier in this chapter (p. 220) Emily suffered far more greatly from stress-related problems when working with the latter. While this could be related to the increase of background tension within that school context after the introduction of the ERA, Emily also pointed out that the second headteacher demonstrated far less trust than the first headteacher in her ability to perform her duties in an appropriate fashion. This led to Emily having a very strong feeling of devaluation, which, combined with the elevation of background tension, led to the many difficulties she experienced, and precipitated her resignation and temporary downshifting in order to alleviate the problem.

Wolverton, Wolverton and Gmelch (2002, p. 104) suggest that the environment, or context, in which leaders are working directly affects their level of job satisfaction.

> The more caring the environment [context], the more co-operative the climate, the more involved the staff were in decision making and the greater the perceived level of autonomy, the greater the level of job satisfaction.

This view agrees, on the whole, with the view of Nias, expressed above, since the majority of the satisfiers stated here are intrinsic to the nature of the work. The notable exception, however, is the explicit statement that the nature of the environment, or context, can also be regarded as a satisfier. The view does, however, fit well with the proposal, drawn from this study, which suggests that features of the context give rise to the background tension, which forms the base level upon which shorter-term stresses are built, leading to the overall level of strain on the individual. The point made by Wolverton, Wolverton and Gmelch, also reinforces the suggestion made earlier that the level of this background tension would appear to be affected by both the positive and the negative factors of the job. This is in contradiction to Nias who suggests, rather, that these are mutually independent of each other. In a similar vein, Kyriacou (2000, p. 100-101) gives a number of strategies that 'healthy schools' may use to reduce teacher stress. These include 'a strong sense of collegiality,' 'management decisions based on consultation,' 'teachers receiving positive feedback and praise,' 'red tape and paperwork are minimised' and 'policies and procedures [that] are easy to follow'. It may be seen that although these points are directed at teachers, they apply just as much to headteachers and their interaction with both the local and the wider contexts, and that, as has been shown earlier, these are some of the very features which the introduction of many government initiatives removed from the professional lives of headteachers. Furthermore, contradicting again the claims of Nias and, particularly, Herzberg, the removal of these positive features served to raise the level of the

background tension in schools where they had been the norm prior to the introduction of these initiatives.

More recent texts, which refer to the difficulties faced by headteachers with regard to the government initiatives, concur with the suggestion that education reforms have brought about excessive workloads for the teaching profession.

> Heralded by the passing of the Education Reform Act in 1988, successive British governments have generated an extensive series of policies aimed at transforming English state school education as part of a wider strategy to reform, or to 'modernize', all the public services … An unintended negative consequence has been to overload chronically the headteachers and teachers charged with responsibility for implementing the multiplicity of innovations entailed in these policies. (Hoyle and Wallace, 2005, p. 1)

> The same kind of feeling was expressed by both Penny, when she talked of 'countless, countless, countless initiatives' and by Jill, who said that there were 'so many things that come into school, like budgets and new initiatives … and the mounds of paperwork, and things that take our eye off the ball really'. In such situations, the sheer number of demands would very likely, as Jill put it, take one's eye off the ball. (Bottery, 2007, p. 105)

Hoyle and Wallace (2005) go on to provide evidence supporting this statement (pages 2-5), while Bottery is quoting the general opinions of headteachers who took part in his study. There are clear references to the long-term difficulties faced by teachers and headteachers working in contexts where there is the implementation of numerous, rapidly introduced government initiatives which are statutory, but with which they do not necessarily agree. While they mention both teachers and headteachers, Hoyle and Wallace (2005) say later (p. 4) "If government reforms had produced such consequences for the morale and aspirations of teachers, one can assume that the impact on headteachers was even greater." Although they do not mention background tension, by that name or any other, it is clear that the common emphasis in these texts is upon the longer-term detrimental effects upon teachers and headteachers of working in a context where they are implementing strategies which have been imposed upon them by central government. These statements align with the

principle of background tension, since they are referring to the longer-term contextual tension of the headteachers: that is to say, the constant, everyday pressure, arising from the conditions within which they are working, that underlies the specific, shorter-term, day-to-day pressures that arise from individual problems which the headteachers may face during the course of their working day.

The New Convergence

Goodson (1992, p. 119) suggests that:

> The 'life histories' of schools, subjects and the teaching profession would provide vital contextual background. The focus on teachers' lives would therefore reconceptualise our studies of schooling in quite basic ways.

In a similar way, the examination of the professional life histories of headteachers in this study has provided vital contextual background which has thrown light upon how the professional identities they had developed during their earlier careers related to the changes in their working environments during the past 20 years. This was followed by an examination of how those contextual changes, and the headteachers' responses to them, combined to develop varying levels of tension, depending upon the level of conflict between their professional identities and the requirements of the contexts at any particular time.

In order to relate the life histories of the headteachers to their contextual situations, an uncommon amalgamation of techniques was employed. Their historical narratives were collected using semi-structured interviews and then these narratives were analysed using the activity triangle as a heuristic device. The way in which this combination was achieved was explained in more detail in Chapter 5. This is an unusual combination, which, in this study, has been described as the 'new convergence', the effectiveness of which needs to be examined. Here, it is worth reiterating, as pointed out in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4, that although the activity triangle is used as an analytical device, this study does *not* use activity

theory to underpin the thesis. In addition, despite dealing with the activities of headteachers in school contexts, this is not a thesis based on management of education, but, rather, considers the relationship between the headteachers and those contexts.

It can be seen in Chapter 6, that in this case, the use of the activity triangles was an effective way of relating the individual headteachers to the contexts in which they had taught at specific times during the period which was under consideration in this study. This use offers a particularly clear representation of where the tensions lie within those contexts, and between the individual headteachers and those contexts. The analysis in Chapter 7 makes use of both the historical narratives of the individuals and their relationships with the contexts as ascertained by the use of the activity triangles. In this way it was possible to determine the extent to which those contexts had been transformed since the introduction of the government initiatives in 1988 and how the headteachers' individual responses to these transformations related to their professional identities. In both these chapters the integrated use of activity triangles (with the matrix derived from them) and the headteachers' historical narratives allowed the appropriate comparisons to be drawn between them. It is apparent, therefore, that this particular use of activity triangles allowed some clarity of depiction and, when the activity triangles were used in combination with the historical narratives of the headteachers, it was a reasonably straightforward matter to make comparisons between the headteachers, their relative contextual tensions and their reactions to the government initiatives. Thus, the initial reasons for this combination of dissimilar techniques – each enhancing the points where the other was the less appropriate method – were found to be satisfied and therefore the combination was appropriate. In addition, it is apparent that the combination described above made the analysis of the data and the consideration of the tensions between the headteachers and their contexts rather more easily achieved than it

would have been if the activity triangles had not been used. It may be considered, however, that since it was necessary to use the matrix to collate and clarify the analysis of data that had been accomplished using the activity triangles, their value may have been limited. While this is a reasonably valid point, since the activity triangles were spread over a large number of pages, which made referring to them difficult, construction of the matrix without the triangles would have been extremely difficult and vital components may have been omitted. Analysis without either the activity triangles or the matrix would have been possible, but this may have diluted the contextual aspect which was so important in this study.

