

# **PERSONAL CAPACITY**

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**An exploration into the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders  
influences their response to challenges that occur in the changing educational  
landscape**

**by**

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of Doctor of Education

School of Education

University of Birmingham

March 2018

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The educational arena has been undergoing unprecedented changes regarding government policy and reforms. These changes have posed significant challenges for school leaders, chiefly, intensification of accountability structures and the decision-making process in schools, as well as increased pressure to work at a relentless pace. The resulting attrition of headteachers and the reluctance of senior leaders to fill the vacancies, burgeoned into a recruitment crisis, raising questions concerning the capacity of school leaders to cope.

This study attempts to arrive at a definition of personal capacity as it relates to educational leaders particularly, to determine its impact on their ability to cope and to ascertain its role in their career trajectory.

The research which was phenomenological in nature used a self-completed questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to obtain data from a sample of nineteen school leaders.

An analysis of the findings yielded a definition of personal capacity, essentially, the ability of individuals to adapt and respond to challenges. Such ability was multifaceted, comprising a dynamic combination of non-discrete components underpinned by key qualities and characteristics, specifically, moral imperative, resilience, self-efficacy, confidence, emotional intelligence, and empowerment, altogether driven by a growth mindset. Personal capacity featured significantly at every stage of the trajectory of school leaders and therefore warrants considerable attention in talent identification and development.

Word count 212

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I wish to extend my gratitude to all those who have contributed to this study.

My supervisors, Joanne Cliffe and Tom Bisschoff, who have supported and challenged me to improve the standard of the work I was producing. Christopher Rhodes whose words of motivation, “It shall be well!” propelled me along during difficult times. Enjoy your retirement, Chris.

All the headteachers and senior leaders who took me into their confidence and shared their experiences, joys and sorrows during the interviews. My colleagues and aspiring headteachers on the NPQH and The Getting Ahead London programmes. Monica, my own headteacher, whose openness, support and encouragement have made me the school leader I am today.

My dear mother who never stopped inspiring and encouraging me in my earlier days of schooling, helping me to appreciate the fact that we all learn differently and at a different pace – a philosophy that has guided me throughout my teaching career and has enabled me to become the outstanding teacher I am today.

My darling husband, FitzMaurice, whose love, patience and prayers have kept me sane. My precious girls, Samara and Anna-Grace for their understanding and support. My family for putting up with a disorganised house, ready meals, my virtual absence, and giving invaluable critique enabling me to refine my writing.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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AHT	Assistant Headteacher
BERA	British Education Research Association
DfE	Department for Education (2010 to present)
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (2001 to 2007)
DHT	Deputy Headteacher
HT	Headteacher
NAHT	National Association of Headteachers
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headteachers
NUT	National Union of Teachers
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PC	Personal Capacity
RHT	Retired Headteacher
SLT	Senior Leadership Team

# 1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

---

There is an ancient adage attributed to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (535 – 435 B.C.) that “everything flows, nothing stands still,” and its variant “nothing is permanent except change.” A common recognition today that change is a constant feature of educational systems (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 642; Wilkins, 2010, p. 88) adds some validity to the saying. Perhaps nowhere else is this as obvious as in a recent review of the school leadership landscape in England. The review noted that “the English education system is experiencing an era of unprecedented change [and that] nowhere are these changes more keenly felt than amongst the leadership teams and governing bodies of the country’s schools” (Earley *et al.*, 2012, p. 5). To be specific, these changes have included the movement of schools towards academisation, more demanding Ofsted criteria, more stringent performance-related pay, curriculum reforms, pupil premium, the new league tables, and the decentralisation of the local authority with a subsequent increase in governors.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

The implications of such changes for school leaders are far-reaching when seen within the wider educational context. The twenty-first century dawned with the news that headteachers were quitting the profession in near-unprecedented numbers. Two thousand five hundred headteachers were said to have left in the year 2000 (Telegraph, 2001; BBC, 2001). Succeeding years saw similar phenomena (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2005; Shaw, 2006; Howson and Sprigade, 2010). The Department for Education’s white paper, *The Importance of Teaching* (DfES, 2010),

reported that twenty-five per cent of school leaders were due for retirement over the subsequent three years. The following year, 2011, was described as the worst year on record for recruiting headteachers (Howson and Sprigade, 2011). In a poll carried out by the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) in 2012, roughly forty per cent of headteachers indicated they were discouraged and intended to leave the profession prematurely (NAHT, 2012). In 2013, an analysis of further studies hit the headlines with the lament that schools were still struggling and experiencing unprecedented difficulties in recruiting headteachers (Richardson, 2013). For Robbins (2013) this was the making of a crisis in the United Kingdom. The situation regarding recruitment and retention has not changed significantly since the year 2000 (Table 1).

<b>43%</b>	<b>86.8%</b>	<b>28%</b>
of school governors said it was difficult to find good candidates when recruiting senior staff (NGA; 2015 survey)	of school leaders in 2015 believed headship was less attractive as a career choice than it was in 2010 (The Key, 2015 survey)	of headteachers said they were planning to leave headship within five years (TES/The Future Leaders Trust; 2015 survey)

*Table 1 Blog by The Future Leaders Trust, November 2016.*

Major recruiting agencies, namely Teach First and Ambition School Leadership (then the Future Leaders Trust and Teaching Leaders), projected a shortfall of at least fourteen to nineteen thousand school leaders by the year 2021 (Davison *et al.*, 2017). The report by Davison *et al.* (2017, p. 29) emphasised that the shortfall “will affect almost one in four [schools] – including 40% of the most challenged schools.”

▲ > Education

## Head teachers are in short supply- It's a significant challenge that we need to address now

**MIKE BUCHANAN**

14 NOVEMBER 2016 • 10:21AM

*Figure 1. Headteachers are in short supply, Mike Buchanan, Telegraph online (2016).*

The review of the school leadership landscape (Earley *et al.*, 2012) pointed to a combination of factors, including pressures of demography, contributing to headteacher shortage. The review showed that this looming threat of headteacher shortage was further exacerbated by a reduction in the post of deputy headteacher, with little turnover.

Attempts have been made to identify the factors responsible for this worrying trend in the reluctance of headteachers to continue through to retirement. In an independent report published by the National Union of Teachers (NUT), headteachers identified frustration over the government's imposition of pressures ranging from bureaucracy to lack of work-life balance (Smithers and Robinson, 2007). Such claims elicited the scathing question of whether the job had become too big for one person (Smithers and Robinson, 2007, p. 32). Secondary school headteachers blatantly dismissed the suggestion while their counterparts in primary schools

largely thought it was. The authors found that the key to the diverging views was the fact that secondary school headteachers enjoyed a larger scope to delegate and spread out tasks in contrast to primary school leaders. Added to all this was a dwindling pool of middle leaders who were turned off from headship due to workload and accountability pressures. The disenchantment with headship poses a real challenge for succession planning. If, in fact, middle and senior leaders do not envision themselves having the ability to cope with the pressures that arise from the various changes in the education system, the task of identifying and developing leaders to succeed the dwindling supply of headteachers becomes even more arduous. The need, therefore, to “develop the ability of [school leaders] to cope with uncertainty and change in a shifting climate” (Earley *et al.* (2012, p. 69) is a very pertinent issue that cannot be overemphasised.

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The preceding recognition of the need to develop school leaders who can cope with the challenges of the changing educational landscape is a tacit admission of the existence of some relationship between the ability of school leaders to cope and how they respond to challenges they encounter in their roles. The purpose of this research, therefore, is to explore this relationship, that is, between the ability of school leaders to cope and their response to challenges, as well as the impact it has on the recruitment and retention of headteachers.

In looking at the daunting nature of the changes occurring within and impacting on education globally, Lane (2007, p. 85) had insisted that “the ability of educators ... to cope with rapid [and constant] change is essential to sustained success.” This relationship between the ability of

educators and the challenging nature of their role was earlier investigated by Stamp (1980) who pointed to evidence from various studies, of the damaging consequences of a mismatch between one's capability and the level of work to be done. She used the terms 'ability', 'capability' and 'capacity' interchangeably, and explicitly referred to personal capacity as "an expression of capability." Crawford (2003, p. 67) also specifically associated 'ability' with 'personal capacity' and while she claimed that "building personal capacity is crucial because it gives room ... to change and develop ... skills and capabilities" (Crawford, 2003, p. 67), she did not seem to have been using the terms 'capacity' and 'capability' interchangeably. Mitchell and Sackney (2011) dealt extensively with the concept of 'personal capacity', but their focus was on how personal capacity was structured, the apparent expectation being that its meaning was understood or was to be inferred from the text. Hopkins and Jackson (2003, p. 87) pointed out that the articulation of a definition of capacity on the whole, which they believed to incorporate personal capacity, had long been a complex and elusive task. An actual definition of personal capacity seemed to have been lacking in the work of Mitchell and Sackney (2011). What is particularly relevant to the stated purpose of this research, however, is their argument that the building of personal capacity has some bearing on the "ability to cope with change" (Mitchell and Sackney, 2011, p. 44).

As previously emphasised, "the need to develop the ability of leaders to cope" (Earley *et al.*, 2012, p. 69) is a pertinent issue with implications for the recruitment and retention of headteachers, which this study sought to explore. It raises the vexed question, however, of whether leaders are made or born – an issue that has occupied and continued to occupy leadership theories and debates (Hilarie 2000; Miner 2002; Grabovac 2004; Northouse 2007; Messick and Kramer 2008; Farlow 2012). As far as Gronn and Ribbins (1996, p. 465) were concerned "there is ... an absence

of any systematic understanding in the literature of how leaders get to be leaders.” Gronn (1999) did not subscribe to the view that leadership is an innate quality but instead proposed a framework of four sequential phases in the career trajectory of school leaders that could be used to bring together their life experiences across various contexts and to analyse and compare them. Such an approach suggests, therefore, that efforts to develop the ability of school leaders to cope, with a view to addressing the issue of recruitment and retention, would derive much benefit from giving due consideration to their career trajectory.

The aim of this study, therefore, was to explore the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders influences their response to challenges that occur in the changing educational arena.

### **1.3 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

As both a teacher-researcher and a senior leader, this study is of importance in light of other studies which have pointed towards an urgent need to replenish the pool of senior leaders to offset the increasing shortage of headteachers. The contention has been that this shortage of headteachers, as well as the reluctance of senior leaders to vie for the unfilled posts, may be an indication of the real or perceived inability or lack of capacity to cope with the pressures and demands of the changing climate. Murphy (2013, p. 33) pointed out that “exceptional leaders ... develop a capacity to cope.” Other researchers (Robbins and Trabichet, 2009; Robins, 2013) have concluded that educational leadership programmes did not provide school leaders in the United Kingdom with the tools and skills needed to cope with inevitable work-related stress. The implications are obvious. Unless leaders are identified who have the capacity to cope with such



demands or whose capacity can be developed, it seems to be only a matter of time before what now appears to be a looming crisis turns out to be a disaster with irrevocable consequences for education and the wider society.

The preceding prognosis could be interpreted as the driving force behind the vision of Sir Michael Wilshaw, the former Chief Inspector of Schools in England and head of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). In January 2012, he warned that "schools' failure to train the next generation of headteachers will have 'catastrophic consequences' for the education system" (Ratcliffe, 2014). It also calls into question the consideration given to the personal capacity of headteachers in the national standards for headteachers (Department for Education, 2004; 2015). It is possible to detect elements of the concept strewn across the pages of both the 2004 and 2015 publications and to recognise that the later publication reveals an attempt to improve on the previous standards. However, there is no articulation of a comprehensive statement on the personal capacity of headteachers in the national standards nor on the ability to cope. This study is an attempt to fill that gap and is, therefore, a unique contribution adding to the repertoire of knowledge on personal capacity. In consideration of the future of educational leadership, it should also be of value to stakeholders who are engaged in succession planning.

As a senior leader and currently poised for headship, I must admit to experiencing a measure of trepidation in applying for headship. In observing the challenges faced by headteachers due to perpetual changes occurring within education and being cognisant of the negative and sometimes fatal impact on their social, mental and physical well-being, the way forward seems

overwhelming. Nonetheless, I am constrained to determine why it is that some headteachers are still effective in their roles and what I could learn from them. Consequently, I have reflected on my capacity to handle these challenges and anticipated the personal and professional growth and development I could gain as a researcher, a senior leader and an aspiring headteacher.

## **1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Having established the purpose of this study, it is now possible to set out the research questions that guided the study. Research questions are described by Draper (2004) as the essence of what the researcher wants to know. Rees (1997, p. 250) defined them as the elements that structure the research process, particularly the data collection. For Bryman (2016), research questions are crucial because they guide the researcher's decisions in the research design. The consensus seems to be that the research questions must be answered with a well-structured and appropriate research design that ensures rigour, purpose and focus. The precision and clarity of the research questions are also essential, and their purpose is usually to test or generate theory, which is to be used to evaluate or describe a phenomenon or trend.

Research questions should be clearly and precisely expressed and can be classified as interrogative or declarative (Draper, 2004, p. 5). In other words, the questions that guide the research can be 'why' questions, explanatory, or 'how' questions, descriptive. De Vaus (2005) has stated that this understanding of the research questions is crucial to the researcher as it shapes the way in which researchers develop a research design. Gorard (2013, p. 37) added to these the 'what' questions, for example: what is the problem, pattern or trend? What produces this? What could or should be done to improve it? This study is concerned with the 'why' or explanatory, as it aids the development of causal explanations and theory testing and theory construction.

The chosen research questions were intended to facilitate an exploration of the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders is a factor in their ability or inability to cope effectively with challenges that occur in the changing educational arena. These were:

1. extent is the personal capacity of educational leaders a factor in their ability to cope What constitutes the personal capacity of educational leaders?
2. To what effectively with challenges?
3. What role does personal capacity play in the trajectory of school leaders?

The first question sought to arrive at a conceptualisation of 'personal capacity' as supported in the related literature and the perception of the school leaders. The second question explored the correlation between personal capacity and their ability to effectively cope. The third question looked at the role personal capacity plays in the career journey of the school leader and the implications for addressing the need for a ready pool of prospective headteachers in the face of an increasing trend of headteacher shortages.

## **1.5 THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

At the outset, it was possible to identify some of the key literature that would facilitate an exploration of the research questions and connect them with the theoretical basis for the study. Hart provided a succinct definition which was helpful in getting a clear grasp of what the literature review should be:

The selection of available documents (both published and unpublished), on the topic, which contains information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to

be investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed (Hart, 1998, p. 13).

The review of relevant literature (chapter 2) gave the opportunity, therefore, to learn from previous work and to position this study within the existing body of knowledge on the personal capacity of school leaders.

Among the various sources that have been referenced were the works of Bennett *et al.* (2003), Bush (2008), Day (2010) MacBeath (1998), and Earley *et al.*, 2012 who focussed specifically on school leaders and educational leadership. The subject of educational leadership is admittedly extensive and multidimensional, a detailed treatment of which is not the focus of this study. I also examined the works of Mitchell and Sackney (2011) on personal capacity. Scholars such as Peter Gronn and Peter Ribbins, have done extensive work on leadership trajectory. Fullan (2016) gave special attention to educational change. Other related literature were located *via* internet search engines and journals, and judicious use was made of published and unpublished academic literature, professional journals, newspaper articles and reference lists.

### **Key Terms**

For the sake of clarity, some key terms used in the title are defined to reflect their meanings in the context of this study.

School leader in this study is used synonymously with senior leader and refers to individuals with school-wide responsibilities with job titles, such as assistant headteacher, vice principal, deputy headteacher, directors of learning, headteacher, principal. This study has a deliberate focus on senior leaders to the exclusion of all other levels of leadership. However, as many “school leaders

begin their professional careers as teachers and progress to headship” (Bush, 2016, p. 7), there is scope for similar research to include classroom teachers and middle leaders.

Change in this context refers to the government initiatives such as:

a new accountability framework; curriculum, assessment and qualification changes; new performance management arrangements; new funding models; and a fundamental effort to sweep away bureaucracy and free up schools to focus on their own priorities. Finally, the establishment of a network of Teaching Schools, based on the principles of Teaching Hospitals (Earley *et al.*, 2012, p. 5).

## **1.6 THE RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research methodology adopted was that of the case study (Denscombe, 2017). It was qualitative in keeping with a subjectivist, interpretive and paradigm. The case study lies in the humanistic domain, which is one of the five knowledge domains Ribbins and Gunter (2002a; 2002b) used to classify the typology they developed to map leadership studies in education. It has been criticised for its subjective and unquantifiable nature (Gunter, 2001) but it was used here as it afforded the opportunity for focus and preoccupation with the actual people involved, gathering and theorising from their complex experiences as leaders (Ribbins, 2003). This argument is further developed in the third chapter on research design.

Semi-structured interviews (3.6.2), in addition to a questionnaire (3.6.1) were used to collect the data from nineteen school leaders comprising twelve headteachers and seven senior leaders. They all gave informed consent with the guarantee of anonymity in keeping with ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) and in general, steps were taken to adhere to strict ethical guidelines, to ensure participants’ confidentiality and anonymity.

## **1.7 STRUCTURE AND SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

The research study comprises five chapters. It is phenomenological in nature and used a self-completed questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to obtain data from a sample of nineteen school leaders, com. Chapter one offers an introduction to the research study, setting out the key issues and structure, including the purpose and importance of the study. Chapter two is a critical and focussed review of the literature pertinent to the research questions. The review informs the research design which occupies chapter three. The research design consists of the outline of the research methodology and methods and a justification of the choice of each method used. I also discussed the execution of the data collection process. Chapter four is a summary and discussions of the findings. The findings focus on themes including new insights which are presented and analysed alongside a substantive, theoretical and methodological discussion linking the key findings, research questions, and literature. Finally, chapter five concludes with a focus on key points and suggestions for further research.

## 2 CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

---

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical platform for the research questions that drove this research project and to identify the constituent parts of the concept 'personal capacity'. Before attempting the review of existing literature, it is worthwhile heeding Hart's (1998, p. 1) assertion that "many reviews ... are only thinly disguised annotated bibliographies" and that it is not possible to read everything that relates to a particular topic. He further argued that in some cases the text cannot be too closely read, in others reading has to be selective and casual while in yet others, some texts may have to be omitted completely.

I have adopted a systematic approach to review the literature as this enables me, as the researcher to, among other considerations, understand the topic fully (Booth *et al.*, 2012). The authors also believe that it contributes to both the accuracy and reliability of conclusions. The words personal capacity, capacity, educational change, and self-efficacy were searched *via* internet search engines from the outset, followed by systematic searches of contents, pages and indexes of published and unpublished academic literature, professional journals, newspaper articles and reference lists.

### 2.2 DEFINING PERSONAL CAPACITY

The term 'personal capacity' was central to this study, hence the first research question "what constitutes the personal capacity of educational leaders?" As the concept is not limited to the

field of education, the review of the literature aimed to broaden an understanding of the term as it applies to educational leaders. Its usage in other contexts was taken into account to avoid a parochial and insular approach as this would have divested it of its potential to contribute to the existing body of literature on personal capacity as it relates to education and educational leadership.

Although the term 'personal capacity' is strewn across the literature in various contexts, it has not been possible to find any concrete definition or common understanding of the concept, especially regarding the ability of educational leaders to cope with challenges in the educational sector. For example, it appears in the health sector as one of nine elements of capacity building, to be specific, systemic capacity building (Potter and Brough, 2004) with focus on such factors as knowledge, skills and confidence. From a social cognitive perspective, personal capacity provides grounds for self-efficacy, that is, the belief a person had in his or her capabilities to bring about the accomplishment of a particular outcome (Albion, 1999; Paton, 2003). Personal capacity also appears in the context of energy policy and environmental sustainability (Middlemiss and Parrish, 2010) with professionalism being a central feature in how it is characterised but with no real attempt being made to define the concept.

In the educational arena, Frost and Harris (2003, p. 487) grouped personal capacity among several factors that determine "the extent and nature of leadership that can be exercised by teachers." Although the authors were addressing teacher leadership, their discussion of personal capacity could, to some extent, apply to headteachers as school leaders, in the general understanding of the term. The observation can be appreciated from the fact that first, they



were writing in the context of the teacher as a leader in a shared or distributed leadership setting. Here the central idea was that leadership was not the sole prerogative of any single person but that anyone within the organisation could exercise it, including teachers. Second, while advocating distributed leadership, they were mindful of the fact that the capacity, that is, the personal capacity, of the individual, was a very pertinent issue that could not be ignored. The authors believed that personal capacity could be “examined in terms of authority, knowledge, situational understanding and interpersonal skills” (Frost and Harris, 2003, p. 487). Their discussion is very instructive and does afford an insight into what personal capacity involves and an appreciation of how it can be understood and applied. However, there is no indication that they were trying to formulate a definition.

Gurr and Drysdale (2007) also grouped personal capacity alongside several factors that influence capacity building in general but particularly as it relates to schools. They described it simply as the ability to do what is demanded but recognised that it could be enhanced. As a result, they went further to propose a model in which they identified four elements that can be effective in strengthening personal capacity. These were understanding and managing self, creating new knowledge, individual professional pedagogy, and networking. Mitchell and Sackney (2011) included such elements as values, assumptions, competencies and practices held by the individual. While their understanding of the concept could be gathered from the text, their focus was on how personal capacity could be built than on how it could be defined. Altogether, therefore, these diverse shades of meaning, within and without the educational sector, testify to the need for a more coherent, unified articulation of the concept: personal capacity. What follows is an attempt to address this need.

### 2.2.1 Personal Capacity and Motivation

Although the literature referring explicitly to the personal capacity of educational leaders is sparse, the issue of human motivation appears before us at the very outset of an attempt to define the concept. I call attention to a rather succinct statement made by Gurr and Drysdale (2007, p. 49), namely, that “personal capacity is the ability of an individual to do what is demanded of them.” Arguably, replacing the word ‘demanded’ with ‘necessary’ would have been more appropriate as it carries a less imposing and somewhat condescending tone, without, at the same time, denying the fact that ‘what is necessary’ may in some cases be ‘what is demanded’. The authors were writing about successful school leadership from an Australian perspective, but the picture of personal capacity painted here, as the ability to respond merely to demands from an authority figure, does not seem to consider the various ways in which people are motivated to do what they do.

The absence of such consideration, therefore, warrants attention to the issue of human motivation. For example, we find Deci and Flaste (1995) seeking to distinguish between two contrasting aspects of human behaviour, namely, autonomous and controlled. In the former, people are self-motivated, acting according to their desires; in the latter, people are pressured to comply with external demands and edicts purely because they are instructed to do so. Such a response would be predictable in a climate of authoritarianism and seems to be in keeping with the understanding of personal capacity portrayed in the previous statement by Gurr and Drysdale (2007). However, simply having the ability to respond to the demands of a superior hardly seems compatible with what is to be expected of effective school leaders responsible for the lives of

teachers and students (Hallinger and Heck, 1996) who look up to them as role models and for moral leadership (Lashway, 2003).

This question of how people are motivated is a question Deci and Flaste (1995, p. 21) thought best answered by a reflection on intrinsic motivation, “the process of doing something for its own sake, of doing an activity for the reward that is inherent in the activity itself ... the vitality, spontaneity, genuineness and curiosity that is intrinsic to people’s nature.” The authors were of the view that “any occurrence that undermines people’s feeling of autonomy – that leaves them feeling controlled – would decrease their intrinsic motivation” (Deci and Flaste, 1995, p. 30). They argued that efforts to secure compliance by the opposite route, extrinsic motivation, was, in fact, controlling in nature and yielded negative consequences, whether such external motivating strategies were in the form of rewards or threats. Kohn (1999) was adamant that both rewards and punishments were at best merely short-term tools of manipulation and control, which were both ineffective and damaging to people’s behaviour in the long run. Sansone and Harackiewicz (2000) contended that research into the raging debate between advocates of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation had been more successful in identifying factors that militated against intrinsic motivation than in providing solutions. Nevertheless, they shared the view that individuals were actively engaged in motivating themselves instead of waiting passively to be motivated by the efforts of others. This leads us to a consideration of not just individuals, in general, but specifically of leaders.

### **2.2.2 Personal Capacity and Leader Motivation**

Interestingly, there is relatively little discussion in the reviewed literature on the motivation of leaders, and, of note, school leaders. Instead, one finds much on motivation by leaders, whether it is the case of employers motivating their employees, school leaders motivating their staff or teachers motivating their pupils. However, Sergiovanni (1996) showed that the principles of motivation discussed above are also relevant to school leaders in their bid to secure school improvement. He was making a case for moral leadership. He critiqued traditional views of leadership for their incorporation of the principle of extrinsic motivation with its distinctly controlling overtones. These, he argued, had a debilitating effect on performance and creativity. This criticism would no doubt apply to the view that personal capacity, especially of leaders, is the ability to do what is demanded of them. Hogue (2013, p. 124) is very forthright, insisting that “leaders cannot be authentic if leading for the rewards ... leaders of character are intrinsically motivated.” This begs the question of how leaders can be motivated intrinsically. A possible answer can be found in the argument advanced by Sergiovanni (1996). He maintained that the concept of leadership embodies an understanding of the dimensions of human behaviour such as emotions, values, and relationships that were, in themselves, powerful sources of motivation. He concluded (Sergiovanni, 1996, pp. 27, 58) that in contexts like that of leadership, the guiding principle is no longer ‘what is rewarded gets done’ (extrinsic motivation) but ‘what is good gets done’ (intrinsic motivation).

### **2.2.3 Personal Capacity: The Indispensability of the ‘Personal’ Factor**

In the preceding discussion, personal capacity is more than simply the ability to respond to externally imposed demands; it includes the ability to respond out of one’s inner motivation.

This, however, is not to ignore the fact that personal capacity is indeed an ability, specifically ‘the ability to do’. However, the appreciation of the fact that there are different ways in which people can be motivated to act is a simple recognition that this ability is distinctly a human or personal factor. It is not limited to a fixed, slavish or mechanical adherence to or compliance with external forms of motivation but is multifaceted in nature (Reiss, 2004), a consideration that is indispensable to any search for a comprehensive understanding of personal capacity. This study focussed on the ‘personal’ factor, especially as it applies to leaders in general and particularly school leaders. My contention remains, therefore, that the description of personal capacity as ‘the ability to do what is demanded’, fails to take account of this multidimensionality of the personal or human factor and must, therefore, be deemed inadequate.

#### **2.2.4 Capacity: A Range of Meanings**

While recognising that the depiction of capacity as ‘the ability to do’ is ubiquitous, it is not to say that there has been unanimity on its usage. For example, while the following three definitions each portray capacity as ‘the ability to do’ they reveal a spectrum of meanings in how the word is used (Baser and Morgan, 2008, p. 22):

- [Capacity is] the ability of individuals, institutions, and societies to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives in a sustainable manner (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2007).
- Capacity is the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), 2006).

- Capacity is the ability of an organisation to function as a resilient, strategic and autonomous entity (Kaplan, 1999).

These differences in the conceptualisation of capacity have to do with the context and the actual purpose served in each case. Thus, in the first definition, the focus is on the ability to work sustainably, the second on the ability to manage successfully and the third focuses specifically on the ability of organisations to function effectively. Hence, as Brinkerhoff and Morgan (2010, p. 2) indicated, the concept is shrouded in “vagueness and multiplicity of definitions and approaches” as well as in debates on how to define it.

The study of capacity did not attract serious research attention until the turn of the century when international developmental bodies began to tackle it as a developmental issue (Baser and Morgan, 2008). One fruit of such efforts was the development of a model by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) which was created in 1986. The model aimed to provide an understanding of the concept. It arose out of a research project that was initiated in 2002 and carried out within the context of international development, but the relevance of that study stems from the stated intention to provide some new perspectives on capacity issues, incorporating ideas from the literature on capacity beyond that produced by the international development community (Baser and Morgan, 2008, p. 7).

Within the context of educational leadership, where the need to respond to the challenges of continuous multiple changes resulted in the focus being turned to school capacity, the attempts to define capacity have also proven to be both “complex and elusive” (Hopkins and Jackson, 2003, p. 87). The authors regarded the concept as fundamentally metaphorical and, to reflect its

“complexity and multidimensionality,” were at pains to avoid simplistic definitions. Consequently, they argued for “a concept of capacity that demonstrates flexibility, adaptability, responsiveness and adroitness in processing continuous change in a volatile, unpredictable environment” (Hopkins and Jackson, 2003, p. 95).

### **2.2.5 Capacity: Substantive Meaning or Umbrella Concept?**

Hopkins and Jackson (2003) have described capacity as being fundamentally metaphorical. The description echoed a key concern as to whether the concept had any intrinsic value or substantive meaning of its own, that is, whether capacity exists with distinct characteristics that transcend context, or whether it is merely an umbrella concept adapted to fit into unique circumstances. In response to this, he referred to five central characteristics of capacity that Baser and Morgan (2008, p. 23) found among the cases in their research, characteristics which they believed could give substantive and operational shape to the broad concept. Here capacity was seen as:

- empowerment and identity
- collective action
- a systems phenomenon
- a potential state
- creation of public value

The authors saw ‘empowerment and identity’ as a twin concept that, among other things, “allowed an organisation or a group to be aware of itself” and involved “people engaging to take control over their own behaviour in some fashion” (Baser and Morgan, 2008, p. 23). They

considered empowerment to be critical to capacity development but were of the view that studies too often neglected the specific abilities and roles of individuals. However, their understanding of empowerment, in which people are able to take or exercise control over their behaviour, appears as a central theme in several studies (Rowlands, 1995; Page and Czubs, 1999; Sen, 2000; Muijs and Harris, 2003; Suarez-Balcazar, 2008). The studies were situated amidst various shades of meanings and used in different contexts. Rowlands (1995, p. 101) specifically pointed to the personal dimension of empowerment arguing that “empowerment is about developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity,” that is, developing one’s identity. According to Drury *et al.* (2015, p. 2), “the concept of empowerment ...inevitably involves identity” and “subjective power is an essential dimension of identity itself” (Drury *et al.* 2015, p. 27). It has been observed, however, that the use made of this interconnectedness between the two constructs has not always been the most ethical (McDonald, 2004). ‘Empowerment and identity’ is particularly relevant to this study due to its distinctly human and uniquely personal dimension, which underscores the inclusion of the human factor or ‘human capital’ in an understanding of capacity on the whole (Hopkins and Jackson, 2003, p. 88). This consideration of the human factor here has been interpreted as ‘personal capacity’, specifically delineated as one of the components of the broader construct, ‘capacity’ (Hopkins and Jackson, 2003, p. 91). Thus, in the context of schools in particular, a comprehensive understanding of capacity in general, must incorporate personal capacity.

#### **2.2.6 The Nature of Capacity: From the Macro to the Individual**

In addition to the central characteristics mentioned above, Brinkerhoff and Morgan (2010) identified key themes running through their study. One such theme had to do with the actual



nature of capacity. Here the predominant view was that “capacity is about the ability to do something [and this ability] can take the form of individual competencies [*sic*], collective capabilities or overall system ability” (Baser and Morgan, 2008, p. 19). The authors were initially critical of the focus on the individual and more disposed to see capacity in the context or the larger design of systems such as organisations (Baser and Morgan, 2008, p. 24). However, they recognised that although “capacity is usually defined and discussed at an aggregate level ... [this] tells us little about what specific abilities might be involved or what the actors in question would actually do” (Baser and Morgan, 2008, p. 23). Conceding that macro contexts too often ignored the human element, they “returned to the obvious, that is, that the mindsets, motivations and hopes of individuals remain crucial contributions to capacity, no matter how complex the system” (Baser and Morgan, 2008, p. 23). In the same vein, they noted that “perhaps the most obvious contributions at the individual level were those of leaders” (Baser and Morgan, 2008, p. 24). This is a point to which I shall return later, but it should be noted that in a report to UNESCO’s International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (UNESCO-IICBA), Matachi (2006) placed a similar weighting on capacity at the individual level. For him, capacity at this level was the most rudimentary aspect of capacity building and included such components as knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, health and awareness. In conclusion, therefore, whether on a macro or individual level, there are still grounds to correctly view capacity as ‘ability’, a distinctly human ability, with attention given to its individual or personal components and to the actual context within which the concept is used.

### **2.2.7 Summary**

Although the review of the literature has so far found Gurr and Drysdale's (2007) concise definition of personal capacity to be inadequate, Gurr (2012) had further expanded on the understanding of the concept to include components such as values, assumptions, competencies and practices that the individual holds. He summed these up as self-management, professional networks, individual pedagogy and knowledge creation and construction (Gurr, 2012, p. 463). This wider depiction of personal capacity is consistent with the previous discussion on capacity at the individual level, the common and defining factor being 'people', as against 'systems'. These components, to a greater or lesser extent, give more breadth to the concept and grounds for further exploration.

## **2.3 LOCATING PERSONAL CAPACITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL AS A LEARNING COMMUNITY**

The theoretical framework, within which Gurr and Drysdale (2007) drew their conclusions regarding personal capacity and its components, echoes an earlier understanding of personal capacity, which had been proposed by Mitchell and Sackney (2011). The latter had placed the concept squarely within the context of the school as a learning community, emphasising that it was primarily about, and concerned with, people. Implicit in that emphasis was what Retallick (2001, p. 356) described as "a departure from the constructs of structures, functions, roles, rules and procedures that tend to dominate the discourse of educational management and governance." In the latest edition of their work, first published in the year 2000, they held that, from the perspective of schools:

personal capacity is structured by the embedded values, assumptions, beliefs, and practical knowledge that educators carry with them and by the professional networks and knowledge bases with which they connect (Mitchell and Sackney, 2011, p. 20).

Within this construct of personal capacity, it was possible to identify both internal and external aspects. The former relates to the values, assumptions, beliefs, and practical knowledge which make up the educator's professional repertoire, while the latter consists of the professional networks and knowledge bases which indicate the degree to which he or she has access to new or different professional ideas (Mitchell and Sackney, 2011).

### **2.3.1 Personal Capacity: Potential for Development**

Mitchell and Sackney (2011) argued that personal capacity can be built and strengthened through a process of deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction of one's professional narrative. The implication here is that personal capacity should not be defined as a fixed or static characteristic incapable of improvement or development. On the one hand, there is an internal search, a process of critical reflection on one's professional narrative in which it is possible to determine what is valid and what needs reconstruction. Alternatively, one can engage in an external search of his or her professional networks for new ideas and possibilities. The search may take the form of planned or unplanned, formal or informal learning activities. In these networks, ties develop which are useful for both emotional support and extension of one's professional narratives. The networks, as Gurr and Drysdale (2007, p. 50) explained, provide the capacity for personal growth and resilience.

### **2.3.2 Personal Capacity and Resilience**

There is some merit in considering the concept of resilience and its relationship to personal capacity (Reich, 2010), although the concept developed as a psychological construct and came to be viewed as a coping strategy in adverse situations (Luthar *et al.*, 2000; Patterson and Kelleher, 2005; Campbell-Sills *et al.*, 2006; Bernhard and Werner, 2009). Resilience serves as a link between personal capacity and the ability to cope with challenges that both teachers and school leaders encounter in the changing field of education. The link is an observation that various researchers (Harris, 2002; Patterson and Kelleher, 2005; Day and Gu, 2007; Farmer, 2010; Bumphus, 2011; Day *et al.*, 2011; Sutcliffe, 2013) have made and to which I return later in this study.

### **2.3.3 Personal Capacity and Headteacher Competence**

In the context of schools as learning communities, the Department of Education has defined the standards which dictate the recruitment, appointment, practice and professional development of headteachers, senior leaders and middle leaders who are aspiring to headship (DfE, 2015, p. 4). The National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers (2015) are under four domains, namely: quality and knowledge, pupils and staff, systems and process and the self-improving school systems. Each domain is further sub-divided into six characteristics. The National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) grouped the competencies into three categories that “reflect key dimensions of highly effective leadership” (NCSL, 2011, p. 1):

Strategic leadership	Educational excellence	Operational management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Self-awareness and self-management</li> <li>▪ Personal drive and accountability</li> <li>▪ Resilience and emotional maturity</li> <li>▪ Conceptual thinking</li> <li>▪ Future focus</li> <li>▪ Impact and influence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Delivering continuous improvement</li> <li>▪ Modelling excellence in teaching</li> <li>▪ Learning focus</li> <li>▪ Partnership and collaboration</li> <li>▪ Organisational and community understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Efficient and effective</li> <li>▪ Analytical thinking</li> <li>▪ Relationship management</li> <li>▪ Holding others to account</li> <li>▪ Developing others</li> </ul>

*Table 2 National Professional Qualification for Headship Competency Framework (NCSL, 2011)*

Identifying the personal characteristics with the competencies that are essential to highly effective leadership, has implications for an understanding of personal capacity. The implications become apparent when the concept of personal capacity, understood as arising from observing personal characteristics, is taken into consideration (Stamp, 1980, p. 23) providing grounds on which to link the characteristics reflected in the leadership competencies, to personal capacity.