What is not apparent from this study, however, is definitive data regarding whether this information could have been obtained as easily and accurately by using a different technique, or combination of techniques, or whether it would have been possible to derive the matrix without the use of the activity triangles, or by the use of a different analytical technique. To discover whether this is the case it would be necessary to use a number of different approaches and then make a comparison of the various styles. Although this use of a combination of techniques was an interesting and relevant point for discussion, it was not the main object of this study and therefore has not been given this greater depth of analysis.

Conclusion

As a result of this study, several comparisons were drawn with regard to the various responses of the eight headteachers to government initiatives between 1988 and 2005 and, particularly, the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). The small-scale nature of the study and the low number of headteachers taking part lead to the conclusion that only internal validity can be claimed. However, the cross-referencing of the headteachers' responses against each other and against the opinions of members of the local inspectorate suggests

that the reliability of the conclusions drawn in Chapter 7 should be acceptable. These conclusions resulted from comparing the reactions of headteachers who were longer-serving with those who were newer to the job; those who were more likely to be compliers where government initiatives were concerned with those who were resisters and those who had developed a child-centred professional identity with those who were more curriculum-led. The resister/complier classification of the headteachers was, initially, a fairly weakly-based categorisation which might have caused some difficulties (or 'blind-alleys) if it had not been suitable for this sample of headteachers and their responses to the government policy on education. This, however, was not the case and the congruence between the categorisation and the responses led to suitable analytical classification of the headteachers in the sample group.

The procedure for determining the themes and then fitting them to the activity triangles, as can be seen from the description in Appendix 4, was a prolonged, in-depth activity. There were several reasons for this intensity. First, it was necessary to ensure both the intra-transcript and the inter-transcript consistency in the interrogation of the headteachers' statements and the development of the themes from them. The second reason involved the importance of consistency in their application to the appropriate nodes on the activity triangles. While these nodes refer to particular features of the contexts within which the headteachers were working, they are not necessarily totally independent of each other; the division of labour (DoL) node, for instance is closely related to the community (other stakeholders) node, which includes other members of the leadership team, to whom the headteacher will be delegating some parts of school management. This could have been a source of error in the analysis and, therefore, needed to ensure that the application of themes to nodes was consistent to reduce ambiguities regarding the 'fit' between themes and nodes.

The example in Appendix 4 demonstrates that each of the themes and their 'fit' with the nodes was the result of the consideration of a number of statements. This consideration of multiple statements was used as a means of reinforcing the reliability of the procedure and thus minimising possible errors. Since this was a significant possible source of inaccuracy, every effort was made to try to reduce it. While recognising possible sources of error in the analysis of data, it is important to note that every effort was made to ensure objectivity and therefore reduce any possibility of researcher-based error. This should enhance the validity of the research and reduce the possible opportunity for any contention that there may have been researcher bias in a study which considers the reactions of individuals to interventions in their professional lives.

In this sample, the child-centred headteachers who displayed the tendency to be more resistant to government initiatives were more likely to suffer from the physical, or medical, effects of increased stress whereas those who more compliant were more likely to suffer from the emotional problems which might arise from increased stress. The curriculum-led headteachers in the sample suffered far less from these stress-induced problems than either of the categories of child-centred headteacher.

Many of the significant tensions which arose relating to the headteachers and the contexts in which they were working stemmed from the relationship between their professional identities which they had developed as a consequence of their earlier professional development and the pressures existing in their contexts at that time. In situations where the contextual pressures were in contradiction with these professional identities, the headteachers suggested that the tensions that they felt existed between them and their contexts were perceptibly exacerbated. In three of the cases, the contextual contradictions and tensions were in school contexts, where the headteachers had previously been working

as deputy heads and stemmed from difficult professional relationships with new headteacher colleagues who had been introduced into those school contexts. Each of these very problematic relationships occurred after the introduction of the ERA in situations where the new headteachers were trying to implement the government initiatives. In each of the cases the tensions were related mainly to interpersonal relationships but also the mode of implementation of initiatives and related to the differences between the initiatives that were being implemented at the time and the professional identities of the interviewees. In situations where the contextual pressures were more closely aligned with the professional identities of the headteachers, the increase of tension was significantly smaller.

One apparent weakness of this study is that, due to the small sample, the conclusions outlined above are only valid in relation to these specific headteachers. This weakness is accepted and no claim is made for any possibility of the findings being suitable for generalisation to a larger arena. While this may be the case, there is one inference which, with further investigation giving similar findings, may be more appropriate for generalisation. As a consequence of the evidence gathered in this study, it was suggested that the longer-term contextual tension that the headteachers encountered on a daily basis formed a foundation upon which any shorter-term stressors built to give the cumulative level of stress that those headteachers were experiencing at any particular moment. This long-term, foundational, contextual tension has been referred to as background tension. It was also suggested that this background tension was increased by several factors. These included:

a) The large number of government initiatives introduced in the period under study; the rapidity of their instigation and the general negative rhetoric, regarding members of the teaching profession, which accompanied them.

b) The critical differences between the professional identities of the headteachers, leading to their philosophies and objects for school management and development, and the curriculum-centred direction in which the initiatives were driving them. This was exacerbated by innovations such as Ofsted inspections and 'league-tables' of schools that were seen as devices to ensure that the required approach was being adopted.

c) The continual longer hours and extra workload brought about by the initiatives and the shorter, high-intensity bursts of activity that became necessary when Ofsted inspections were imminent. The tension caused by this extra workload and the bursts of activity was exacerbated in the case of the headteachers in smaller schools who also had a teaching commitment.

d) The lack of specific training for a number of the new tasks they were being required to undertake, with which they were unfamiliar, and which they were obliged to implement in a short, unrealistic time-frame.