### **2.3.3 A Shift in Perspectives: From Organisational Culture to Learning Community**

Before delving into a fuller consideration of the various components of personal capacity, it is helpful to provide some context to the interpretation Mitchell and Sackney (2011) presented, as outlined thus far. Both had been preoccupied with the idea of educators, including school leaders, functioning as active professional creators of learning communities. The idea was an alternative strategy for school improvement, in contrast to the prior emphasis that dominated the twentieth century, in which school leaders appeared as passive objects of manipulation in learning organisations (Mitchell and Sackney, 2011). Over a decade, they gradually underwent a shift from the predominant thinking in the business and education sectors, in which the goal of the organisation concerned factors such as growth, productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness. Within that perspective, people were simply the means to realising these aims. There, they were

expected to fit into, rather than contribute to, the creation of organisational culture. However, Mitchell and Sackney (2011) believed that the idea of a learning community, in which the concern is with the human experience of growth and development, more closely reflected conditions better suited for schools.

The notion of schools as learning communities, and its contrast with the business model, was not unique to Mitchell and Sackney (2011). For example, Stoll *et al.* (2006) noted that the idea presented prospects for capacity building and as such had been gaining ground on an international scale. They (Stoll *et al.* 2006, p. 228) contrasted it with the business world where the stages of organisational life cycle change had predictable and sequential patterns, and they questioned whether such patterns would apply to the development and sustainability of learning communities, where continuous learning is a key goal. Bowker (2008, p. 1) also compared features of the business-like model that schools were struggling to fit into and concurred with Mitchell and Sackney (2011) that the “academic conception of the school-as-learning-community ... appears to offer a better vision for schools.”

This concept of schools as learning communities becomes significant in considering the central place that Mitchell and Sackney (2011) gave to educators in questions of educational practice, change and improvement. Such centrality made it essential, therefore, to deliberately and explicitly build capacity among educators and within schools and school systems, to bring about the profound improvement they were advocating. Here capacity necessarily included the personal capacity of educational leaders. The research questions that this study seeks to answer, therefore, are to be understood against the model of the school as a learning community in

contrast to an organisation. It underscores the point that personal capacity is more than ‘the ability to do what is demanded’, as would befit passive educators in the earlier business-oriented model, but that it involves the ability to contribute to school improvement actively.

## **2.4 PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND PERSONAL CAPACITY**

Various attempts have been made to identify characteristics or qualities of effective school leaders (Green, 2000; Gold, 2003; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b; West-Burnham, 2009; Brighouse, 2007; Research and Library Service Briefing Paper, 2010; Sutcliffe, 2013). In fact, there has been evidence from several types research of “an association between leaders’ personal qualities and leadership success” (Day *et al.*, 2010, p. 7). Sutcliffe’s (2013) publication, *8 Qualities of a Successful Leader*, provides us with a summary of such qualities. Succinctly stated these are:

- Vision - clear sense of moral purpose
- Courage - great determination with the willpower and patience to see things through
- Passion - a commitment to teaching and learning; an active interest in staff and children
- Emotional intelligence - empathy; relationships valued, staff and pupils empowered
- Judgement - judicious, that is, making the right calls and being wise leaders
- Resilience - optimistic, calm in a crisis, energetic and positive at all times
- Persuasion - confident communicators, storytellers, listeners, and motivators
- Curiosity - outward-looking, excellent networkers, great opportunists, vigilant

Of note is the recognition that these characteristics allegedly represented the contributions of some thirty very successful headteachers, most of whom Ofsted had rated as outstanding or excellent leaders. All were highly experienced and respected leaders in their profession and

hailed from schools ranging from highly disadvantaged primary and secondary schools to prestigious independent schools. For instance, Leithwood *et al.* (2006b, p. 14) had posed the question, “Why are some leaders more expert than others?” They acknowledged that not much work had focussed on personal characteristics or intelligence at that time, but pointed out that efforts to improve low-performing schools had unearthed evidence that:

under challenging circumstances, the most successful school leaders are ... persistent ... resilient and optimistic [and] such traits help explain why successful leaders facing daunting conditions are often able to push forward when there is little reason to expect progress (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b, p. 14).

What is germane to this study is that when the personal characteristics of successful school leaders are taken into consideration, along with the observation that personal capacity springs from these characteristics (Stamp, 1980), a picture of personal capacity emerges which incorporates the characteristics that make for effectiveness as a school leader. Putting it differently, the personal characteristics of effective school leaders are together an expression of their personal capacity and they attest to the fact that personal capacity is a significant factor accounting for their effectiveness, that is, for their ability to cope with daunting and challenging circumstances they encounter in their role.

#### **2.4.1 A Focus on Vision and Values**

It would be superfluous to set out in detail the findings on personal characteristics cited above (Day *et al.*, 2010; Gold *et al.*, 2003; Research and Library Service Briefing Paper, 2010; Sutcliffe, 2013). However, the findings and conclusions from the literature reviewed (Sergiovanni, 1996; Fullan, 2003; Macbeath, 2009; Day and Sammons, 2013, p.35) are unanimous that a strong, clear



vision and set of values for their respective schools, drive successful school leaders. The point is cogently expressed in the following:

The evidence is unambiguous – the most effective leaders have strong moral and ethical purposes and a strong sense of social justice. They care passionately about improving educational experiences for all groups of students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Day and Sammons, 2013, p. 35).

Similar findings had been earlier made by Day *et al.* (2001) who had adopted a multi-perspective approach in their search for “a model of effective leadership which is suited to a post-modern context.” They were concerned that there was too much reliance on headteachers as the primary data source in studying leadership in schools. They saw it necessary to draw upon others, therefore, such as teachers, support staff, governors, parents and students to get a more balanced and authentic perspective. The findings from their study also demonstrated that “effective leadership is driven and defined by individual value systems, rather than instrumental managerial concerns.”

These characteristics are said to underpin and inform their actions and that of the school as a whole, providing direction and purpose and serving as a benchmark for developments, policies and initiatives. It holds true for the numerous schools and contexts appearing in the various researches and reviews, including a range of schools, highly advantaged and disadvantaged, large and small, primary and secondary, both in the United Kingdom and throughout the international arena. This consideration of vision and values as personal characteristics of effective leaders demonstrates that personal capacity, especially of leaders, involves dimensions of human behaviour that are in themselves powerful sources of motivation. The particular consideration has been a recurrent theme in Sergiovanni’s work in which he maintains that the principle of

intrinsic motivation strengthens the heartbeat of both leadership and schools (Sergiovanni, 1996; 2005). It also shows that characteristics such as values, vision and a sense of moral purpose which function as intrinsic sources of motivation, occupy a vital place in the effort to determine how personal capacity features in the ability of school leaders to cope with challenges in the educational arena.

#### **2.4.2 Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is understood to incorporate the notions of self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 2005). It has been argued that it is a “key dimension” of personal capacity (Frost and Harris, 2003, p. 492) in that the exercise of influence by leaders necessitates “the ability to read situations which requires [*sic*] sensitivity to the emotional responses of others.” It is often viewed also, as the most important quality for effective school leadership (Bullock, 2009; Gray, 2009; Moore, 2009; Skipley Federation, 2013; Goleman, 2014; Goleman *et al.*, 2013). These studies have emerged enquiring into the relationship between emotional intelligence and school leadership specifically, even though research about the emotional intelligence of leaders, in general, had been considered relatively new (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006a). The conclusions showed a positive relationship between the two while acknowledging that there were other factors, such as leaders having high expectations and effective communication, which also accounted for their effectiveness (Bullock, 2009).

Similarly, after exploring the role of emotional intelligence in accounting for the disparity among the performance of headteachers and principals faced with dire circumstances in the changing educational landscape, Allen (2011) concluded that the outstanding headteachers and principals

were those who had mastered their emotional intelligence. Being aware of their own emotions and those of others, they were thereby able to “tune the emotional climate in their schools towards the positive end of the spectrum of emotions” (Allen, 2011, p. 386). This positive end was described as the moral purpose to which they were attuned, in which they were grounded and by which they were driven.

Cliffe (2011), though focusing exclusively on female headteachers, also found positive correlations between emotional intelligence and effective school leadership. However, she did not think that researchers gave enough consideration to the issue of negativity associated with emotional intelligence. There was, for example, insufficient awareness that emotional intelligence skills could be used manipulatively for personal rather than organisational gain and that “being too empathetic can result in failure to deal with a relationship appropriately” (Cliffe, 2011, p. 215), or that excessive self-awareness can lead to indecisiveness – traits that militate against effective leadership. She posited an underlying need to determine whether the issue was that of emotional intelligence being used negatively or that of emotional intelligence being absent altogether; in effect, the possibility of there being negative aspects or ‘a dark side’ to emotional intelligence.

The conclusion regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and school leaders is not limited to literature that address the situation existing in the United Kingdom. A mixture of qualitative and quantitative studies in the United States of America (Allen, 2011; Hebert, 2011; Moore, 2009; Williams, 2007; Cook, 2006), enquiring into this relationship, essentially arrived at the same conclusion: emotional intelligence positively correlates with effective or outstanding

school leaders. Neither is emotional intelligence limited to school leaders. For example, Kulkarni (2014) reviewed four major aspects of emotional intelligence and found grounds on which to propose that emotional intelligence contributes to leadership effectiveness in organisations. However, Côté (2014), while recognising that there had been progress in understanding the role of emotional intelligence in organisations, especially as it related to leaders, argued that the context and disposition of employees should be taken into consideration. He identified correlations between emotional intelligence and leader effectiveness in some instances but concluded that “there remain important gaps in our knowledge and controversies about the role of [emotional intelligence] in organizations [*sic*]” (Côté, 2014, p. 482).

This understanding of emotional intelligence, that its relationship to leader effectiveness extends beyond the United Kingdom and that it is not limited to the educational arena per se, has implications for personal capacity. It suggests that personal capacity which springs from an observation of personal characteristics (Stamp, 1980), of which emotional intelligence is but one (Sutcliffe, 2013), also extends beyond both local and educational boundaries. The suggestion is important in the effort to determine what it is that constitutes the personal capacity of educational leaders and to avoid a parochial or insular approach to an understanding of the concept.

Several definitions of emotional intelligence had arisen since Mayer and Salovey (1997) originally coined the term (Cherniss, 2000; Goleman, 2005). While admitting that their knowledge and understanding of the concept was essentially still in its infancy, they had sought to clarify its meaning and came up with the following revised definition:

[Emotional] intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to reflectively regulate emotions in ways that promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer and Salovey, 1997, p. 23).

George (2000, p. 1027) provided a rather simple definition, namely, that it is “the ability to understand and manage moods and emotions in the self and others.” In addition, Cherniss (2000, p. 9) emphasised that “emotional intelligence [comprised] a large set of abilities that have been studied by psychologists for many years” and that would become progressively important in an increasingly changing world of work, with its compounded demands on one’s cognitive, emotional and physical resources. He further pointed to “a considerable body of research suggesting that an individual’s emotional intelligence provides the basis for the kinds of social and emotional competencies that are important for success in almost any job” (Cherniss, 2000, p. 10). Among the competencies he identified were those such as, managing feelings and handling stress. He also maintained that “as the pace of change increases and the world of work makes ever greater demands on a person’s cognitive, emotional and physical resources, this [large] set of abilities will become increasingly important (Cherniss, 2000, p. 10). This latter point was distinctly relevant to the leadership of organisations which often entailed “a very hectic work pace with multiple and changing demands and high levels of stress (George, 2000, p. 1042).

Even though the discussion did not centre on school leaders, the implications for my study is worth noting as it focuses on a somewhat identical type of context, one in which school leaders need the ability to cope. Edward and Warelow (2005, p. 101) regarded coping as a vitally key psychological process that was “implicit in resilient and/or emotionally intelligent behaviors *[sic]*”

and maintained that “emotional intelligence is often discussed in the context of resilient behaviours demonstrated by individuals in the face of adversity.” Edward and Warelow (2005, p. 101) noted that the relationship between coping in the face of adversity and emotional intelligence was “implicit in resilient and/or emotionally intelligent behaviors *[sic]*” and that “emotional intelligence is often discussed in the context of resilient behaviours demonstrated by individuals in the face of adversity.” They viewed resilience as an internal strength that enabled one to bounce back in situations in which failure was inevitable. They concluded that “emotional intelligence can be developed and dramatically increased through support and education, and resilient behaviors *[sic]* can be learned and interwoven with contextual life experiences (Edward and Warelow, 2005, p. 102).

Life experiences, according to Cliffe (2016), are reflected in the life histories of individuals and these can serve as tools in studying emotional intelligence. These experiences include emotional turning points, and how individuals handle them is a reflection of emotional intelligence. Cliffe (2016) was of the view that emotional intelligence was necessary to be an effective headteacher and found that headteachers who handled their emotions well, that is, those who were more emotionally intelligent were better able to cope with stressful situations. To be more specific, she found that the headteachers she studied demonstrated the ability to “regulate their stressful experiences and ... such experiences enabled them to focus within the workplace, thus they were able to rise above their problems and deal with them appropriately” (Cliffe, 2016, p. 2781). Edward and Warelow (2005) were speaking directly to psychiatric or mental health nurses and Cliffe’s (2016) study was limited to female headteachers. Both have shown that emotional intelligence is linked to resilience which is the coping characteristic indispensable to effective

school leaders (Patterson and Kelleher's (2005). For them, the educational landscape is invariably one of changes and challenges, or to borrow from a colloquial expression, that 'comes with the territory'.

### **2.4.3 Social and Emotional Intelligence**

Despite the representative value of Sutcliffe's (2013) eight qualities of successful school leaders, these need not be taken as exhaustive. Other qualities such as self-efficacy and self-esteem, which tend to appear together as twin concepts in much of the literature, have been identified elsewhere for their relationship to leader effectiveness. Mitchell and Sackney (2011) specifically linked personal capacity to self-efficacy, pointing to other research in which it was concluded that people perform better and are more emotionally stable when they believe that their efforts will yield desirable results, in other words, when they have a high level of self-efficacy. As far as Dimmock (2012, p. 50) is concerned, there is little doubt among the numerous research on teachers and leaders "that one of the key influences on leader achievement is the level of their self-efficacy." Where self-esteem is concerned, it had long been established (Hill and Ritchie, 1977, p. 492) that it is an important characteristic in analysing leadership effectiveness. Not only is it among the predictors of job satisfaction and performance generally (Judge and Bono, 2001, p. 80) it has been shown that "effective leaders generally have high levels of self-esteem" (Bass, 1990a cited in Bass, 2006, p. 169). According to Meredith (2008, p. 59), a basic level of self-esteem is needed to confront challenges, take the initiative, set direction and to respond to relational demands, things that would be expected of leaders in general.

Another characteristic of effective leaders that is worthy of deliberation is social intelligence. Social intelligence has appeared alongside emotional intelligence in a study entitled, *Characteristics that Distinguish Outstanding Urban Principals* (Williams, 2007). Similarly, Schneider and Burton (2008) proposed social intelligence as a possible key to successful 'principalship'. Their proposal was against the background of the rapidly changing nature of educational leadership brought about by "ever-increasing and complex demands on school principals" (Schneider and Burton, 2008, p. 22). They viewed social intelligence as the ability to understand and relate to people (Schneider and Burton, 2008, p. 26) and held that it consisted of two intelligences, namely, intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences, which were two of Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligences. The former, intrapersonal intelligence was defined as the "capacity to form an accurate, veridical model of oneself and to be able to use that model to operate effectively in life" (Gardner, 1993, p. 9). A strong intrapersonal intelligence has the potential to guide one to the development of self-esteem and self-enhancement and to the strength of character that is crucial in solving problems (Gardner, 1983, cited in Schneider and Burton, 2008, p. 27). This point was considered to be very important when linked to mid-life as it was usually during this period that when teachers move into their positions as school leaders. It was further regarded as a correlative ability, correlating with interpersonal intelligence, which had to do with "the ability to understand other people [emphasis added]" (Burton, 2008, p. 27). According to West-Burnham (2002, pp. 1-4), the simplest definition of interpersonal intelligence is reciprocity and sharing, which themselves are fundamental, not only to interpersonal intelligence but leadership and leadership development as well.



After reviewing historical developments and empirical findings from the literature on social and emotional intelligence, Kang *et al.* (2005, p. 99) found many similarities and identified likely differences between the two. They regarded the similarities as obvious, while the differences were deemed subtle and more implicit. As far as they knew, there was no research into these factors, and they were only able to recommend areas for further research. Mackintosh (2011, p. 241) called attention to claims that the focus had shifted from social to emotional intelligence and that perhaps, social intelligence had failed. He queried, however, whether any distinct difference between the two existed, arguing that there was insufficient evidence to support such a view. He suggested that emotional intelligence corresponded to Gardner's (1993) intrapersonal intelligence, while interpersonal intelligence is more in keeping with social intelligence. After looking at each one separately, however, Mackintosh (2011, p. 252) acknowledged that "there is now evidence that at least one [intelligence] test ... does provide a measure of ... emotional intelligence that is at least partially independent of the intelligence measured by IQ tests." His acknowledgement seems to be a rather tacit admission that it may yet be possible, even if somewhat improbable, to distinguish between the two. He had admitted that when compared to the work that had gone into traditional IQ tests "research on these aspects of intelligence is still in early childhood, if not infancy" (Mackintosh, 2011, p. 252).

Despite being unable to do more than suggest topics for further conversation and research, Kang *et al.* (2005, p. 91) concluded that social and emotional intelligence were "multidimensional, interdependent and overlapping." Their conclusion is consistent with and is further testimony to, the multifaceted dimensions of the human factor that were encountered earlier (2.2.3) in the

search for a comprehensive understanding of personal capacity and its implications for the ability of school leaders to cope with changing circumstances in the educational landscape.

#### **2.4.4 Mindset as a Contribution to Personal Capacity**

Baser and Morgan (2008, p. 23) concluded that “the mindsets, motivations and hopes of individuals remain crucial contributions to capacity.” This understanding of mindset as one of the crucial contributions to capacity at the individual and hence, personal level, deserves further attention, especially in light of the work on mindsets developed by research psychologist Carol Dweck (2006). In a nutshell, she believed that people’s ability to cope with adversity, setbacks and failures depend not so much on their innate qualities but rather on their mindset. She distinguished between two types of mindsets, fixed and growth. People with a fixed mindset regard of their abilities as innate, fixed, permanent traits or qualities that people have in varying amounts and nothing can be done to change the mindset (Dweck, 2006, p. 133). Such people tend to be inflexible in their approach to success and failure. The view they hold is that one succeeds because of his or her inherent ability or fails due to lack of such ability. Such a mindset, the argument goes, tends to limit success because such people usually pass up opportunities to learn and grow if they suspect that their weaknesses will be exposed.