The last factor (d) may have been considered to be a shorter-term problem if there had been a small number of initiatives; if they had been introduced over a short time-span and then there had been a period during which they could have been implemented; if there had been respite periods for implementation between initiatives; or if so many of the initiatives had not required training. However, the continuous nature of new initiatives being established and the high intensity of their introduction, together with the number needing training combine to make lack of specific training a longer-term factor, and thus one which contributes towards background tension.

This study has, in one area, an unusual outcome. It appears to go against the normal trend for research of this type which rarely produces analytical trends that fit a pattern so neatly. There was no way in which this was engineered, and the data were drawn directly from the

interview transcripts, which, in turn, were typed verbatim from the recordings. The themes were, of course, drawn from specific areas of the data, but from points that had been mentioned by the majority of the headteachers, and, in the main, had been brought up several times by each of them. The consistency of the themes, which led to the 'neatness' of the data may be a feature of interviewing headteachers from one county, but this is a feature of many studies and thus is not 'out of the ordinary'. As has been mentioned throughout this study, determined attempts have been made to eliminate sources of error and minimise subjectivity. There are times when such neat data may be questionable, but, given the determined attempts to reduce subjectivity, the careful selection of the headteachers and the careful extraction of the themes, this must be one of the few 'other' times when the data are accepted.

Although the factors mentioned above are specific to education reforms, and this study is not wide enough to claim opportunity for generalisation, the education reforms were introduced on a national scale and other public services, such as the National Health Service, are undergoing similar reforms. There is, therefore, a case for suggesting that the hypothesis, introduced in this study, regarding background tension, as a longer-term contextual foundation upon which shorter-term stressors build, might be a suitable topic for further investigation, in education and other appropriate fields. With this additional research, the case for generalisation might be established and the principle of background tension could be applied to groups beyond a select few in a single county. If, then, it is found to be the case that background tension is a more common feature of working environments where differences between contextual drives and professional identities exist, some ways may be developed to reduce it. This reduction in the background tension – the base level upon which other, shorter-term stressors build – could then provide the

opportunity to reduce the overall level of everyday stresses. While it is clear that these tensions are acting upon teachers and headteachers, they could, perhaps, also relate to other professionals working in various public services where government initiatives have increased the workload and the tension in recent years. With further investigation, therefore, there is the possibility of this small-scale study being of benefit to a far broader spectrum of workers.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview schedules

Appendix 1a: Guidance for initial headteacher interviews

Appendix 1b: Guidance for main headteacher interviews

Appendix 1c: Questions for main headteacher interviews

Appendix 1d: Questions for inspectors

Appendix 2: Interview transcripts

The transcripts of interviews amount to more than 70 000 words. [They are included as a separate appendix]

Appendix 3: The 25 tasks

A list of the 25 tasks not to be undertaken by qualified teachers.

Appendix 4: From transcript to triangle

A section taken from the transcript of the second interview with Barbara, showing how the themes were highlighted and transferred to the activity triangle.

1a: Guidance for initial headteacher interviews

Semi-structured Interviews.

1.   *History of heads professional lives. First introductory session*

Establish basic details-length of career?
Years as head?
Schools as head?

Cover details of Activity Theory and the activity triangle in a simple fashion to explain how specific factors are important and the construction of identity through interaction with a specific systemic context.

Leave sheets with headteachers to give an idea of what is being done and what areas will be covered. These sheets are summaries of pages 67-70 (stress reduction strategies) and 97-106 (the activity triangle).

Explain that the survey will be part of a historical longitudinal study which will look at their careers at specific points to determine how they have changed-particularly with reference to the Education Reform Act and its consequential changes.

Cover ethical, financial and methodological issues.

Make appointment for second interview.

1b: Guidance for main headteacher interviews

Refer back to first meeting with reference to life history and Activity Theory. Explain that we are looking at professional trajectories.

2.   School system in 1988 – at time of ERA, school system now and period of greater stress.

Establish the main times which will be considered:-
- Pre-ERA
- Times of particular stress (personal or professional)
- Times have greater workload
- Now?

Re-introduce the Activity Theory factors. How did each of these affect the raising or lowering of the level of stress at the particular points discussed? Concentrate on the object of the system for each of the times, working down to the base object in each case. (Determining what the object was in each of these systems by looking in depth at what the headteachers wanted for the schools and communities at each of these points may require the question "why" several times to determine the root object for particular activities.)

Move to the bottom line of the triangle and establish how each factor influenced the actions, ability to resist / comply with requirements. How, directly or indirectly, did they affect the stress levels of individuals?

Examine whether these coincide with the objects, or perceived objects, of the government initiatives at each of these points.

- To what extent do they consider that they were able to influence (and possibly change) the systems within which they were working at each of those times?
- How did the system influence their objects/actions at each of those times?
- Was this influence upon their actions compatible with their wishes / ambitions for themselves? The school? The community?

How did any alignment or misalignment between what the headteachers' wanted and what they thought the government wanted affect their satisfaction with the conditions they were working in and their perceived notions of the suitability of outcomes.

3.   Resister or complier – when? For what? Overall?

Explain what we mean by complier and resister.
Ask for a considered opinion of whether they consider themselves, complier or resister. Was this for all the issues?
What features of the school systems worked for / against their compliance and/or resistance to particular features?
Were there any individuals or groups who supported them in this?
What contradictions or conflicts emerged in the school as a system at the times of change and compliance or resistance?

How did these contradictions and/or conflicts impact upon your work in moving the school forward at those points?
Do they consider that they may have been a pre-empter? Could they give some examples?

How might these decisions have affected their stress levels?
How did any increased stress manifest itself?
How did they deal with this stress and its effects? Would they deal with it the same way now?

In the long-term what do they consider to be the most effective way of dealing with it?
Mention – Retreatism (moving out of the profession, either by retiring or a career move) – Downshifting (planned demotion, role reduction, role redefinition) – Self-actualising (re-routing or relocating).

1c: Questions for main headteacher interviews

Prompt sheet – to be used in plain English

1. *Remind about confidentiality.*

2. For about 15-20 minutes, could you run through your professional trajectory since 1985? Concentrate on major events and other things which have had a significant effect on you, your work and on the systems within which you have been working in particular. These may be school-based or external and the external may be to do with the education system (for example DfES initiatives) or personal (give example).

3. *Re-introduce the Activity Triangle factors.*

4. It would be particularly helpful to look at three specific points in that trajectory now; one pre-ERA, one time of particular workload, tension, stress or perhaps notable for some other reason and one being now – or close to now. What might those points be?

How did each of the activity triangle factors affect any feelings of stress you might have had at the particular points discussed?

Looking at the *object* (redefine) of the system for each of the times I would like to work down to the root object in each case. (Determining what the object was in each of these systems by looking in depth at what you wanted for the schools and communities at each of these points.) I may need to ask the question "why" several times to determine the root object for particular activities – this does not mean there is a problem, merely that I am searching for the deepest object in each case.

Moving to the bottom line of the triangle I would like to establish how each factor influenced your actions and ability to resist / comply with requirements. How, directly or indirectly, did they, in any way affect your feelings at those times? Did they, in any way, make you feel stressed?

Did the objects of your activities coincide with the objects, or perceived objects, of the government initiatives at each of these points?

- To what extent do you consider that you were able to influence (and possibly change) the systems within which you were working at each of those times? How much did you feel you might need to do that?
- How did the system influence your objects/actions at each of those times?
- Was this influence upon your actions compatible with your wishes / ambitions for yourself? The school? The community?

How did any alignment or misalignment between what you wanted and what you thought the government wanted affect your satisfaction with the conditions you were working in and your perceived notions of the suitability of outcomes.

5. Resister or complier – when? For what? Overall?

Overall, what would you do?
        if you disagreed with the initiatives? } *Could you give*
        if you were happy with the initiatives?   } *any examples?*
Was this for all the issues?

What features of the school systems worked for / against compliance and/or resistance to particular features of the system at these times?

Were there any individuals or groups who particularly supported or opposed you in these actions?

Were there any contradictions or conflicts that emerged in the school as a system at the times of change and possible compliance or resistance? What were they?

How did these contradictions and/or conflicts impact upon your work in moving the school forward at those points?

Do you consider that you or the school system may have pre-empted any of the

initiatives? Could you give some examples?

How might these decisions have affected you? Did they cause any feelings of stress?

How did any increased stress manifest itself?

How did you deal with this stress and its effects?

Would you deal with it the same way now?

Remind about Retreatism (moving out of the profession, either by retiring or a career move) – Downshifting (planned demotion, role reduction, role redefinition) – Self-actualising (re-routing or relocating).

In the long-term which of these would you consider to be the most effective way of dealing with stress, or do you think there is another, more effective method?

Thank you for allowing me to interview you.
I will let you have a copy of the appropriate section of my thesis for your comments when the analysis is complete. (This may take some time and will certainly not be before December.)

1d: Questions for inspectors

Prompt sheet – to be used in plain English

1. Remind about confidentiality for them and the headteachers. Ask about recording.

2. Your list of headteachers consists of some who have been interviewed and some who have not. This is to protect the confidentiality of the heads who have agreed to take part in my research. The information for those heads who are not taking part in my project will be immediately discarded so their information will also remain totally confidential. In order to make this simpler, I would like to consider each head separately – one at a time.

3. *Introduce the Activity Triangle factors.*

4. Each head looked at three specific periods in their career; one pre-ERA, one time of particular workload, tension, stress or perhaps notable for some other reason and one being now – or close to now. I would like you to think of the head in the period you have known them.

Thinking about the school within which they work, and considering how that system may have changed, how would you say that each factor – particularly those on the bottom line – has influenced the system?

What would you consider to be the object in this case? That is, what drives this headteacher professionally?

- How would you define the school? Think about:
- Decision making – collegiate? Bureaucratic? How has it changed?
- Underlying ethos – child-centred? Curriculum-centred? How has it changed?
- The degree of stakeholder influence?
- The head's influence in change – or otherwise?
- To what extent government initiatives influenced the direction of the school – and why?
- Do you feel this influence upon their actions was compatible with their wishes / ambitions for themselves? The school? The community?

How do you feel that the alignment or misalignment between what they may have wanted and the government initiatives affected their satisfaction with the conditions they were working in and what you would consider to be their satisfaction with the outcomes?

Overall, (most heads being some of each) so far as these initiatives are concerned, would you consider the head to be a resister or complier and what features of their characters and the school systems worked for or against compliance and/or resistance to particular strategies?

Can you think of any contradictions or conflicts that may have emerged in the school as a system at times of change and possible compliance or resistance?

How did these contradictions and/or conflicts impact upon the school moving forward at those points?

Do you consider that the head or the school system they had built may have pre-empted any of the initiatives? Could you give some examples?

Has this head suffered due to stress at any point?

How did any increased stress manifest itself and how did they deal with it?

In the long-term which of these would you consider to be the most effective way of dealing with stress, or do you think there is another, more effective method?

Thank you for allowing me to interview you.
Due to confidentiality I will not be able to furnish you with the results of the study, nor with the edited commentary of your interview, but, if you wish, I can provide you with a tabulated summary. Would you like to have this?

Appendix 3

Tasks that should no longer be done routinely by teachers:

- Collecting money
- Chasing absences
- Bulk photocopying
- Copy typing
- Producing standard letters
- Producing class lists
- Record keeping and filing
- Classroom display
- Analysing attendance figures
- Processing exam results
- Collating pupil reports
- Administering work experience
- Administering examinations
- Invigilating examinations
- Administering teacher cover
- ICT trouble shooting and minor repairs
- Commissioning new ICT equipment
- Ordering supplies and equipment
- Stocktaking
- Cataloguing, preparing, issuing and maintaining equipment and materials
- Minuting meetings
- Co-ordinating and submitting bids
- Seeking and giving personnel advice
- Managing pupil data
- Inputting pupil data

This list was obtained from Ofsted document 'Leadership and Management: Managing the Workforce' website address:
   (http://www.governornet.co.uk/linkAttachments/Ofsted-managingtheworkforce.pdf)

Appendix 4: From transcript to triangle

Excerpt from interview with Barbara

At King Edwards First School there were elements of deprivation but it was nothing like the deprivation we experience here at Eastfield and nothing like the deprivation in other schools I've worked in. So I wasn't getting that level of professional – you know – buzz that I get here and in other places, yes.