Alternatively, people who have a growth mindset see their ability as something that can be developed through perseverance and training. Failure only means an opportunity to work harder until success is achieved. This type of mindset produces perseverance and resilience, recognised as two essential ingredients in the ability to cope under challenging circumstances (Patterson and Kelleher, 2005) and is demonstrated in a number of research studies (Yeager and Dweck, 2012).

As a result, those with a fixed mindset cope less easily with challenging situations that require extra effort, and they tend to give up if they fail. Those with the growth mindset are able to manage such situations because they are ever seeking to improve and are willing to make the necessary effort to do so.

In laying the case for the growth mindset, Dweck (2006) calls our attention to a famous quotation of basketball professional, Michael Jordan, who she regarded as an example of the growth mindset 'par excellence'. As an explanation for the reason behind his success, he is noted to have declared:

I've missed more than nine thousand shots in my career. I've lost almost three hundred games. Twenty-six times, I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed (Dweck, 2006, p. 100).

According to Dweck (2006, p. 32), Jordan knew that his success was not due to any inherent superiority but rather that he had struggled and grown by working hard to develop his abilities and learn from his mistakes.

Baser and Morgan (2008, p. 24) noted that "perhaps the most obvious contributions [of mindset to capacity] at the individual level were those of leaders." This relationship between leadership mindset and capacity at the individual or personal level also finds support in Dweck's (2006) theory of mindset. First of all, she believed that the success or failures of companies such as corporate energy giant Enron (Oppel and Sporkin, 2001), had to do with mindset, that is, with whether or not the leaders had a growth or a fixed mindset. Hence, her response to the question of what distinguished thriving companies from others was that "There were several important factors ... but one that was absolutely key was the type of leader" (Dweck, 2006, p. 110); to be

specific, leaders with a growth mindset. These were distinguished by the fact that, instead of being obsessed with the notion of innate talents, they faced their deficiencies and were ever seeking to improve. “Fixed mindset leaders,” she argued, “live in a world where some are superior and some are inferior” (Dweck, 2006, p. 112). She contended that such leaders hardly have room for the development of others as they believe that people fail simply because they inherently lack the necessary qualities to succeed. Those with a growth mindset, however, can help others through their failures by inspiring and motivating them to work on developing their abilities.

Chase (2010, p. 296) believed that “the leadership mindset is a critical component related to effectiveness and success as a leader.” As a result, she was adamant that sports coaches should not hold the belief that leadership is an innate ability. She insisted that they needed to have a growth mindset as this would enable them to transform both themselves and others to collectively accomplish the goal. She agreed with Dweck (2006) that:

a growth mindset embraces challenges, persists during setbacks, views effort as necessary for achievement ... whereas a fixed mindset avoids challenges, quits during setbacks, see effort as pointless and threatening (Chase, 2010, p. 305).

This ability to take challenges and setbacks and translate them into success has been described by Syed (2015) as black box thinking. According to him, this involved learning from mistakes in the same way that the aviation industry used the black box in aeroplanes after a crash to investigate, learn from and address causes of failure. He argued that failure is the best way to learn. Rather than denying mistakes, seeking scapegoats or behaving like a spin doctor, he insisted that:

it is about the willingness and tenacity to investigate the lessons that often exist when we fail, but which we rarely exploit ... Failure is rich in learning opportunities for a simple reason: in many of its guises, it represents a violation of expectation ... Failure is thus a signpost. It reveals a feature of our world ... and offers vital clues about how to update our models, strategies and behaviours (Syed, 2015, p. 33).

The issue of mindset, therefore, broadens our understanding of personal capacity. Without surrendering the notion that personal capacity is to do with ability, here we are called to acknowledge that this ability is not to be seen as some static, predetermined, innate quality or set of qualities. Rather, it is something that can be developed and improved through training, determination and hard work. This is so, not only for individuals in general but particularly for leaders and thus, for school leaders operating in a context of constant change and the attendant challenges.

#### **2.4.5 Summary and Initial Definition**

It is now possible to draw together what has emerged in the literature thus far and to construct a tentative picture of what personal capacity looks like, especially as it relates to school leaders. Personal capacity can, therefore, be defined as a dynamic, flexible and adaptable characteristic that is multidimensional in nature, being the sum-total of several non-discrete components comprised of personal characteristics, knowledge and skills, these being physical, intellectual, emotional and social, and that enable individuals to be responsive to and to cope with challenging situations and circumstances. It is not a static, fixed, rigid or innate quality that cannot be developed or improved but, as a dynamic characteristic, it is rooted in a mindset, that is, a growth mindset, that sees failures and challenges as opportunities for improvement.

This notion of personal capacity has significance for educational leaders located in the context of the school as a learning community where the expectation is that leaders will be active and creative contributors to school improvement, in contrast to a learning organisation in which they were expected to function as passive objects of manipulation. The following diagram affords a visual appreciation of the emerging picture. These components, it should be emphasised, are not purely discrete factors, functioning independently of each other. In reality, shades of overlap can be evidenced in most categories:

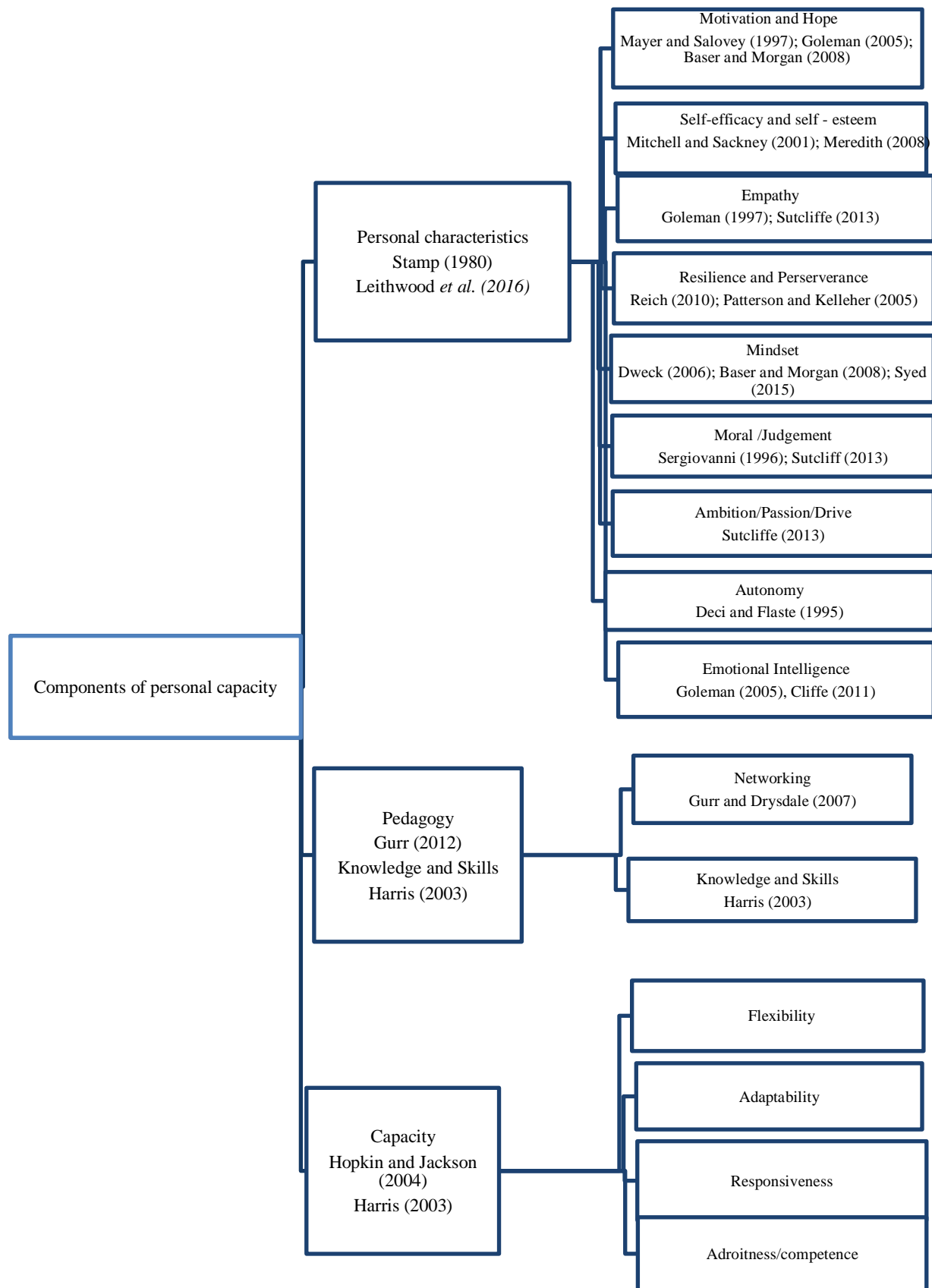


Figure 2. A schematic presentation of the emerging components of personal capacity.

## 2.5 EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP CLARIFIED

Having established what constitutes the personal capacity of school leaders, in keeping with the first research question, it was necessary to consider the second, namely, the extent to which the personal capacity of educational leaders is a factor in their ability to cope effectively with challenges. In answering the question, it was important to recall that the preceding review of the literature had made several references to effective school leaders. These, it has been argued, refers to school leaders who have demonstrated the ability to cope amidst challenging and daunting circumstances. This is in keeping with Murphy's (2013, p. 33) earlier assertion that "exceptional leaders ... develop a capacity to cope." He was writing within the context of educational leadership, a concept that is an evolution of terminologies, namely, 'educational administration' and 'educational management' (Bush, 2011). These changes in the terms used are reflections of the debate surrounding leadership and management that had been taking place outside of the field of education in which various theories developed that "were subsequently applied to schools and colleges with mixed results" (Bush, 2011, p. 10). An understanding, therefore, of what constitutes an 'effective school leader', must take into account the existence of countless theories on leadership and management that are "complex, contradictory, [though] often not applicable within the context of educational leadership" (Bates and Bailey, 2018, p. 2).

Searches for "the one and only proper and true definition of leadership" have been deemed a fruitless exercise (Bass and Bass, 2008, p. 4). It could be argued that since leadership has been regarded as a necessary fact of life and is said to be built into the human psyche (Bass and Bass, 2008, p. 3), searches for a single comprehensive definition should not have been so difficult. Furthermore, although much of the study of history is seen as essentially 'the study of leaders'



and written principles of history take us almost as far back as the emergence of civilisation, this has not made the search for a definition of leadership any easier. It is instructive, therefore, that some eighty-four social scientists from across fifty-six culturally and linguistically diverse countries were able to reach a consensus. They concurred that “leadership was the ability to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute to the effectiveness and success of the organisations of which they are members” (Bass and Bass, 2008, p. 23).

Other experts in the field of educational leadership have expressed, to some degree, a similar understanding of the concept, though approaching it from various angles. Bush (2011) has done extensive work in educational management and leadership and is just one example of researchers who have been cognisant of various conceptualisations of leadership and their varying degrees of usefulness both of which had led to the assertion that none of the definitions was correct (Bush, 2011, p. 5). Despite the absence of an accepted definition, however, he and his colleague identified three dimensions of leadership, namely, influence, values and vision, that he thought could form the basis of the following working definition:

Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared towards the achievement of this shared vision. (Bush and Glover 2003, p. 5).

The first dimension was ‘influence’ which appears in the literature reviewed, as the central element in many definitions. Leadership, as influence, is exercised purposefully with the intention of achieving desired results. Bush (2011, p. 6) believed influence was independent of authority in that, although both are dimensions of power, authority is derived from the formal

positions held, such as the principal or headteacher, while anyone in the school or college could exercise influence. Groups could also exercise it, and this was another indication that it was independent of positional authority. Besides, it strengthened the case for distributed leadership which could extend to any member of the school, as well as for such constructs as senior leadership teams. The second dimension of leadership was 'values', which represent school leaders' moral purpose for the school. In this case, the character of leaders is expressed in personal and professional values, self-awareness and emotional and moral capability. The third dimension was a 'vision' which for many years was "regarded as an essential component of effective leadership" (Bush, 2011, p. 7). It was also understood to provide "the essential sense of direction for leaders and their organisations" (Bush, 2009, p. 4).

Educational management, like leadership, lacks a single accepted definition (Bush, 2011, p. 1) but among the many different interpretations, certain aspects that are understood to be common to them all and considered essential. One common and essential aspect of the various interpretations is that management is an executive function for carrying out agreed policy. Another is that it is about the effective and efficient use of resources to accomplish the goals of the organisation. Bush (2011, p. 1) himself believed that the central concern of educational management was its link to the aims and objectives of schools and colleges.

In distinguishing between educational leadership and educational management, Bush (2011, p. 6) was convinced that one of the clearest distinctions between both was that leadership was linked to 'change' while management was linked to 'maintenance'. He further argued that both needed to be given equal prominence, however, if schools and colleges are to function effectively

and realise their objectives (Bush, 2011, p. 9). Thus, “while a clear vision [which is a function of leadership] may be essential to establish the nature and direction of change, it is equally important to ensure that innovations are implemented efficiently [an activity of management].” Bates and Bailey (2018, p. 6) also employed the use of distinctive terminologies, adopting ‘inspirational’ to refer to leadership and ‘aspirational’ to refer to management, in their effort to simplify the concept of educational leadership and to distinguish it from educational management. They too believed, however, that a combination of both roles was essential to anyone in senior positions in any organisation. To simplify it even further, Bates and Bailey (2018, p. 6) suggested that “80 per cent of leadership is inspirational and 20 per cent aspirational [while conversely] 80 per cent of management is aspirational and 20 per cent inspirational.” Day and Sammons (2014, p. 16) saw in this combination of the two roles, a shift “from principal as manager to principal as both manager and leader, that had been occurring over the previous two decades.”

Notwithstanding the case being made for some combination of both functions, Bush (2011) observed a dichotomy in Britain in which, on the one hand, leadership was the preferred norm while, on the other, governments had been emphasising performance and public accountability, which are issues for management (Bush, 2009. p. 5). It is appropriate, therefore, to emphasise that educational leaders need to be typically visionary school leaders who, while engaging in activities that are characteristically related to management, would not approach the managerial aspect of their roles as an end in itself, but as a means of realising the clear purposes of leadership.

## 2.6 PERSONAL CAPACITY AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

In addressing the second research question on the extent to which the personal capacity of educational leaders is a factor in their ability to cope effectively with challenges, I began by adding some clarity to the concept 'educational leaders'. One of the challenges school leaders have faced is that of unprecedented educational change, an issue alluded to at the outset of this study and reported by Earley *et al.* (2012) in their review of the educational landscape in Britain. Advances towards academisation, the opening of free schools, and the divesting of the Local Authority role were held up as the most public manifestations of the changes, bringing with them additional perceived freedoms and increased responsibilities. Other changes included:

a new accountability framework; curriculum, assessment and qualification changes; new performance management arrangements; new funding models; and a fundamental effort to sweep away bureaucracy and free up schools to focus on their own priorities. Finally, the establishment of a network of Teaching Schools, based on the principles of Teaching Hospitals (Earley *et al.*, 2012, p. 5).

Earley *et al.* (2012, p. 69) explored how leaders were responding to the changes and saw the manner in which they did so as a reflection of their state of readiness to respond to the challenges brought on by the changes taking place. Some senior leaders reported that they were aware of "the need to develop the ability of colleagues to cope with uncertainty and change in a shifting climate."

The understanding of change in the educational arena has long occupied the attention of researchers such as Fullan (2016) who had been keen to point out that despite decades of research on school improvement, systematic research on the principal's role and relationship to stability and change was only quite recent. He noted that earlier research had identified the

principal's role as central to educational change. For example, Huber and Pashiardis (2008), writing in the context of international studies, had pointed to the corroborating evidence of decades of research into school effectiveness, which substantiated the claim that the school leader is a pivotal factor in the school improvement process. Consequently, as Fullan (2016, p. 124) asserted, "Today, no serious change effort would fail to emphasize the key role of the principal." He considered it ironical, however, that promises of extensive and sustained reform were becoming impossible to fulfil due to excessive load being placed on the principal's role.

Earlier, Fullan (2007) had argued that for years the centrality of the principal in the change process had not been given attention by policy-makers and senior administrators. Notwithstanding, eventually they had begun to treat the research findings with more seriousness and to respond to them by incorporating principals into the forefront of school change initiatives. He bemoaned the fact, however, that unfortunately, the efforts made did not meet the desired results as successful reform was proving to be elusive (Fullan, 2007, p. 167). He insisted that this was because the principals lacked the capacity to cope with the daunting demands of their new roles as leaders in school change initiatives; they did not have the understanding and skills that come through the preparation and in-service development experience, to carry out these new roles (Fullan, 2007, p. 168). He maintained that this was a recipe for frustration, particularly in a climate of unprecedented changes. He was to later explore the role of principals as agents of change and to further focus on what is involved in being highly effective (Fullan, 2016).

Lewis and Murphy (2008) likewise deplored the fact that though much of the literature on school leadership seemed to locate the headteacher at the helm of the school's destiny, "in some

respects many headteachers are more like branch managers than CEOs [in that they were being] handed down expectations, targets, new initiatives and resources – all of which may or may not be manageable in the context” (Lewis and Murphy, 2008, pp. 135-136). As in the previous cases, therefore, it was one thing to recognise that school leaders were central to the change process but another to accept that their capacity to function effectively in such a key role was also a central factor.

A similar observation was made by Moller and Schratz (2008) regarding the central role of educational administrators in the process of change and transformation in the educational system. They had been studying leadership development and training of school leaders in the context of rapid policy changes in Europe that resulted from the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The educational administration was becoming increasingly decentralised, and school leaders were judged to be capable of managing the new situation. However, it was found that “the development of their personal capacity was rather neglected [and so] their readiness to cope with the new situation was lacking” (Moller and Schratz, 2008, p. 346). According to Macpherson (2009, p. 91), “the generally decentralised approach to the implementation of reforms in Eastern Europe after 1989 tended to allocate much more power to principals, yet often without commensurate capacity building and support.” The observation, along with the subsequent focus on developing school leadership, is further testimony to the central role, not only of the school leaders themselves but also of their ability to function effectively in a climate of rapid change and transformation. Without the necessary personal capacity, they are unable to function effectively.