So that's the way it's gone and while I was at King Edwards – um – you would, as everybody would in those days, your staffing was determined purely by pupil numbers and the only control of finance you had, really was over the allowance you had to buy resources. Everything else came via the LEA and was dealt with so it released huge amounts of time for me to be involved with the curriculum and I *love* developing literacy, I *love* developing pupils' opportunity to debate and to talk and to have ideas, and development in areas of art and craft, all those things were very much things I enjoyed working with pupils for and when financial budgets arrived, and delegation of that – at first it was quite a shock and I thought, "we could well do without this!" but the way the LEA handled it, by letting us appreciate bit by bit what was involved made it fairly painless, although it was consuming more time, and within eighteen months / two years of delegation of budgets I realised the power that they actually gave to schools; and that power was the opportunity of choice, of really putting in resources where professionally – um – one could really see that they were needed whereas an LEA approach to financing schools can really miss the target and the idea that if you are one pupil less you don't qualify for a teacher but if somebody joins your school – ooh! Yes a whole teacher! just made a nonsense of the way resourcing could work in its worst instance. So to have control of the budget was a very big step forward – very big step forward, and gradually as time has gone on it has enabled schools to really plan their staffing, their resourcing, and providing the resources have been substantial enough – that's ok.

My first, when I was first appointed to Eastfield, which was twelve years ago, for the first couple of years – um – it was a Conservative government, and I don't want to be political in this but there is a reality behind this, for those first two years we had a one and a half percent cut in our school budget each year and that was quite a blow, because this was a big school, it needed resourcing, it needed a huge amount of work on the environment spending, there were outside toilet blocks, there was black tarmac along the corridors, which was horrible,

the classrooms had no carpet and the roof was leaky in so many places because it was like a glass lean-to in the corridors I was – I mean the staff were lovely and we were just determined that we were going to improve the quality of our environment because, particularly in a deprived area, environment demonstrates, to the pupils and the community, how you value – them! So if children are coming in, having to walk across a playground into a dirty, smelly, horrible toilet it's saying, "well, we don't really care much about you, you can manage with this," whereas we know perfectly well that the other side of the river it would not be tolerated so we became determined to do something about it. So I wasn't very pleased when in the first two years we had two one and a half percent cuts in our budget. But since the present government came to power the level of funding that has come to our school, particularly the targeted funding, although it hasn't been immense it has been excellent, particularly in the capital money that has been coming in, the targeted resourcing for IT work, the increased amount of money per child now that has given a huge amount of flexibility, the initiatives like the Education Action Zone, which have been a great support, because they have been another level of funding that can be targeted and put into supporting our pupils…

DW – I see.

Barbara …And suddenly it's not me working on my own at Eastfield driving forward with the environment every school in our area because we were working as a team in a sense and you could see we were all going in the same direction. Supported, you know, in a deprived area improving massively the environment for our pupils and the quality and provision of education provision. Because if we em, look at the two initiatives in numeracy and literacy, there's some huge, hugely good points in both of them. Because they have focused attention on the very key things that are going to enable our pupils to move on in their schooling without any doubt in their minds when they go to high school. So providing ones takes the right professional parts of those strategies and ensures that it doesn't become, and this is the drawback to something like the National curriculum, something like a numeracy strategy, if it doesn't become a delivering of the curriculum but we look at the reason why teachers are here and not just delivering then that is very positive but if we look at oh its something else we now know what it is, it's ever so easy to teach now because all we've got to do we've got to do is just deliver this curriculum, then that is quite different. We really tried to ensure

that our staff are motivated, are inspiring people, when the children come in they just love to be here, they want to find out more so the key thing isn't how they deliver that curriculum, in terms of its content, it's more the style in which they deliver that curriculum, are they motivating in the real balance of the lesson bearing in mind the ages of the pupil. In year 6 are they letting the children go out with less than wanting to find out more and feel, 'cor' this is a fantastic subject. God I'd love to find out more about this and when I go to High School I can do even more, or are they driving it into the ground on adverbs and bits and nuts and bolts of the English language and make it so boring as if on a treadmill of work? And now the problem with teaching staff is that because you are working to a test, at key stage 2 that the Government are placing huge importance on, and it is huge importance - nobody can step aside from that and you ignore it at your peril. If you step aside from that it means that you really feel obliged to drive on and drive on to ensure that the pupils in their year 6 get those level fours and above. Now to become inspiring teachers one has to almost devalue that test. Because the only way you can really prepare them for the test is to have a mind set that is test orientated.

DW Mmm

Barbara and so you need to do practice tests. You need to be aware of what the paper is going to demand you, what is the format of it? How does it work? And to succeed well you need an approach that does that, it's an extremely complex bit, into one's teaching programme to be motivating, exciting, picking up on children's ideas and taking those forward when there's a particularly prescribed set curriculum that's leading towards a crucial test.

DW It's bringing sixteen year-old ethics to eleven year-olds?

Barbara – It is! And for me, personally it is the most inappropriate way to ensure that children have a transition from their primary school to their high school – by insisting that we have this tight programme towards the tests. Disastrous! (laughs) We don't do brilliantly on the tests, and I'm proud of that fact – and there are lots of reasons why we don't do well in those tests, and another one – and this is probably more damning of this approach that's used – is that we had a special education centre in our school, which was set up by the LEA, where we had children with (pause) quite often extreme statements for their

difficulty in learning – and often combined with behaviour as well – and they were taught in a class in our school, in a group of twelve, with a very experienced and very able teacher and a teaching assistant, and they were fully integrated into the life of our school. Just as if they were just a small class of twelve around they school. Nobody ever thought of them as – "gosh they are nothing to do with us" they our children in everything we do, they are totally and utterly integrated, so when the LEA took away that funding on the basis that we shouldn't have SECs, that children should be integrated into mainstream classes, that totally devalued, a) the work the SEC was doing, but worse than that it threw huge burdens on year six and year five teachers in their preparation for the SATs because it meant that suddenly now we've got pupils that are extremely difficult to cope with, that were excluded from other schools because of it, and they couldn't cope and now suddenly we've got to! But now what was very worrying was that the LEA made no allowance for that fact when they look at our key stage two results – at all! – Whatsoever!

DW And each child is a little over one percent.