Macpherson (2009, p. 66) also noted that in England, educational leadership development programmes such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and the National College of School Leadership (NCSL), now the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL), were established against a background of change at the turn of the twenty-first century. These changes posed extraordinary challenges for educational leadership, which demanded a type of leadership that “generates capacity to enable people to meet an ongoing stream of adaptive challenges” (Macpherson, 2009, p. 67), a need that the NCTL and other development programmes were meant to fill. Other studies (Gunter and Forrester, 2008, p. 159) have pointed out that, in England, the prevailing model of leadership has been that of the single person as the organisational leader. It is in accord with Fullan’s claim that the school leader is at the centre of successful educational change (Fullan, 2011). For him, such leaders are, among other things, resolute leaders who are not born with innate leadership qualities but learn and improve through practice. He found this conceptualisation of leaders to be congruent with Dweck’s theory of growth mindset (Fullan, 2011, p. 48), for according to Dweck (2006, p. 24), “it’s not about immediate perfection. It’s about learning something over time: confronting a challenge and making progress.”

#### **2.6.1 Single leader vs distributed leadership**

Fullan’s (2007) emphasis on the principal’s personal capacity to cope so as to bring about successful change, is suggestive of what has been called the ‘heroics of leadership’ genre of literature that has come under much criticism (Gronn, 2009; Harris and Spillane, 2008; Spillane, 2005; Timperley, 2005). For example, Spillane (2005) believed it was inaccurate to identify school leadership exclusively with an individual leader, particularly with the principal, seeing that

leaders, in general, and principals, in particular, “do not single-handedly lead schools to greatness” (Spillane, 2005, p. 143). He was also opposed to the emphasis that proponents of single leadership placed on the consideration of ‘what makes up leadership’ (that is the structures, functions, routines and roles), in contrast to ‘how and why’ leadership was performed daily. He, therefore, welcomed distributed leadership as an antidote to, and replacement of, the work that had been done in the heroics of leadership (Spillane, 2005, p. 143; Harris and Spillane, 2008, p. 31). According to Spillane (2005, p. 144), distributed leadership was first and foremost about leadership practice, which he further described as the product of interactions between people (namely, school leaders and followers) and their situation, in contrast to people’s knowledge and skills. Though he recognised that leadership practice typically involved multiple leaders, he was keen to point out that the critical factor was not so much their individual actions but rather the interactions among them. He believed that this made it essential to move beyond the perception of leadership in terms of superhuman or heroic actions of individuals (Spillane, 2005, p. 145).

In developing his perspective on distributed leadership, Spillane (2005) pointed to the perplexity that surrounded the actual meaning of the concept which was attested to by Bennett *et al.* (2003) in their extensive review of the literature. They too had encountered a plethora of definitions in their search for a common understanding of distributed leadership. Nonetheless, amidst the various meanings, they had succeeded in identifying three distinctive elements of the concept. In brief, leadership was viewed as, first of all “an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals” (Bennett *et al.*, 2003, p. 7). According to the authors, this was in contrast to leadership as a phenomenon arising from the individual. “Secondly, distributed leadership



suggested openness of the boundaries of leadership” (Bennett *et al.*, 2003, p. 7). In the case of the school community, the inclusion of other members such as the pupil or student body needed to be considered. Thirdly, distributed leadership entails the view that “varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few” (Bennett *et al.*, 2003, p. 7) which, if brought together can forge a concerted dynamic representing more than the sum of the individual contributors.

Of the literature they reviewed, Bennett *et al.* (2003, p. 15) regarded Gronn’s (2002) work as comprising “the most sophisticated attempt to develop a conceptual description of distributed leadership” with his focus on concertive action. Gronn (2002, p. 425) distinguished between two forms of distributed leadership, namely numerical and concertive actions. In contrast to the numerical sense, which amounted to the sum or aggregate of individual actions, the “defining attribute of concertive action” was a conjoint agency (Gronn, 2002, p. 431). Concertive action is where people work together, pooling their initiative and expertise, resulting in a product that is greater than the sum of their individual actions (Bennett *et al.*, 2003, p. 7). Gronn (2009) had been, admittedly, critical of the predominant notion that the personal capacity of the school leader is a template for change-oriented action. He had initially enthusiastically campaigned for distributed leadership as a strategy to replace the individualistic heroic approach, viewing it as a rallying-point for those who were searching for “post-heroic” leadership alternatives (Gronn, 2009, p. 18). However, he foresaw the possibility of a closely related scenario developing, that of a combative polarisation between both camps which could eventually result in a typical hardening of positions. He, therefore, cautioned against the growing attention accorded to distributed leadership.

Another response to distributed leadership that Gronn (2008; 2009) considered, was one in which efforts are made to accommodate both individualistic as well as distributed approaches to leadership. He envisaged occasions and locations in which leadership is concentrated for substantial lengths of time in an individual, while in others it would be shared. He went on to propose the concept of “hybridity” (Gronn, 2008, p. 199; 2009, p. 19) as yet another possible response that could best serve the interests of leadership research. Gronn (2009, p. 19) did not see hybridity as a new type of leadership but rather as “a way of characterizing [*sic*] an emerging state of affairs.” He saw it as an improvement over the previous scenario which held out the possibility for both individualised and distributed leadership co-existing sequentially. In a hybrid situation, both would co-exist concurrently as well. Thus, in any particular organisational school setting, for example, there could be a constantly shifting leadership mix or arrangement of the resources of leadership to meet the wider environmental and situational challenges specific to that context. Such situations were on-the-ground realities experienced by people in schools and are more complex than can be captured by the various descriptors of leadership such as shared, transformational or visionary.

Gronn (2009, p. 20) recognised that, in addition to the fact that his proposal opened up possibilities, there were also problems. For example, as previously noted in their reflection on the single leadership model in education policy in England, Gunter and Forrester (2005, p. 159) contended that “the primacy of the single person remains” despite the “rhetoric around, and training provided for, hybrids such as ‘distributed’ and ‘total’ leadership.” Frost and Harris (2003, p. 486) had also sought to make a case for distributed leadership. They argued that research into the area of educational leadership needs to divest itself of the traditional profile of a “strong,

charismatic and preferably heroic individual at the apex of the organisation” and instead accept the idea of distributed leadership. However, though not as forthright as Gunter and Forrester (2005) in making a case for single leadership, they too were keen to point out that even in the context of distributed leadership, the “[personal] capacity of the individual to exercise leadership and the extent to which this can be cultivated and supported,” is an issue to be taken into consideration (Frost and Harris, 2003, p. 490). It is not difficult to appreciate, therefore, the validity of Gronn’s (2008; 2009) proposal of hybridisation of the traditional single leader model with that of shared leadership, as a means of resolving the conflict between the different viewpoints encountered in the literature and experienced in practice. The key point that can be established here is that, despite the distinction Spillane (2005) made between leaders and leadership, the value and relevance of distributed leadership, especially in the context of changes, does not obviate the need to focus on the personal capacity of individual school leaders.

### **2.6.2 Models of leadership**

Some new models of leadership have arisen, partly as a response to the challenges in the changing educational landscape (Earley *et al.*, 2012, p. 7). In addition to the traditional model which consisted of a single headteacher and a senior leadership team consisting of a deputy headteacher with or without assistant headteachers, an independent study into school leadership (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007) identified the following high-level models: the managed model, the multi-agency model, the federated model and the system leadership model.

The authors have been careful to emphasise, however, that:

“... these models are, by definition, very broad and as such they are not mutually exclusive ... some schools may sit across the boundaries of each category such as those

which are providing extended services through multi-agency working and sharing these across a federation of schools” (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007, pp. x, 49).

According to the study, those models judged to be effective were those in which “leadership is distributed appropriately at all levels of the organisation” (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007, p. 51).

The study (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007) reports that, in the traditional model, the distribution of leadership is quite limited. Though still the dominant model in vogue, there are those who have regarded it as unsustainable due to its single-leader structure. The managed model had a flatter and more diversified senior leadership team and hence, more distributed leadership. Co-headship was considered to be a subset of this model. In the multi-agency model, there was more scope for diversity and sharing, but there are those who have regarded it as merely an extension or variant of the managed model. The federated model consisted of a formal collaboration of leadership but to varying degrees, depending on the extent of the linkage between them. The leadership structure may accommodate an executive head, or there may be a senior leadership for the entire federation.

The final model, the systems leadership model, deserves extensive attention. Coleman (2011, p. 311) links it to collaborative leadership and insists that this “move towards increased collaborative working represent the single most significant change for schools in the 21st century.” It is understood to be a new form of model in which the headteacher assumed other roles beyond their school in order to contribute to the wider system, within and beyond the locality. Hopkins (2009, p. 2) also saw it as “a more collaborative approach” than previous models, and to him, it was a welcome shift in the trend from an era of competitiveness. He considered it

remarkable that the emerging system leaders, in their capacity as school leaders, were as concerned about the progress of other schools or colleges as they were about theirs (Hopkins, 2009, p. 1). As far as he was concerned, they were increasingly at the forefront of this shift and had the potential to transform the entire educational system. He saw this new model representing “a powerful combination of practices that give us a glimpse of leadership in a new educational landscape” (Hopkins, 2009, p. 3, 7). The fascination with the idea of collaboration that system leadership represented was also captured by Coleman (2011, p. 311) who relayed that “the emergence of system leadership and increased popularity of distributed leadership approaches have further raised interest in the notion of collaborative leadership.”

Hopkins (2009) proposed a model of system leadership practice in which the system leaders were at the centre and were being driven by a moral purpose to see students succeed. He believed, as confirmed by various researchers that, like other successful school leaders, system leaders possessed personal skills, qualities and capabilities that could be developed (Hopkins, 2009, p. 6) thereby enabling them to function effectively in their roles. Drawing directly from the experiences and perspectives of system leaders, Ballantyne *et al.* (2006) were able also to pinpoint some characteristics of system leaders. According to them, system leaders respond positively to complexity which they regard as an indispensable condition for effective leadership. In the most challenging of circumstances, they prove to be adaptable and pragmatic without surrendering their commitment to moral values and beliefs by which they are explicitly motivated. They are reflective and aware of the impact of their actions on others and are thereby able to create opportunities for collaboration and building the leadership capacity of their colleagues. Although system leaders are recognised to be education leaders, par excellence, they

understand the value of distributed leadership to the effective operation of networks, and so avoid projecting themselves as heroes or encourage dependency. In summary, system leaders possess the personal capacity, as portrayed in the review of the literature thus far, that characterises effective school leaders.

Bush and Glover (2014) approached the study of school leadership models from a somewhat different angle. They reviewed nine models but pointed out that each was partial in that the perspectives were 'uni-dimensional' (Bush and Glover, 2014, p. 565). They also noted that distributed leadership was the preferred approach among academics and other stakeholders and that traditional models were being criticised for locating the individual principal or headteacher at the centre of education leadership, to the exclusion or downplaying of other leaders involved in the process. The authors were of the opinion that the popularity of distributed leadership was partly due to its alignment with the notion that teachers and other adults in the schools should share (Bush and Glover, 2014, p. 561). However, they did not seem to share the enthusiasm of other academics, practitioners and policy-makers, in advocating for a normative approach to distributed leadership. A similarly cautious approach to system leadership is noticed. They believed that evidence for a normative approach was sparse (Bush and Glover, 2014, p. 564). System leadership is said to be of increasing significance due to the emergence of new forms of school organisation including federation, networks and executive headships. Their effectiveness has been deemed to be void of unified evidence, however, requiring more evidence to secure confident judgements "about their value as a mode of structuring relationships between schools" (Bush and Glover, 2014, p. 566-567).

Notwithstanding their desire for more evidence of their effectiveness, Bush and Glover (2014, p. 563) believed that system leaders were required to have certain attributes to be effective in their roles. These included but were clearly not restricted to courage, tenacity, resilience and vision. In fact, successful leaders, on the whole, face unprecedented pressures. As these environmental pressures intensify, educational leaders and managers require greater understanding, skill and resilience to sustain their institutions (Bush and Glover, 2014, p. 564). This understanding of system leadership was in keeping with the views of other researchers mentioned previously, who themselves were strong advocates of system leadership.

## **2.7 PERSONAL CAPACITY AND SELF-EFFICACY**

The relationship between personal capacity and self-efficacy can be appreciated in the context of educational change. Dimmock and Hattie (1996), like Fullan (2007), could point to research evidence supportive of the view that principals were key to educational change and reform (2.6). While Fullan (2007) focussed on the principal's [personal] capacity to cope, Dimmock and Hattie (1996) focussed on the principal's self-efficacy. They concluded that the "self-efficacy of the principal to cope with change can be an important mediator in accomplishing change and reducing the stress levels of the principal" (Dimmock and Hattie, 1996, p. 72). Their conclusion was based on a study in which they measured the self-efficacy of principals. Although they were of the view that self-efficacy is specific to a particular situation, their study demonstrated that those school leaders who coped with change tended to have higher self-efficacy than those who failed to cope. Other studies exploring the relationship between self-efficacy and coping ability have arrived at similar conclusions (Schaubroeck and Merritt, 1997; Grau *et al.*, 2001).

According to Mitchell and Sackney (2011, p. 31), the development of one's personal capacity can lead to a greater sense of efficacy. They pointed to research which had concluded that people perform better and are more emotionally stable when they believe that their efforts will yield desirable results. It was also in keeping with Bandura's (1997, pp. 2-3) notion of self-efficacy in which he held that:

unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act. Efficacy belief, therefore, is a major basis for action. People guide their lives by their beliefs of personal efficacy. *Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities* [emphasis added] to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments.

Bandura believed that self-efficacy determines people's ability to cope with obstacles and aversive experiences, that is, by what they believe about their capabilities (Bandura, 1977, p. 191). As Maddux (2009, p. 335) understood it "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce desired effects by their own actions [emphasis in the original]" comprised the basic premise of Bandura's self-efficacy theory. These capabilities in their various dimensions, as has been extensively argued thus far (2.2.7), amount to one's personal capacity. This is somewhat congruent with Mitchell and Sackney's (2011, p. 31) argument that the development of one's personal capacity can lead to a greater sense of self-efficacy. By implication, therefore, the development of one's personal capacity should result in an enhancement of one's ability to cope with challenging circumstances.

In seeking a clear sense of how self-efficacy was defined and measured, Maddux (2009, p. 336) saw it necessary to distinguish it from possible misconceptions. Among these, and significant for this study, was that self-efficacy was neither self-esteem nor a personality trait but rather a belief



whose development continues throughout our lifespan as we integrate information from our varied experiences over time. In practice, those who feel capable and competent will rise to opportunities and challenges to bring about the desired results while conversely, those who think they lack the ability and hence the sense of efficacy, will try to avoid them. This has implications for personal capacity which, as was discussed earlier (2.2) and has been corroborated in this section, equates with their capabilities in their various dimensions.

## **2.8 PERSONAL CAPACITY AND CAREER TRAJECTORY**

In order to specifically address the specific research question, “What role does personal capacity play in the career trajectory of school leaders?” Gronn’s (1999) career model of leadership was very helpful but it is not to ignore the fact that other models have been developed and judiciously used in studying the career journeys of school leaders. Three of these are worth mentioning. Day and Bakioglu’s (1996) model consisted of four stages, the first or initial stage being the start of the leader’s career and the fourth stage characterised by disenchantment in which, for one reason or the other, the leader may lose confidence and enthusiasm and become fatigued. Ribbins’ (2003) model to some extent incorporated both Day and Bakioglu’s model into Gronn’s. It, however, takes into account the lives of leaders beyond their careers, which can end either positively (enchantment) or negatively (disenchantment). Earley and Weindling (2007, p. 74) produced a six-stage model, which “maps out the stages of transition through headship.” His focus was specifically on the stages in headship. Figure 3 affords a visual comparison of the models.

S	Day and Bakioğlu (1996)	P	Gronn (1999)	S	Ribbins (2003)	S	Earley and Weindling (2007)
		1	Formation	1	Formation		
		↓		↓			
		2	Accession	2	Accession	0	Preparation
		↓		↓		↓	
		3	Incumbency	3	Incumbency	1	Entry & Encounter
		↓		↓		↓	
1	Initiation			4	Initiation	2	Reshaping
↓				↓		↓	
						3	Refinement
						↓	
2	Development			5	Development		
↓				↓		4	Reshaping
						↓	
						5	Consolidation
						↓	
3	Autonomy			6	Autonomy		
↓				↓		6	Plateau
4	Disenchantment	4	Divestiture	7	Disenchantment/Enchantment		

Figure 3. A comparison of four models of career trajectory. S= Stages. P = Phases.

Gronn's (1999) model which has become relatively popular, had shown that it is possible to follow the career journey of leaders to headship through four sequential phases: the formation, accession, incumbency and divestiture phases. These, he argued, are structured within three macro-contexts, namely, historical, cultural and societal, which essentially mean that leaders are,

at the early stages in their lives at least, involuntarily and inevitably, products of these contexts (Gronn, 1999, p. 32).

They are 'born and bred' within a particular era and place and therefore, within the early formative years, imbibe and convey the culture and values of which they have been socialised.

According to Gronn (1999, p. 32):

A leader born in a particular civil society, therefore, is the product of a specific era and is moulded according to the mix of cultural assumptions chosen by her or his primary carers, and in turn embodies or becomes the bearer of those values which have left their mark.

The first phase of the journey to headship (Gronn, 1999, pp. 32-33), as the word explicitly indicates, is formative. For individuals, this is the period from infancy to early childhood, when preparatory socialisation processes and experiences that shape character occur, and which later position them as leadership aspirants. This is where the core aspects of leadership, namely, concepts of self and identity, are developing, concepts that were earlier identified as characteristic of capacity in general and personal capacity, in particular (2.2.5). It would be somewhat premature to expect personal capacity to be playing any role in these formative years.

An interest in the progression of senior leaders to headship, however, takes us to the second phase, the accession phase. This phase is described as one of priming or anticipation. This is where personal capacity comes into play, as leadership aspirants begin to prepare and position themselves (Gunter, 2001, p. 77; Gronn, 1999, p. 34), testing or trying out their capacity for leadership. Fuelled by their personal capacity that had been in the process of development, they come to a state of self-realisation regarding their readiness for leadership, a self-realisation that had been pre-conditioned by their own self-belief. This, on the one hand, amounts to their "sense of efficacy, or the acceptance of [their] potency, competence and capacity to make a difference"

and on the other hand, their self-esteem, “positive feelings of [their] worth and value” (Gronn, 1999, p. 36).

Despite having come to this state in which they should be finding the position of the school leader appealing, however, Dimmock (2012) found that even in a climate of increasing demand for headteachers, the post was, in fact, appealing to fewer teachers. At the same time, more middle leaders were being turned off from the prospect of progressing to headship and fewer senior leaders were making the transition. Sadly, while teachers may aspire to become middle-level leaders or even vice-principals, they tend not to aspire for principalship (Graham, 2004).