Barbara – Yes, so to follow the government route in this, which is to ensure you've got the highest standards in your school, the highest results, you've need to flush out the pupils who are not going to get you those results – that's what they are telling us really, so we should have stood very firm and said, "OK these pupils have been with us one year, two years, perhaps even three, they're not our catchment area, we can't cope with them, we must exclude them and if we had done that our SAT results would have been fine, but because we looked at the pupils' needs and enabled the pupils to go into our main stream – um – it gave the impression that we were a failing school regarding our SAT results and no credibility for that was given whatsoever. Now you might say, oh, that's just my interpretation of it but I can tell you that I actually went to a meeting that the LEA had, that had been called – um – by the DfES, where – it was called a stocktaking meeting – where someone comes and talks to the LEA about what they are doing about their schools that haven't reached the right scores, and I was invited along to that meeting to explain why my school hadn't reached the right scores, and – um – I knew personally the person from the DfES because she was – um – at Mercia College, she was a trainer, one of the, you know, one of the lecturers, for - and she actually trained my daughter and two of the members of staff here, so we knew her, we knew what her values should be, but she came with a very, very different agenda and would

not at all listen to – um – the mobility in our staff because of the SAS camp and the fact that in our year six we could have only thirty percent of our pupils that were in Eastfield in Key Stage one, all the others had arrived, come from all sorts of directions for all sorts of reasons and she wouldn't accept the fact either that we'd got pupils from the SEC integrated. The remark was, "other schools cope with this, other schools manage that, what are you doing?" so our strategy had been totally wrong, we should have said, "Right, those pupils need to go, we need to be far more selective with who we let in if we possibly can, and put people off and then we'd have been seen as a very successful school, and I would have felt, professionally, totally devalued by that approach but it would seem to be the one that would work in the current system. And it is utterly and totally pernicious that the government have got this power over the LEA. So, here we've got LEA officers who, we know, really do want pupils to come to school and be motivated, having to put into practice really a system that they don't really believe in either and that's pretty bad! So that's more-or-less the summary of it. So there's some very big pluses, but there's also a very, very big negative – and it's a very current big negative – and perhaps I'm feeling that because I'm retiring at the end of this year, and it's, perhaps, the most poignant reason why, in the end, I'm not too unhappy about retiring from headship.

DW – Right, so that's a quite balanced view because you have got some really good parts, but what it seemed to me, from what you have been saying, was that the *negative* parts have been centrally based and the more positive bits have been more local. Is that right?

Barbara – Yes, definitely! Because the local inspectorate have been extremely supportive, understand the situation, and anybody who – anybody who *knows* the school, knows the pupils, knows the people who work here, in whatever capacity – and I can say that because I know other colleagues who feel the same in other schools – understand what we are doing and know that we have got very hard-working staff, very dedicated people, and we want to educate the whole child. Where I feel very angry is that more and more we are becoming accountable to people who don't know us and don't know the school. I've got no problem about being accountable, but I want to be accountable to people who have got an interest, part of the school, something that they actually do know about us from a perspective of reality whereas we are being accountable to people who have little idea about the reality of

our intake, our pupils, our expectations, all those kind of things, and what we are trying to do about our *vision* – yes?

DW – Yes, you used a really good word there, which I want to come on to. How do you feel the balance between responsibility and accountability has changed over the years?

Barbara – The balance has totally tipped! Because all teachers live with guilt, because it doesn't matter how hard you work, you are never going to achieve, *fully*, what you really want to achieve, which is the best level of support for each pupil, so there's always going to be that level of guilt in this profession and that can be overwhelmingly dealt with by being dedicated, being hard-working, being motivating, seeing pupils succeed, being happy and enjoying and moving on to other things, and meeting them later in their life and seeing what they have achieved, and, if you've got levels of support, because we all need to feel wanted, we all need to feel we are doing a good job, we all need praise from some direction, and when the local inspectors come in and talk to you and praise the school you feel, "Oh, that was good!" From talking to other colleagues they do feel very similar to that but, when you are faced with a kind of sledgehammer, and this doesn't necessarily have just to be Ofsted, because the last Ofsted we had, the team were lovely and we had lots of praise and it was good fun. But there does seem to be this sledgehammer approach now to accountability in absolutely everything, even in the, sort of, areas of extended schools so the people you employ, because you are always bidding for the money to keep these things going, there's no job security for them, and how are you going to get quality people running extended schools and doing all these things if you can't really say, "well there might not be a job next year" and again, why is that occurring, because nobody is totally trusting at the moment that this is going to be so successful that we can say, "right, for the next five years, have your breakfast club, for the next ten years have your after school club," it's, "well we've got the money for it this year and we will know, perhaps towards the end of April whether we have got the money for it next year and you'll have to bid for it and these are very, very time-consuming things so I'd put that into the category of accountability and I think – you know – it's like – if you are looking at the see-saw the weight has gone rock-solidly down on accountability and responsibility is, in a way, up there somewhere, but not balancing the see-saw.

[…]

267

DW   How has the bottom line of the triangle, to do with how the intrinsic rules, the stakeholders, and how you as the headteacher work with others on this object changed over the years – if at all?

Barbara   I haven't wanted it to change and I still believe that they way I operate my role will determine whether that objective about wall-to-wall working for pupils will be reached and so my practice in each school has been the same.

The conversation I want with the teaching staff is always going to be about "how can I help my pupils?" There will be other issues to discuss obviously – about their own professional development – a myriad of other issues that will come up – but all the time – let's push it back to our objective and I think that providing we do that – and I certainly have – though I might not have been totally successful it's been my real purpose in my conversation, my relationship with each member of staff – I would say that the rules have been developed around that. They may have been slightly different because of the historical development of the three schools I have been in. They have been slightly different – and also the fact that we now have far more teaching assistants playing an important role in our school. In the past they were just there to help the teacher – clean the paint pots, get the paper, sort things out – almost like a manual role and I became very determined, when we became part of the EAZ that we would enable our support staff to become joint educators with our teachers and to do that they would need training, so six of our current teaching staff are trained mentors in NVQ in child care. We connected with Evesham College because I held these in high esteem as I knew the person who was running the course there, and she actually came out and trained us for five days and the funding came from the EAZ. From that point a lot of our teaching assistants have taken courses and moved on – one now has a Bed. We've got NVQs at least three and we've got the Star course that the government ran with the LEA – it was run extremely well in this authority and a half-dozen of our teaching assistants went on that and two of them got distinctions. Now they've achieved that I meet all of our teaching assistants (TA) once a week – and the meeting is minuted – and it was agreed very early on, that, to ensure the teaching assistants had an element of the teaching role with the member of staff, each TA keeps a file, and in it they have their CV, so we can look at their professional development, and they keep examples of pupils work at the beginning of the school year and see how that child has progressed and the annotate each of the pieces of work with the work they have been doing with the teacher to show that improvement. They don't feel it's a

pressure as they love doing it, and I take the opportunity to see them at work and give an appraisal once a year but, because it's my style, we're looking at the positive things they have achieved and they feel pleased that the opportunity is there. So that's quite a big development but not a change of its rules, though nothing that has come in has rocked the boat, its made perceptions people have of the school and education, but the actual objective has not changed at all.