These observations and conclusions presented by Dimmock (2012) are consistent with what I have noted at the outset of this study: the pool of headteachers is diminishing, and it is not being replenished by upcoming leaders at any level. To be specific, Dimmock (2012) noted that only forty per cent of those who completed the programme decided to apply for headship afterwards. The applications have been few despite the prospects that school leadership training programmes such as the NPQH seemed to have held out. It is noteworthy that although the NPQH training programme ceased to be compulsory for headteachers or prospective headteachers from 2012, the revised programme has had its highest number of applicants since its inception in 1997, yet the pool of headteachers has continued to diminish. It is not unreasonable to conclude from this that, somehow, the programme does not adequately prepare senior leaders to advance in their career. Dimmock (2012) was of the opinion that accession to headship requires certain attributes and dispositions including self-efficacy but as far as he was concerned, “these attributes and dispositions are not necessarily demanded or expected to the same degree

of the vice-principals or deputy heads” (Dimmock, 2012, p. 41). Conversely, however, it could be interpreted as a positive outcome in that it helps to identify those suited to headship while not necessarily propelling them into the role.

It is both necessary and possible, however, to gain further insight into the issues involved in preparing senior leaders for headship via the NPQH programme as this may help to determine what the critical factors are in the transitioning process. In this regard, the study carried out by Rhodes *et al.* (2009, p. 449) “to explore the influence of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in England in supporting aspirant heads to make the transition to headship” is particularly valuable. It emerged that the journey to headship needs to be supplemented with “timely leadership experience, support, confidence-building, networking and direct contact with incumbent senior leaders prior to NPQH.” They made note of other studies which demonstrated that networking was important for developing confidence and in helping to shape the identity of new headteachers. These findings are in keeping Mitchell and Sackney (2011). As a result, they have implications for the place of personal capacity in the transition to headship process.

Rhodes *et al.* (2009) further pointed to the fact that the issue of transition to headship was international in its scope. As an illustration, attention was drawn to an influential study carried out by Browne-Ferrigno (2003) on the transition to headship in the United States. He had identified “four key elements in the transformation process, as aspirant principals engaged with a programme of preparation for their headship [namely]:

- (1) role conceptualisation which is related to participants’ understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a school principal;

- (2) initial socialisation into a new community of practice where transformation is related to understanding the need for changed professional behaviour appropriate to the role of the principal;
- (3) role-identity transformation where professional growth is indicated by the mindset shift of participants to that of an educational leader; and
- (4) purposeful engagement based on career aspirations where professional growth is indicated by a desire to gain knowledge, confidence, support and the skill set required to achieve the transition to the role of principal” (Rhodes *et al.*, 2009, p. 451).

As Rhodes *et al.* (2009) further suggested, since the journey to headship long pre-dates the NPQH experience, perhaps the NPQH programme should take on the important role of enabling aspiring headteachers to take ownership of their career trajectory. To put this within the context of the understanding of personal capacity that has emerged in this review, perhaps more effort should be made to ensure that aspirants to headship engage in a thorough deconstruction of their personal and professional trajectory before deciding to embark on the NPQH programme. The effort would aid these individuals in uncovering an appreciation of their self-efficacy and confidence. The stage would therefore be set for them to engage in an active process of reconstruction through viable and enriching programmes of which the NPQH programme could be one. The hope is that this would result “in the inclusion of stress-related modules and training for future school leaders” as part of its review (Robbins, 2013, p. 54). Like the others who demonstrated self-awareness, self-belief and self-confidence and hence, personal capacity, throughout the programme, they too would have been able to make the transition to headship.

## 2.9 CHANGES AND CHALLENGES IN THE EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

This review would not be complete without reflecting on some of the significant changes in the educational landscape that are primarily challenging for educational leaders in England. Earley *et al.* (2012) identified the academisation of schools and the opening of new free schools among other important changes which have included: federation chains and teaching schools, a new accountability framework, changes in curriculum and assessment and in qualifications, new performance management arrangements and new funding models. It would be naïve, however, to suggest that the incidence of changes highlighted here are novel. The changing nature of education has been long attested to by several authors addressing the history of education in the United Kingdom. Included among these have been Curtis (1967), Cunningham (1989) and Gillard (2018), with Gillard (2018) presenting a comprehensive and recently updated timeline.

The review of the educational landscape carried out by Earley *et al.* (2012) focussed on the decade of changes in the education landscape subsequent to the 1988 Education Reform Act. These changes were considered to be ‘unprecedented’, the significance of which was at least comparable to the introduction of the Local Management of Schools provided in the Act and in which direct financial control of schools was transferred from the local authorities to headteachers and governors. Since then the momentum of change has continued being deemed to have reached ‘seismic’ proportions (School Clerk UK, 2016) with the government planning to overhaul the education sector in keeping with its pursuit of excellence in education everywhere across England (DfE, 2016a). The fundamental changes that this overhauling involves pose significant challenges to educational leaders as they are centrally located in the shaping, management, and oversight of the entire process (Jackson, 2017, p. 12).

The plans for the overhaul of the education sector were published in the Government's White Paper '*Education Excellence Everywhere*' (DfE, 2016a) and included the total academisation of maintained schools by the end of 2020, or at least that they should be in the process of conversion by then. The government planned to take steps to enforce the academisation of schools in local authorities that were underperforming or that the local authorities lacked the capacity to maintain. The expectation was that most schools would form or join multiple academy trusts (MAT) with the most successful schools having the option of continuing as Single Academy Trusts. This academisation of maintained schools is an expression of the move toward school autonomy deemed to be "one of the defining features of the recent history of the English education system" (Sandals and Bryant, 2014, p. 11).

Another expression of the government's commitment to give schools more autonomy is the creation of new free schools, a programme introduced in 2010 by the then Coalition Government. It entailed the establishment of new schools outside local government control and oversight, with both capital and revenue costs being funded by central government (Andrew and Johnes, 2017). The programme was set to expand under the Conservative Government's pursuit of excellence in education, with a commitment to "build on the success of the free school programme to open 500 new schools by 2020" (DfE, 2016, p. 61). From the onset it was clear that free schools would have an impact on other schools and that the freedom from local government control enjoyed by both academies and free schools would present challenges (McLean and Hammond, 2012). One such challenge was the question of whether the existing public schools were able to compete on equal grounds with free schools due to the obvious difference in the regulations they were subjected to and the relative level of autonomy they could exercise. As the



argument ran, these changes would necessitate building relationships, working together collaboratively and having a broad understanding and appreciation of the various ways in which accountability originates. It would also be necessary to “ensure that free schools and existing schools do not compete with each other in such a way that will be damaging to either schools, or their pupils” (McLean and Hammond, 2012, p. 7).

Independent schools are, by definition, free from the constraints imposed by government reforms and so are better able to adapt and respond to changes within the education system (Norton, 2017). The government views them as an asset to the school system as they have the capability and capacity to provide expertise. As a result, they encourage the independent sector to support the state sector as far as possible (DfE, 2018). The government intended to lift restrictions on the expansion of independent schools but following the 2017 election, original plans were scrapped. Since then, the government has stipulated that, in order to maintain their charitable status, independent schools should work harder to demonstrate a benefit to the public. This would range from undertaking full sponsorship of a local state school to actually providing direct school-to-school support (Marriage, 2017).

Closely associated with the challenges brought on by the academisation and the proliferation of new free schools has been the pupil premium introduced by the then Coalition Government (DfE, 2010). This was at the heart of the then government’s reform programme. It essentially meant that extra funds were to be allocated specifically for the education of the most deprived or disadvantaged pupils, with the expressed purpose of raising their attainment. In total, £2.5 billion a year, in addition to the existing schools’ expenditure, was to be spent on the Pupil Premium by

2014–15 (DfE, 2010, p. 81). To date, 2017-18, £2.4 billion of Pupil Premium funding has been allocated in respect of around 2 million pupils (Forster and Long, 2018, p. 3).

Most school leaders welcomed the additional funding and the focus in Ofsted inspections on pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium (Sandals and Bryant, 2014, p. 53). Notwithstanding, as reported by Frostick (2015), headteachers found aspects of the programme to be frustrating, time-consuming and potentially devastating. For example, school leaders were faced with parents who were already benefiting from the universal free school meal entitlement for all infants and so were not too keen on registering for the Pupil Premium. The challenge was to overcome the obstacles in order to persuade parents to go through the process to secure the financial aid which actually amounted to more than just free school meals. Frostick (2015) reported that coupled with this has been an unsettling atmosphere of uncertainty surrounding the tracking of the progress of these vulnerable pupils. In addition, the requirement for headteachers to publish on their websites spending plans for their Pupil Premium allocation, has proven to be pressuring.

In September 2013, the government introduced considerable reforms to the pay of teachers in the maintained sector (Sharp *et al.*, 2017). The central factor was that performance-related pay (PRP) was to replace the system of automatic progression of classroom teachers along the national pay scale. Linked to this was the flexibility schools would now be afforded to recruit new staff without matching their previous salaries. Further reforms a year later applied the same principle to school leaders. However, the implementation of the pay reforms was optional for academies as they were under no obligation to adhere to the national pay terms and conditions. The case for change was informed by research attesting to a positive correlation between teacher

effectiveness and pupil progress, particularly for disadvantaged pupils (Sharp *et al.*, 2017, p. 12). Against this background, therefore, two key objectives of the government are worthy of mention, namely, “to develop arrangements for teachers’ pay which reward good performance and attract the highest performing graduates and professionals into the profession [and] to ensure the best teachers are incentivised to work in the most challenging schools” (DfE, 2012, p. 3).

Subsequent studies have revealed that almost all local authority maintained primary and secondary schools and a majority of academies had implemented pay reforms (Sharp *et al.*, 2017, p. 8). However, school leaders have been faced with various challenges in the process of implementing them, the main ones reported being “the additional staff time involved in collecting and reviewing evidence for performance reviews; the pressure on teachers to meet pupil outcome targets; and the challenge of applying a school’s pay policy fairly in certain situations” (Sharp *et al.*, 2017, p. 9). Even before the announcement of the reforms was put into effect, there were voices of dissent among both staff and headteachers. As Tickle (2013) had observed, “not everyone disagrees with the principle, but it is hard to find a senior leader who thinks the measure [that is, PRP] will work in practice.” Implementation of the reforms have been occurring, therefore, within the context of agitations by and consultations with teachers’ unions representing wide and varying concerns and criticisms of their members (Sharp *et al.*, 2017; Whittaker, 2017; NUT, 2017), underscoring the challenges that the school leaders have to contend with in the changing educational landscape.

The implementation of reforms in curriculum and qualifications has been complex and challenging, as national leaders of education commissioned to consider issues affecting schools have been keen to admit (Brundrett and Duncan, 2010; Fellowship Commission, 2013). Since its

introduction in 1988, the National Curriculum has gone through several revisions. By 2010, however, the government upon acceding office, aired concerns that the school system was performing well below its potential, especially when compared with schools in other countries (DfE, 2010). This comparison was afforded by surveys such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey which is a worldwide evaluation of 15-year-olds' performance in reading, mathematics and science and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) which measures literacy among 10 year-olds. The 2006 PISA survey showed that "England fell from 4<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> in science, 7<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> in literacy, and 8<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> in mathematics" while the PIRLS survey reported that England fell from 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 35 in 2001 to 15<sup>th</sup> out of 40 in 2006 (DfE, 2010, p. 3, 46).

The argument then, as spelt out in the Schools White Paper 2010, was that "the National Curriculum includes too much that is not essential knowledge, and there is too much prescription about how to teach" (DfE, 2010, p. 10). A new curriculum was envisaged, therefore, with the aim of "reducing prescription and allowing schools to decide how to teach, while refocusing on the core subject knowledge that every child and young person should gain at each stage of their education" (DfE, 2010, p. 11). This aim was considered to be best accomplished within the context of a greater degree of school autonomy where academy status is the norm and toward which more and more schools were moving (DfE, 2010, p. 40). The challenge was not merely to improve from year to year but rather to "keep pace with the best education systems in the world (DfE, 2010, p. 46).

The long process of reforms that began in 2011 with the review of the national curriculum in England, involved widespread consultation with schools, further and higher education, and employers, on the principles of reform and on matters relating to subject content. From 2014 the resulting reforms were gradually introduced, the key ones identified being: revisions to the subject content of all national curriculum subjects, the addition of a modern language to the Key Stage 2 (ages 7 – 11) national curriculum and changes to the way in which pupil assessment was to be carried out (Roberts, 2016, p. 3). Running in tandem with the national curriculum reforms were reforms of GCSEs, AS and A level qualifications. Notable changes to the GCSE curriculum included the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), the new GCSEs, Progress 8 and Attainment 8.

The EBacc refers to a combination of subjects that the government deems to be important for young people to study at GCSE. It was intended that the Ebacc would replace the 5 A\*-C grades as a performance measure (Neumann *et al.* 2016). The new GCSEs promised to be more challenging, having more content, a new grading system and changes to the examination periods (Long, 2017). Progress 8, together with Attainment 8 which measures the achievement of a pupil across 8 qualifications, is the government's main accountability measure that was introduced in 2016, though schools choosing to opt in early could do so in 2015 (DfE, 2016b). As further explained, Progress 8 aimed to capture the progress a pupil makes from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school. It is said to function as a type of value added measure in which comparison is made between pupils' results and the actual achievements of other pupils with similar prior attainment. The main features of the AS and A level reforms are: assessment of both AS and A level mainly by exam at the end of each course, decoupling of both so that AS results no longer count towards the A level, revision and updating of the content of the A levels with

universities playing a greater role than they did previously and examination boards being able to design the AS (Long, 2017).

In addition to curriculum reviews and reforms, there were also significant changes in the measures used to assess children's attainment and progress at both secondary and primary levels (Roberts, 2016). With their stated intention to better prepare primary children for secondary education the government set about altering the content of the tasks and tests so that they would be in line with the content of the revised National Curriculum. The way that attainment is assessed and reported, both during and at the end of key stages, was also changed to make them "tougher, and the expected standard higher" (Robert, 2018, p. 3). National curriculum levels at the end of key stages have been replaced with scaled or standardised score being used to report SATs results.

The changes gave rise to several challenges that school leaders being at the centre of the implementation process, had to contend with. These changes comprised a variety of issues that were judged to have served as potential barriers to reforms (Fellowship Commission, 2013). The first challenge embodied the need for teachers to regain the skills of curriculum design and development as they were previously operating under a National Curriculum that was inherently prescriptive. Second, since schools would be allowed the freedom to decide how best teachers should teach, there was the need to develop a different culture in which innovation and creativity in teaching were the norm (Brundrett and Duncan, 2010). Finally, conditions needed to be in place that would enable successful and sustainable reform. Among these conditions was the need for "careful management of potentially conflicting tensions in the system" (Fellowship Commission, 2013, p. 8).

The tensions manifested themselves in mixed reactions, polarised views, criticisms, controversies and ongoing consultations involving the various teacher and headteacher unions (NUT, 2017; Roberts, 2016; 2018). Changes in accountability measures such as Ofsted inspections were also cited as necessary conditions for successful reform. Other conditions identified were: reforms in qualifications to fit the changing curriculum. The concern was that although the government had, together with the curriculum reforms, “embarked on a root-and-branch reform of GCSEs, AS and A-level qualifications” (Roberts, 2016, p. 10), accountability and assessment “must also be consistent with the wider aim of establishing a curriculum that matches the best in the world” (Fellowship Commission, 2013, p. 8).

## **2.10 SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

The literature reviewed provided some detail to the research questions, however tentative at this stage. The question of how the personal capacity of school leaders influences their responses to challenges in the educational arena required investigation in the field. The first research question was to enable us to arrive at a definition of the concept. The question was to provide the theoretical framework within which to answer the other questions, that is, the extent to which the personal capacity of educational leaders is a factor in their ability to cope effectively with challenges, and the role of personal capacity in the career trajectory of school leaders.

At the core of the understanding of personal capacity garnered so far, is first, the idea of ability. This ability is multifaceted or multidimensional, with its different components carrying various nuances that tend to overlap with each other to a greater or lesser extent. Some of these components are internal (having to do with such factors as attitudes and values) and some external (actively acquired through deliberate interaction with external networks). Second, it is

a dynamic characteristic that is underpinned by a certain type of mindset, dubbed 'growth mindset'; a mindset that sees failures and challenges as opportunities for improvement and makes use of opportunities to learn and improve. It is, therefore, not to be understood in a static, fixed or rigid sense, suggesting that it cannot be developed or improved upon. Neither is it to be seen as an innate trait that one either has or does not have, and so does not need to be improved or developed. Third, and following from the second, is self-efficacy, which is akin to the mindset that underpins personal capacity. This is one's belief in his or her ability to accomplish set goals, and that produces resilience, the characteristic that enables one to bounce back and cope with otherwise adverse circumstances.

It has been noted that leaders and particularly successful school leaders, generally have the type of mindset described here. The literature has revealed that it is these types of leaders who are at the pivot of educational change. Regardless of where such leaders may be in their leadership trajectory, the nature of personal capacity is such that it holds out the scope for their training and development. The task then was to weigh the theoretical constructs which emerged in the literature, against life situations to see if, and to what extent, the research would substantiate them. The approach required careful choice of the appropriate research methodology as discussed further in chapter three (3.5).



## **3 CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN**

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### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In previous chapters, I discussed the aim, context, rationale and related literature to explore the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders influences their response to challenges. In this chapter, I present the stages of the research process, the philosophical assumptions behind the research methodologies, and the research design strategy underpinning this research study. I conclude with a clarification of the issues of reliability, validity, sampling, and ethical considerations.

### **3.2 DOMAINS OF KNOWLEDGE**

Various influential authors have written on the different types of knowledge that a researcher can draw on in positioning their work. I have positioned this research using the more established works of Habermas (1971) and Ribbins and Gunter (2002a; 2002b). Among the various types of knowledge that the researcher can draw upon, Habermas (1971) provided three possible categories. These are:

Types of Interest/ Knowledge	Research Methods	Explanation
Technical	Positivistic Science, (empirical-analytic methods) Mainly quantitative data 'Knowing that.'	Emphasis on task – facts that enable strategic actions; the analytical approach to problem-solving; hence focus on experiments and replicability to produce theories, laws and models.
Practical	Interpretive research (hermeneutic methods); Mainly qualitative data 'Knowing how.'	Emphasis – consensual norms on human social interaction; the intersubjective world of communities, shared norms and values. Aim is to understand the meaning of behaviours
Emancipation	Critical social science (critical theory methods) Mainly quantitative data 'Knowing why.'	Emphasis – self-awareness; knowledge gained by reflection. Aim is to provoke action that leads to transformation.

*Table 3. A summary of the three types of cognitive interest and the critical theory (adapted from Habermas, 1971)*

This study lies in the practical knowledge typology seeing that in it I have sought to understand the behaviour of school leaders, particularly as it relates to how they cope with challenges. Secondly, the study was located within Ribbins and Gunter's (2002a) five intellectual domains in which educational knowledge is focussed:

Knowledge Domains	Seeks to	Description
Conceptual	Challenge	Challenge and extend the 'what is'; concerned with issues of ontology and epistemology and with conception clarification.
Humanistic	Theorize	Seek to gather and theorise from the experiences and biographies of those who are leaders and managers and those who are managed and led.
Critical	Emancipate	Concerned with revealing and emancipating practitioners from the injustices and oppression of the established power structures.
Evaluative	Measure	Concerned with measuring the impact of leadership and its effectiveness at micro and macro levels of interaction.
Instrumental	Strategies	Seek to provide leaders and others with effective strategies and tactics to deliver organisational and system-level goals.

*Table 4. A summary of the five knowledge domains into which school leadership may fall (adapted from Ribbins and Gunter, 2002a, p. 262)*

This research falls in the humanistic domain which seeks to “gather and theorise from experience and biographies” (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002a, p. 375), in that, to arrive at an understanding of

personal capacity, there was a significant reliance on the perceptions and experiences of the school leaders.

### **3.3 PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH**

Researchers have identified two predominant approaches to gaining knowledge in social science, namely, the normative, which is positivist in nature and the interpretive which tends to be anti-positivist (Howe, 1988; Carson *et al.*, 2001; Cohen *et al.*, 2017). I have adopted an interpretive paradigm, the central endeavour of which is to understand the subjective world of human experience, in this case, the school leaders' interpretation of their experience in dealing with challenges. The approach is phenomenological, the attempt being to unearth the underlying essence of their experience (Thorne, 2000, p. 69) as it related to their personal capacity.

There is a general understanding that ontology, epistemology and methodology are the three major dimensions of any research process (Blanche and Durrheim, 2000; Trochim, 2002; Denscombe, 2017). Ontological and epistemological situate a person's worldview (Trochim, 2002) which has a significant influence on the perceived relative importance of the aspects of reality. Ontology is described as essentially, reality (Robson, 2011; Cohen *et al.*, 2017; Carson, 2012). Epistemology is the study of knowledge construction (Robson, 2011). It involves the relationship between the researcher and reality (Carson *et al.*, 2001, p.4) and may be based on either a positivist or interpretivist ideology.

	Interpretivist/Subjective/ Relativist/Phenomenological approaches	Positivist/Objective/ Positivist approaches	Normative/Post-
<b>Ontology</b> is described as essentially, reality (Robson, 2011; Cohen <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Carson, 2012)	Reality and truth are the products of the individual perception; multiple realities shared by a group of people (Denscombe, 2017)	Holds that the world is external and that, irrespective of the thinking or outlook of the researcher, research experiences or situations have a single objective reality (Carson <i>et al.</i> , 1988, p. 5)	
<b>Epistemology</b> is the study of knowledge construction (Robson, 2011)	Knowledge is subjective and is based on experience and insight. The reasoning is inductive. Qualitative methods (Denscombe, 2017)	Knowledge is hard, real and capable of being transmitted. Starts with a theory. The reasoning is deductive. Quantitative methods (Trochim, 2002)	

Table 5. A summary of ontology and epistemology (adapted from Trochim, 2002; Denscombe, 2017; Robson, 2011; Carson, 2012).

This research will predominantly follow the interpretivist approach to understand the experience of school leaders regarding their personal capacity, that is, how they cope with challenges. The interpretivist view of epistemology would suggest that my research leads to a new construct of knowledge. However, the findings of this research will not be used for generalisation, predictions and control but interpretation, meaning and illumination (Usher and Scott, 1996, p. 18).

### 3.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Within the interpretivist paradigm, phenomenology is one of the main intellectual traditions that have been responsible for the anti-positivist position (Bryman, 2016, p. 26). Phenomenological research typically deals with people's subjective interpretation of their experiences, and as such, it sees a world of multiple realities in contrast to the positivist approach that sees only one universal reality (Denscombe, 2017, p. 140). According to Denscombe (2017, pp. 144-145), phenomenological research strategy has four main advantages:

1. Its suitability for small-scale research with the main resource being the researcher.
2. The description of experience can tell an interesting story

3. It can explore authentic accounts of complex phenomena
4. The approach uses a humanistic style

However, it has been criticised for its lack of scientific rigour, due to its reliance on the descriptive (Denscombe, 2017; Cohen *et al.*, 2017). Whereas, the criticism regarding rigour can be viewed as a bias towards quantitative research and is considered in section 3.3, the other disadvantage, that is, emphasis on the description was more difficult to reconcile. However, Denscombe (2017, pp. 145-146) further clarifies that the criticisms might not be warranted if the researcher develops and uses descriptions to support explanations. In light of this then, the phenomenological approach fulfils the purpose and positionality of this study.

### **3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

It is important to distinguish between research methodology and research methods and to be aware that the decision on which methodology to adopt usually precedes the decision on the particular method to use (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 186). Several authors have cited a measure of confusion surrounding these two concepts, and some researchers have even been criticised for employing the word methodology as “a pretentious substitute for the word method” (Shirish, 2013, p. 6). I tend to agree with Frankfurter (2007) that the confusion is not simply an indication of semi-literacy. I consider it even more crucial that “the misuse of *methodology* obscures an important conceptual distinction between the tools of scientific investigation (properly *methods*) and the principles that determine how such tools are deployed and interpreted” (Frankfurter, 2007, p. 2). In this study, I treat research methods as the techniques and processes employed while research methodology

refers to the discipline, that is, the scientific analysis and the effectiveness of the research methods used (Surbhi, 2016):

Research Methodology (examples)	Subjectivist/interpretive/qualitative	Objective/Positivist/quantitative
Experiments		✓
Survey	✓ when used in interviews	✓ when using questionnaires
Case Study	✓	
Action/Practitioner	✓	
In- depth ethnography	✓	
Biography	✓	
Evaluation	✓ begin as or both	✓ follow with or both
Biography	✓	
Test and assessment	✓	✓

Table 6. A summary of the types of research methodology (adapted from Cohen *et al.*, 2017, pp. 187-193)

I have adopted the case study as an appropriate research methodology for exploring the phenomenon of personal capacity as it has usually been associated with qualitative studies (Denscombe, 2017) in keeping with an interpretive approach (Cohen *et al.*, 2017).

The case study has the advantage of reporting, in detail, the unique perceptions and concerns of individuals, which would be lost in quantitative or experimental strategies (Tellis, 1997). It is best used in situations where it is very difficult to separate a phenomenon from its context (Yin, 2003, p. 4). According to Merriam (1998, p. 29) case studies can be characterised as particularistic, descriptive and heuristic. She explains that particularistic refers to a singular focus, for example, on a situation or phenomenon, thus making case study suited to researching issues relating to everyday practices. Descriptive refers to the richness and extensive details relating to the phenomenon over a period (Merriam, 1998, p. 30). Heuristic refers to illumination of a

phenomenon which can result in a new meaning. Hence, it can be used to “evaluate, summarize [*sic*], and conclude, thus increasing its potential for applicability” (Merriam, 1998, p. 31).

The case study has its limitations as it has been criticised for, first, being unrepresentative and lacking in statistical generalisability (Cornford and Smithson, 1996, p. 72; Denscombe, 2017, p. 63). However, researchers have argued that case studies are generalisable in that, like “single experiments [which] can be extended by replication and multiple experiments, so too can case studies can be part of a growing pool of data with multiple case studies contributing to greater generalization [*sic*]” (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 380). In instances such as these case studies can be used for analytical rather than statistical generalisations, that is, “to expand and generalise theories and not to enumerate frequencies” (Yin, 2009, p. 15). Furthermore, despite this criticism, the case study can be appreciated for its ability to capture the complexity of the reality that the researcher is studying (Denscombe, 2017; Cohen *et al.*, 2017; Thomas, 2011).

Secondly, the data collection can be unstructured (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 383) but this is not to say there is entirely no structure. For instance, unstructured or in-depth interviews often “involve a broad agenda” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 111) which can be focussed through applying effective questioning and interview techniques (Cohen *et al.* 2017, p. 389). With these considerations, I have opted to use two data collection methods, as discussed in 3.4.1 and 3.4.2. These were self-completed questionnaires and face-to-face interviews, as these provided “thick descriptions” which, according to Cohen *et al.* (2017, p. 289), represented the complexity of the school leaders’ experience. The term ‘thick description’ has been widely used and accepted in qualitative research but a measure of confusion surrounding its meaning has been noted (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 539). It is not necessary to enter here into a discussion regarding the origin

of the term though it can be noted that Geertz (1973, p. 6), who has been cited by various researchers in relation to the term, admitted that he had borrowed it from British philosopher Gilbert Ryle. Succinctly stated by Bryman (2016, p. 384), 'thick descriptions' are "rich accounts of the details of a culture" though he expanded on this in the glossary. He described it there as "a term devised ... to refer to detailed accounts of a social setting that can form the basis for the creation of general statements about a culture and its significance in people's social lives" (Bryman, 2012, p. 697).

Ponterotto (2006) explored the origin, evolution and meaning of the concept, 'thick description', and produced a rather helpful working definition. He concluded that "thick description refers to the researcher's task of both describing and interpreting observed social action within its particular context" (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 543). He further explained that 'thick description' not only accurately describes the actions observed but enables an interpretation of those actions by assigning purpose and intentionality to them. This is made possible by the fact that the researcher understands and clearly describes the context in which the actions took place. Thoughts, feelings and the complexity of relationships among the participants are captured. Denscombe (2014, p. 86) provided an apt illustration that shows how Ponterotto's definition above is to be understood and can be applied. He argued that simply describing one's wink of the eye does not amount to a thick description. A thick description goes further and supplies information on the intentions behind the wink, which enables us to determine whether the wink was meant to be a friendly gesture, flirting or conspiracy. Ponterotto's (2006) definition is thus quite useful for the purposes of this study.



A third criticism is that case study is prone to problems associated with researcher bias which “can be addressed by the use of reflexivity, respondent checks or checks by external reviewers of the data” (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 382). In reflexivity the researcher acknowledges and discloses his or her position in the research, thereby enabling the readership to arrive at an evaluation of the likely impact “of the researcher’s ‘self’ on the research” (Denscombe, 2017, p. 90).

### **3.6 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research methods, also referred to as “instruments employed for data collection” (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 285), include interviews, questionnaires, group discussions, diaries, personal logs and document analysis, observations and tests. These methods can be used for qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method research (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). This study adopted a mixed method approach to data collection. The use of a combination of data sources not only enabled triangulation but compensated for the weakness in individual sources (Denscombe, 2017, p. 63), increased the rigour (Yin, 2003) and validity (Denscombe, 2017). It also “provided “thick description” (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 289).

I created the research timeline (Figure 4) within the context of my demanding and time-consuming role as a senior leader in a large inner-city school. The generous time allocation for data collection was in anticipation of the difficulty of interviewing headteachers during the school term time.

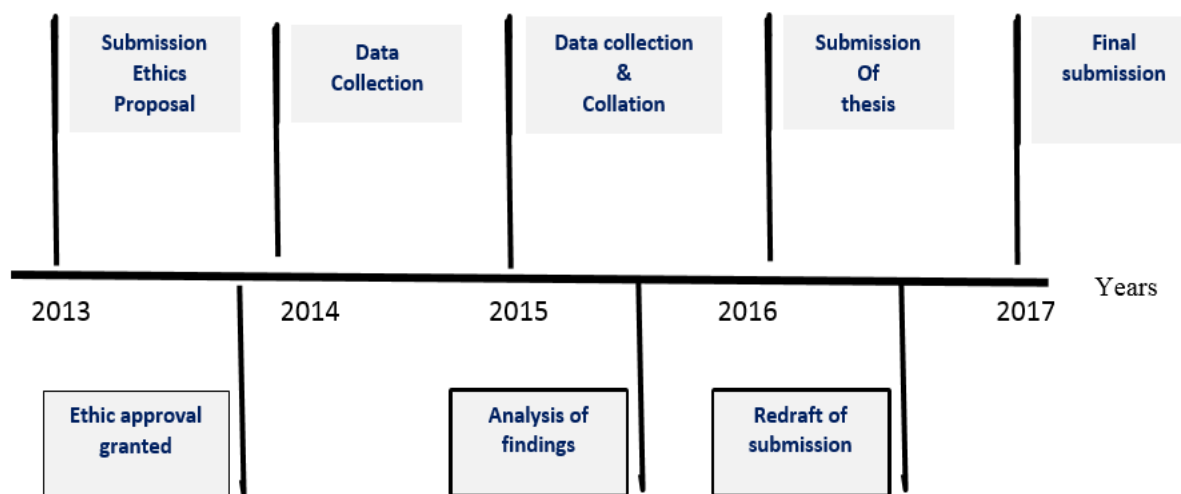


Figure 4. Timeline of the research project

In this mixed method study “methodology ‘follows from’ the purposes and questions in the research rather than vice versa ... different kinds of mixed methods research designs follow from different kinds of research purposes” (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 676). The relationship between the research questions and the research design illustrated in (Figure 5).

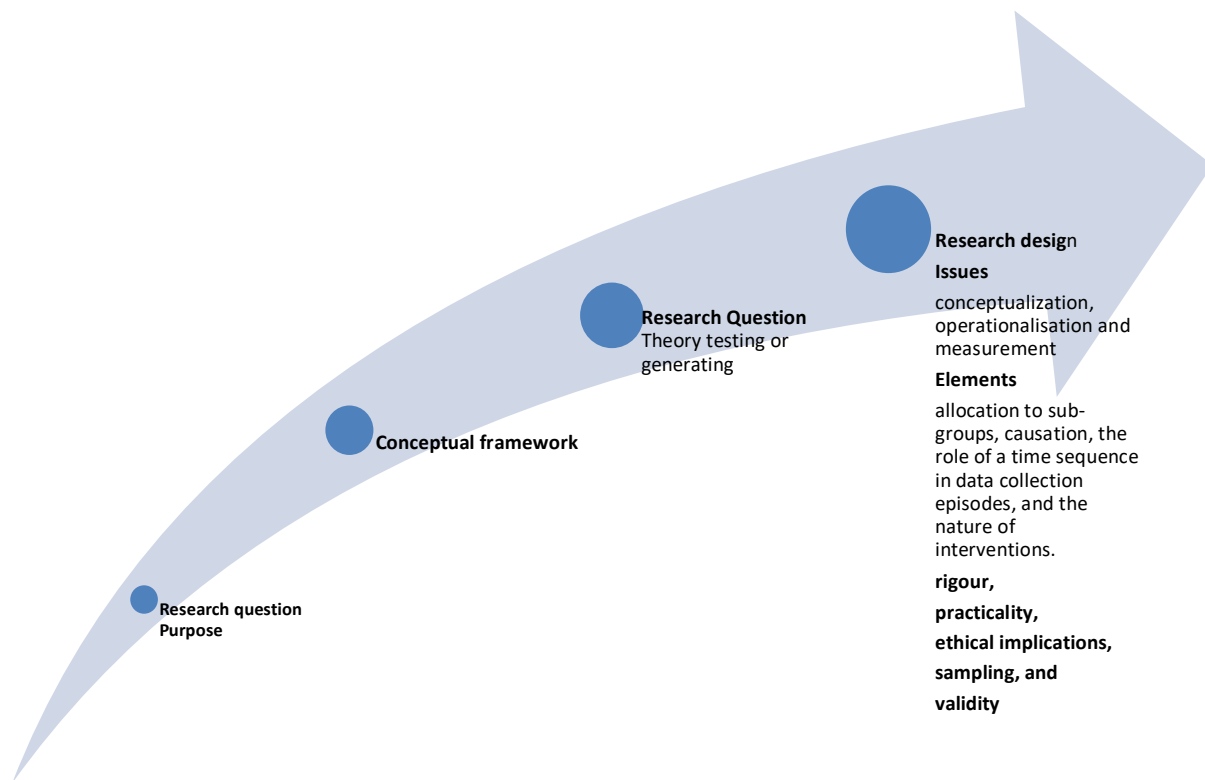


Figure 5. A schematic presentation of the overview of the link between the research question and research design (adapted from Research and Design module, Assignment #3 (Linton, 2013)).

The questions used in both the questionnaires and the interviews were pre-tested by conducting a pilot (Appendix 1) to “increase the reliability, validity and practicability of the questionnaire” (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 496). As a result, an ambiguity between the use of the words ‘changes’ and ‘initiatives’ was identified. The ambiguity necessitated a rewriting of two questions. No other omissions, redundant or irrelevant questions were identified. However, the forty-five minutes allocated for the interview were found to be insufficient. Transferring aspects of question one to the questionnaire resolved this.

### 3.6.1 Method One: Self-Completion Questionnaires

The first method of data collection was a self-completion questionnaire. Each participant completed a questionnaire which consisted of three sections (Appendix 2). Section one aimed to collect demographic data; section two and three were Likert-type scales, comprising questions on leadership competencies and the components of personal capacity respectively.

The self-completion questionnaire generated data that formed two central categories: facts and opinions (Denscombe, 2017). The facts were the background information on each interviewee, such as age, gender, school type, school size, and the leadership style of their senior leadership team. The opinions were of their leadership competencies and the importance of the components of personal capacity to headship. The data generated by the questionnaires were both quantitative and qualitative, an example of the former being the percentage of the components of personal capacity that could be analysed. Their description of personal capacity served as an example of the latter.

The questionnaire is valued for its tendency to be reliable and, due to its anonymity, to encourage honesty, though it may be difficult to discover dishonesty and falsification (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 279). Another is that the results obtained can be quickly and easily quantified through the use of software packages and used to compare and contrast with the findings from the interview. This method is not without its disadvantages, but I compensated for these by using the second method described next.

### 3.6.2 Method Two: Semi-Structured Interviews

The second data collection method used in this study was semi-structured interviews. The face-to-face interviews were used to obtain in-depth, reliable primary data (Appendix 3) to elicit further information from the respondents. I condensed the data from the interviews in the following ways:

- a. The interviews were recorded electronically using an audio memo programme on a fourth-generation iPad.
- b. All recordings were then transcribed<sup>1</sup> and stored electronically and as a hard copy (Appendix 4).
- c. Key emerging themes were confirmed at the end of each interview by using an interview summary sheet (Appendix 5).
- d. The transcripts were then broken down into researcher-generated codes, predetermined by the research questions (Appendix 6).
- e. Additional codes were developed from themes emerging from the interview, which were in line with the research focus.
- f. Leximancer content analysis software was used to identify the interconnectivity between themes (Appendix 7).