DW   How have the rules that have come from <u>outside</u> the school changed over the last twenty years?

Barbara   Oh! They have changed immensely. To continue in the role that I feel I must, I had to be subversive, rule-bending, role twisting, financially twisting in so many ways and say well that money can't be targeted there because it needs to go to this, and I have made no bones about it – fallen out with people over it at times – even the guy who ran the EAZ picked up that I wasn't using the funding specifically for something that was set up, and I said, "No because I am doing it <u>this</u> way" and he thought I was swindling, and we had a bit of a row about it, but I'm sorry, that was the way it was. Yes, the rules that have come in are overwhelming in so many ways but I have made it my objective not to be rocked by them.

DW   I would like to look at the community now, school and wider – how has that community worked with you at those times and how has that changed?

Barbara   There have been some key transitions if you go back to when I was at St Jude's, the LEA played a key role, both as your guide, supporter, inspector, in all sorts of ways you were just embedded into that system and they had power – when I was appointed, the inspector was there, and, in a sense, had the biggest part in the decision. In areas of curriculum depending on the type of inspector their abilities, there was a huge part played in schools to guide they was the curriculum was going. Today, looking at it starkly, the LEA have been totally disempowered – we have a particular shortage of inspectors who even know what our job is, and, these are so few of them, and their role now has been directed by the DfES essentially, and although we've got some advantages in that funding is coming more and more directly to us the strength of any organisation has to be supported by its funding and so the government have been able because they insist on well over – between

eighty and ninety percent of the money delegated to LEA's goes directly to schools. It's meant that all the time the LEA have been disempowered because they don't have the funds to get the people they need. Their salaries have been reduced in many ways because of job evaluation and the post of Director of Education had disappeared and has now become something quite different encompassing far more agencies than possibly could be managed through that system, so, yes, that part has changed immensely.

The governors have gained power as a body – incredibly- to the point that even individual governors feel that power and can act, sometimes without consulting the school. I have two examples, this year, of that due to my own situation personally – because of my illness I'm not here all the time, so they've taken that opportunity to do things that one would have certainly gone about in a different way. One, newly appointed governor, came in the summer holidays without my knowledge with one of the chief police guys to look at the environment and they gave us a very damming report on our school security. That has meant that we cannot now work with the LEA to fund security gradually – it all now needs to happen at once, and the money will have to come from funds put aside to support the school environment. It will wipe out our school capital funding for the next three years. Another (parent governor) whose daughter was in a group that misbehaved for one particular lunchtime supervisor caused a furore in the local area by canvassing other parents about lunchtime behaviour and insisting that action was taken when none was necessary. Neither of these would have happened seven years ago – the rest of the governing body would have insisted on joint decisions.

DW   How about the division of labour, has that changed?

Barbara   It has really, because when I first came to this school I did a <u>lot</u> of teaching, sixty percent of the timetable, going round classes, working with them, a set timetable so I could do something that could be shown to have an effect. There were all those opportunities but there is absolutely no way that I could have a teaching timetable now, because the demands are just immense – to do with parental concerns, staff concerns, all sorts of things are happening during the school day; there are so many things to deal with that to really give a teaching commitment in any respect whatsoever would just be a total disaster. The role has completely changed.

DW   You have described your object. How has that object coincided with what you perceived the objects of the government initiatives to be? – Pre-ERA?

Barbara   Because we were given so much autonomy, perhaps that level of support must have been there – though it is difficult to say whether that was rock-solidly the case – but you could certainly make a very strong case at the moment to say that if your objective is to make sure that pupils have the highest level of expectation, that the teaching staff are highly motivated and that they want the pupils when they leave this school to have a thirst for knowledge and that wonderful enquiry and investigation that they bring in has been sustained, then you can say that all the initiatives have done everything in their power to deter that, to stop that.   Once you overload the curriculum of young pupils with content as if, without that content, they can't move forward then you are just overwhelming them with the idea that education is about getting all these facts getting all these particular skills and just on a treadmill of work that, if you like it, its great, if you don't – forget it!
I am absolutely convinced that the problem we have with boys' motivation particularly has been determined by this onslaught of tedium, of delivering a curriculum that has to be completed in a certain time and would match the tests and I think boys in particular, and there are many in the school that I know who feel that school life isn't about that, and we are doing our best to motivate them, not losing sight of that objective because I am certain that particularly boys, some girls as well, but particularly boys that the style of the moment, that's upon us doesn't suit them to be motivated at all.

DW   To what extent do you consider you were able to influence, and possibly change, those systems at each of the time times?

Barbara   I think that if you've got great energy, character and determination you can achieve it successfully, because the majority of teachers, who think of coming into primary, have really got that at the head of their list as well.
Most primary teachers I've spoken to feel just the same – they just love to have that buzz from their job when they see children really loving to find out, love to learn, pester them with all sorts of things they've found out over the weekend – and that's the reason we do our job. The attitude just is – I'm glad I do what I do! Although we are saying that autonomy has been affected by the way that things have developed, there is still that level of autonomy – you expect that if you really take it by the scruff of the neck and you have got the energy,

■ Ofsted

■ Historical changes

■ Tests / League tables

■ Finance / LFM

■ Literacy and numeracy strategies

■ Triangle

■ Research questions

Transferring themes to the activity triangle

It may be seen from the excerpt, that the themes were drawn from the transcript, which was then marked with colour according to the key above (some colours fill the space, while others only mark typescript, leaving gaps – this is a feature of the software and has no analytical meaning).

These were transferred to the triangle below in the following way. The first marked section on page 247 (green = finance) referred to the earlier introduction of LFM, which, by 2005, was seen as a benefit, so no broken arrows were added for finance. The second marked section (p.248-249, blue and yellow = Literacy and SAT tests), however shows a greater degree of tension – between Barbara's child-centred object and the direction she feels that the National Curriculum and the tests are directing her.

> In year 6 are they letting the children go out with less than wanting to find out more and feel, 'cor' this is a fantastic subject. Because the only way you can really prepare them for the test is to have a mind-set that is test orientated … and so you need to do practice tests. You need to be aware of what the paper is going to demand you, what is the format of it? How does it work? And to succeed well you need an approach that does that, it's an extremely complex bit, into one's teaching programme to be motivating, exciting, picking up on children's ideas and taking those forward when there's a particularly prescribed set curriculum that's leading towards a crucial test. (Barbara)

This leads to tensions between Barbara and both the DfES (as a member of the macrosystemic community) and the tools, or instruments, she feels that she has to use to comply with the requirements of the National Curriculum and tests. For the same reasons, it also leads to tension between her expressed object and both the tools and the DfES. The comments made by Barbara, recorded on pages 249-250 which are highlighted pink (pink = historical changes) support the addition of these tensions to the triangle, as do others, both in this excerpt and from other sections which were not included in this appendix.

Some other statements which support this level of tension, between Barbara and the *community* and *tools* nodes in her 2005 school context are given here. These lead to the activity triangle below (and shown as fig. 6.8), which shows tensions between those nodes and a high level of general tension between her and the Eastfield school context.

[W]hen the LEA took away that funding on the basis that we shouldn't have SECs, that children should be integrated into mainstream classes, that totally devalued, a) the work the SEC was doing, but worse than that it threw huge burdens on year six and year five teachers in their preparation for the SATs because it meant that suddenly now we've got pupils that are extremely difficult to cope with
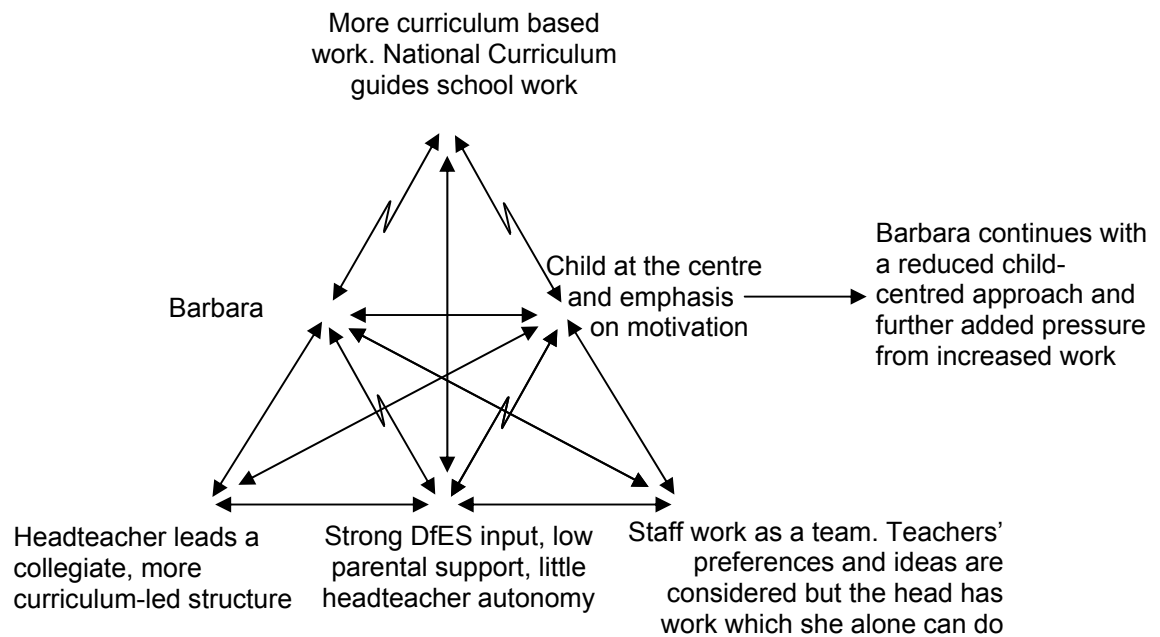
Yes, so to follow the government route in this, which is to ensure you've got the highest standards in your school, the highest results, you've need to flush out the pupils who are not going to get you those results – that's what they are telling us really

[W]e should have said, "Right, those pupils need to go, we need to be far more selective with who we let in if we possibly can, and put people off and then we'd have been seen as a very successful school, and I would have felt, professionally, totally devalued by that approach but it would seem to be the one that would work in the current system

Where I feel very angry is that more and more we are becoming accountable to people who don't know us and don't know the school. I've got no problem about being accountable, but I want to be accountable to people who have got an interest, part of the school, something that they actually do know about us from a perspective of reality whereas we are being accountable to people who have little idea about the reality of our intake, our pupils, our expectations, all those kind of things, and what we are trying to do about our *vision*

Today, looking at it starkly, the LEA have been totally disempowered – we have a particular shortage of inspectors who even know what our job is, and, these are so few of them, and their role now has been directed by the DfES essentially

[W]hen I first came to this school I did a <u>lot</u> of teaching, sixty percent of the timetable, going round classes, working with them, a set timetable so I could do something that could be shown to have an effect. There were all those opportunities but there is absolutely no way that I could have a teaching timetable now, because the demands are just immense – to do with parental concerns, staff concerns, all sorts of things are happening during the school day; there are so many things to deal with that to really give a teaching commitment in any respect whatsoever would just be a total disaster. The role has completely changed.

More curriculum based
work. National Curriculum
guides school work

Child at the centre
and emphasis
on motivation

Barbara

Barbara continues with
a reduced child-
centred approach and
further added pressure
from increased work

Headteacher leads a
collegiate, more
curriculum-led structure

Strong DfES input, low
parental support, little
headteacher autonomy

Staff work as a team. Teachers'
preferences and ideas are
considered but the head has
work which she alone can do

Barbara 2005 (Head at Eastfield School)

The process used to interrogate the transcripts, discover the themes and apply them to the activity triangles was very long and involved. It was discussed in Chapter 5 and has been summarised in this appendix to give a flavour of the techniques used and the extensive nature of the analytical investigation.

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