In keeping with Creswell and Poth (2018) and Miles and Huberman's (1994) recommendations, I have used both researcher-generated codes and a context summary sheet to capture emerging themes. Without being engrossed with the predetermined codes, the effort was made to ensure

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<sup>1</sup> Transcription service provided by the School of Education, University of Birmingham

that unpredicted data were not ignored as these were vital in developing themes. The use of the context summary sheet yielded a more accurate response, as the interviewees had the opportunity to immediately correct misrepresentations and add any crucial information that they may have omitted. Notably, all respondents requested a copy of the final thesis and, except HT12, displayed no interest in their transcripts.

Drawing upon insights from Cohen *et al.* (2017), the information gathered was used to measure respondents' knowledge of personal capacity and explore their values and beliefs as school leaders. Also, the information was used to identify the relationship between their personal capacity and their ability to cope with challenges in the educational arena and to probe deeper into their motivations to either remain in or move on to headship. Respondents had the opportunity to freely elaborate or provide more relevant information during the interview, as recorded in the transcript (Appendix 4). As noted from the audio recordings of the interviews, responses were sometimes inarticulate and incoherent (Cohen *et al.* 2017) observations. Where this is the case, I have attempted to provide clarification through the use of square brackets (Denscombe, 2017).

### **3.6.3 Sampling**

To ensure that the senior leaders to be studied were a representative cross-section of the leadership landscape, stratified purposive sampling was used. 'Purposive' refers to the fact that the senior leaders were hand-picked or chosen non-probabilistically (Bryman, 2016, p. 408). Although Thomas (2011, p. 62) criticised the term 'non-probabilistically', it is used freely throughout the related literature. Cohen *et al.* (2017), for example, point out that purposive, non-

probabilistic sampling is characteristic of qualitative research, though not exclusively so. The stratified sample of school leaders from different levels of leadership ranged from assistant headteachers to executive headteachers and from different types of schools, including primary, secondary, state and private independent. The school leaders in the sample represented a cross-section of age, gender, and ethnic groups. Their anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by assigning codes to the names and omitting any information that could identify their institution and locations.

The selection criteria were whether the individual(s):-

- was or had been in a senior leadership role;
- was or had been a headteacher;
- had or previously had, line management responsibility;
- was or had been responsible for aspects of operational or strategic change;
- was serving or had served in a primary or secondary school;
- represented a cross-section of gender, age, and ethnic groups.

Initially, eleven senior leaders were asked to be participants in this research via emails, which snowballed into the final nineteen. They were then invited to be interviewed and were asked to complete the questionnaire before the interview. I did not show the actual links between specific respondents, institutions and job titles to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Instead, respondents were assigned codes, namely, HT1 to HT19 (4.2).

#### **3.6.4 Coding**

Several authors regard coding as an important part of the research process in that it facilitates the researcher in analysing and interpreting data (Bryman, 2016, p. 574; Cohen, *et al.* 2017, p.

668-669; Denscombe, 2017, p. 116). It generally functions as a shorthand device that can be used to label data, to separate them from each other and to compile and arrange them in some systematic order (Bryman, 2016, p. 574). These can take the form of words or concise phrases that the researcher generates, in which each “symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data ... [and which] can range in magnitude from a single word to ... a stream of moving images” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). A specific meaning is assigned to each bit of data so that patterns in it can be detected, it can be put into categories and other appropriate analytic processes. In this particular research, examples include such words as work-life balance, coping and accountability.

Coding can also be seen as “the process of disassembling and reassembling the data” (Cohen, *et al.*, 2017, p. 718). In disassembling, data are separated into lines, paragraphs or sections then reorganised through coding. The coding gives new insight that enables similarities and differences across various cases to be explored. Some amount of confusion can be expected at the outset as there is an accumulation data that may seem to have no relationship to each other. There is the prospect, however, that as coding continues and themes gradually emerge, they should yield more organised and structured analysis. I have found Saldaña’s (2016) work to be quite valuable in helping me to maintain the discipline required to sort and compare different components parts, categories and subcategories during the process. These were then coded (Appendix 6).

Another consideration in coding, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), is whether the researcher should:



- a. develop codes only on the basis of the emerging information collected from participants
- b. use predetermined codes and then fit the data to them
- c. use some combination of predetermined and emerging codes (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 278).

Saldaña (2016, p. 4) shares the view that coding is the “critical link between data collection and their explanation of meaning.” Certain steps are considered essential in coding data collected via interviews (Gorden, 1998, p. 180). The first three are outlined as follows:

1. Define the coding categories – Develop and define a tentative set of coding categories.

In this research, the categories defined were based on the components of personal capacity. These were adapted from the personal competencies of the school leaders (Allen, 2011).

2. Assign category symbols, that is, code labels to the categories – The researcher gives an abstract symbol to each category which could be an abbreviation, a number, a letter or anything convenient for summarising and eventually retrieving information. Thus, the coding schema I used were abbreviations such as MP (moral purpose), CON (confidence in their ability to lead), IDE (identity and empowerment) and GM (growth mindset and networking).

3. Classify relevant information into the categories – this can be done in three ways, namely:

- a. The transcript could be cut up with scissors, and the relevant words, phrases, or sentences put into little boxes labelled with the appropriate category symbols. However, it has severe limitations regarding practicality, time and the difficulty of calculating the reliability score.

- b. Highlight each fragment of relevant information in the transcript and label each with the category symbol. This method has the advantage of not cutting up the transcripts, and so it is preserved in its original state. There are notably serious disadvantages, for example, it does not allow the results of the whole analysis to be seen at a glance or to compare the contents of the various interviews. However, it was possible to overcome this by using an electronic word document and so I adopted this method.
- c. The third method uses a series of individual codes and a unique identification number or address. These are easily compiled in a table for quicker referencing.

Gorden (1998) proceeded to describe the other steps, namely, testing the reliability of the coding, measuring the reliability of the coding and locating the sources of unreliability in the coding. I have employed the use of Leximancer which incorporates these steps and enabled the analysis of the transcript data. Leximancer is an electronic software that is useful in analysing the content of large quantities of text-based data (e.g. qualitative data from surveys, interviews and related transcripts). The extracted information is visually displayed in a browser by means of a concept map which provides an overview of the material and represents the main concepts contained within the text and how they are related (Leximancer, 2011).

An automatic content analysis was done, creating a series of concept clusters with varied representations including concept diagrams and tables that illustrated each concept's rank, frequency and relationship to other concepts within the transcripts (Appendix 7). These diagrams

show the interconnectivity between the research questions and their overlapping concepts, and the relative frequencies and their prevalence:

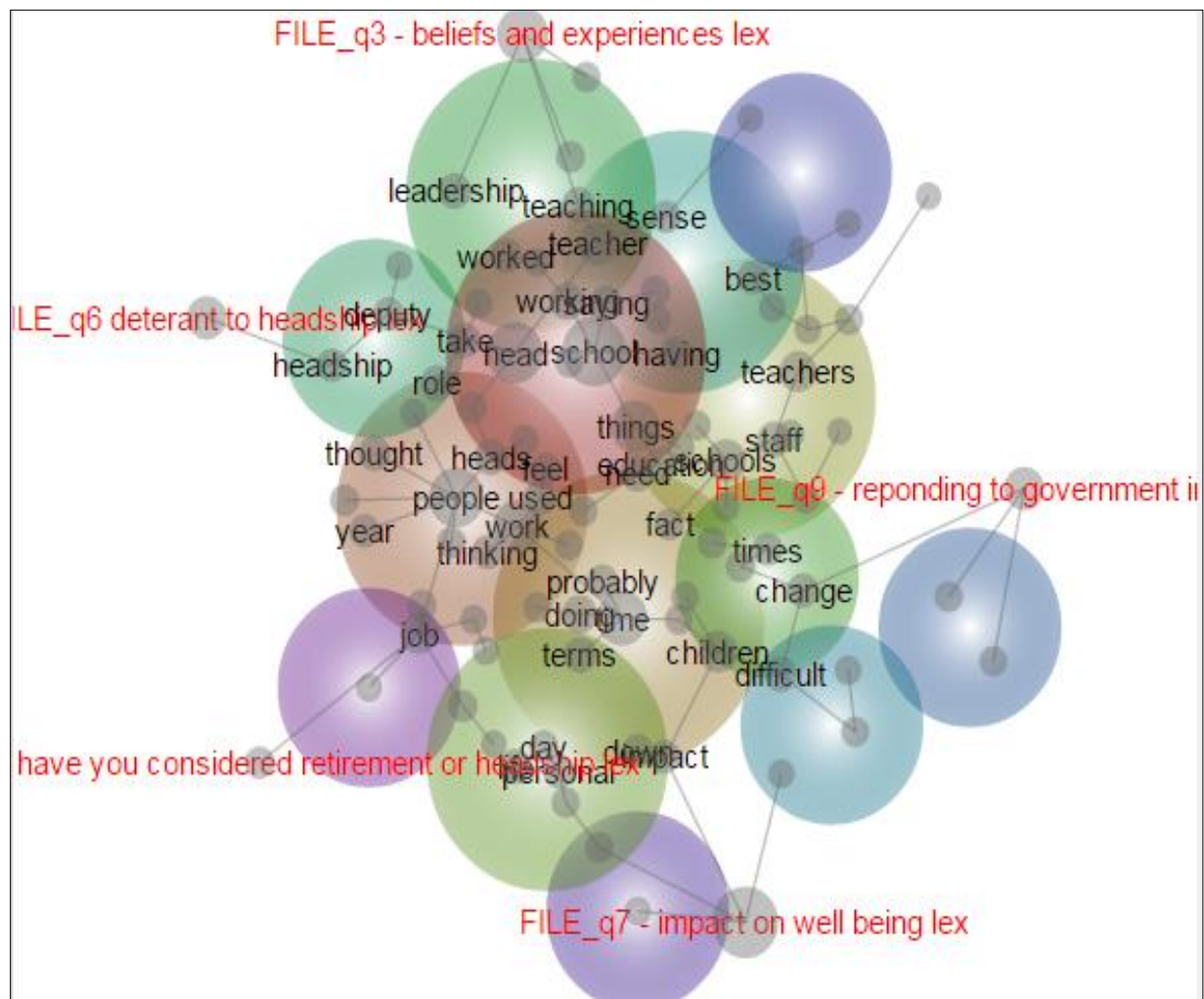


Figure 6a Leximancer concept map: showing relative frequencies of concepts

As shown most of the response indicated that the respondents were equally, reflecting on:

- Deterrent to headship by deputies – significance linked to headship, role - which lead to working the size of the circle indicated the impact
- Beliefs and experiences - great significance linked to leadership, teachers, and work
- Consideration of retirement – significance linked to people- thoughts and feeling, further linked to the concept of time
- Impact on well-being – significance linked to personal

- Responding to government changes – significance linked to time, difficult, change

The Leximancer diagram also illustrated the link of one singular concept to all the others. As, seen the responses to government initiative shows significance to leadership, thinking, probably in addition to the expected such as teaching, school, staff, children:

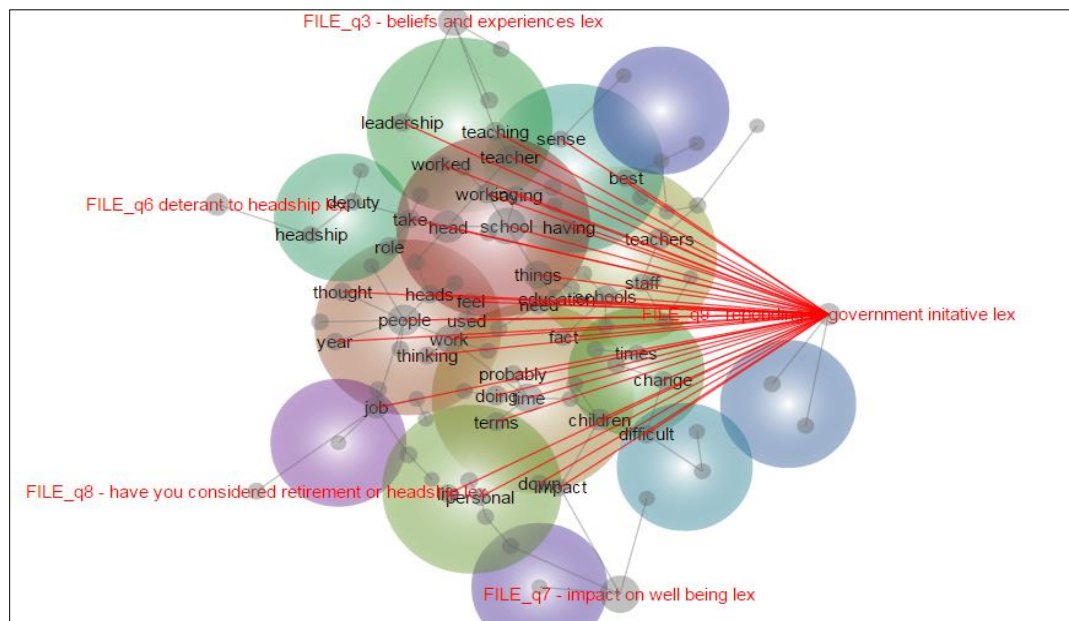


Figure 6b Leximancer concept map: showing links between a singular concept and others

### 3.6.5 Positionality

The issue of positionality is regarded as one of a number of factors inherent in the research process that is important enough to demand critical attention in ethical research (Sultana, 2007, p. 382; Holmes, 2014). Positionality has been described as the worldview of individuals in a particular research task as well as the position in the research that each individual chooses to adopt (Holmes, 2014). It involves relationships between the individuals in the research, that is, the researcher and the participants and is used to both describe and delineate them (Coghlan

and Brydon-Miller, 2014; Cohen *et al.*, 2017). The researcher's positionality is located in relation to the subject, the participants and the research context or process. This, according to Holmes (2014) can be culturally fixed or subjective and contextual, the former including such factors as gender, race and nationality and the latter referring to factors such as personal life history and experiences. The fixed factors, it is acknowledged, can, though not necessarily, predispose an individual toward a particular point of view or perspective (Holmes, 2014). In reflecting on the role of positionality in the research process, Bourke (2016, p. 1) argued that

the identities of both researcher and participants have the potential to impact the research process. Identities come into play via our perceptions, not only of others, but of the ways in which we expect others will perceive us. Our own biases shape the research process, serving as checkpoints along the way.

There is also the acknowledgement that the idea of positionality includes people with multiple overlapping identities. Bourke (2016, p. 2) considered it quite reasonable that the research process would be affected by the socio-cultural context of the researcher. As a white man studying the engagement of students of colour on a predominantly white higher education institution, he was aware that not only could his own biases influence the responses of the participants and his own observations and interpretations, but also the very nature of the study he was embarking on. Morse, *et al.* (2002) suggested that it would be a failure to not recognise the role of the researcher in the construction of narrative and text. This suggests that the researcher has an obligation to document their role in the study. Galdas (2017) advocated the need for reflexive researchers in qualitative research who are able to acknowledge the impact of their own experiences, preconceptions, relationship dynamics, and analytic focus upon the research with which they are engaged. Consequently, it is important to acknowledge my position in this study.

## **My position in this study**

I have worked in various school leadership roles in secondary schools, including that of Advanced Skills Teacher (AST), assistant headteacher and director of school specialism. I have also engaged with several educational leadership training and development programmes such as NPQH, London Getting Ahead, Challenge Partner-reviewer and the Black and other Minority Ethnic (BME) Ofsted inspection shadowing programme. As such this thesis is written by me as a researcher with a genuine interest in school improvement and school leadership.

My decision to focus on the personal capacity of school leaders, however, came about during the second year on the EdD programme, when I was faced with the need to switch from my initially intended research topic and find a new one. My previous research proposal was, 'Black female headteacher - double jeopardy in the UK'. It was necessary to make the switch as no supervisor affiliated with the EdD programme could be found at that time with the relevant background in Critical Race Theory (CRT) or intersectionality or "Double consciousness" and gender. The capacity to cope was a theme running through the reviewed literature on black women in leadership. As part of the reading for the course, I had become familiar with the review of the school leadership landscape in England carried out by Earley *et al.* (2012), as well as work done by Alma Harris on school leadership and school improvement. Against this backdrop was the turmoil in education which resulted from the reforms being introduced by Michael Gove as the then Education Secretary and the aftermath of the unprecedented changes mentioned previously in Chapter One. These all contributed to my decision to focus specifically on the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders influences their response to the challenges that occur in the changing educational landscape.

My position as an insider in this study has advantages. It has ideally situated me to observe and research the impact of these changes within schools. This position also raises issues of validity (see 3.6.5) and highlights the need to minimise researcher bias, to maintain an open mind, to guard against misinterpreting data and neglecting data that does seem to fit into the analysis (Cohen *et al*, 2017). As Polit and Beck (2014) pointed out, the researcher is influential in all aspects of the research process and this can result in a bias which can distort the findings. I am cognisant of the potential influence of my multiple identities, that is, being black, female, school leader, practitioner, researcher and aspiring headteacher in this study. Being mindful of this I have used a number of techniques to minimise their impact, for example, pilot testing, audio recording of interviews, having them professionally transcribed, and using a mixed methods approach to data collection.

In summary, therefore, as the researcher I have acknowledged the assumptions and underlying value-judgements I brought to this study as well as the potential bias on the research process. I intentionally reviewed the way in which I was conducting the research. The process of collecting data to afford an understanding of the personal capacity of school leaders was being shaped, not only by the narratives of the nineteen interviewees' experiences, but also by my own socio-cultural subjectivities and my position in the educational system.

### **3.6.6 Validity**

The validity of the study must be given significant consideration as without it the research is deemed to be worthless (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 249). The basic expectation is that the study does what it claims to do, that is, exhibits honesty, truthfulness, accuracy and precision (Brink, 1993;

Denscombe, 2017; Cohen *et al.*, 2017). Validity concerns both internal influences, that is, whether the findings are due solely to the independent variable, and external validity, whether the findings are generalisable (Denscombe, 2017; Cohen *et al.*, 2017). Four main sources of bias or threats to the validity and reliability of qualitative research were identified: the researcher, the participants, the environment or social context, and the methods of data collection and analysis Brink (1993, p. 35). These are discussed in the next section and 3.4.6.

The researcher's values, biases and worldviews serve as lenses through which we interpret the world (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 301). It is further suggested, therefore, that the "researcher's identity, values and beliefs become part of the equation – a built-in component that cannot be eliminated as an influence on the ... findings of the project, therefore, a certain degree of introspection on the part of the researcher is needed" (Denscombe, 2017, p. 90). Since it seems impossible to avoid the researcher's influence, the challenge, I believe, is not to endeavour to eliminate the researcher's influence but, as Cohen *et al.* (2017, p. 302) advocated, "[researchers] should hold themselves up to the light." In doing so, they should closely and continually monitor their interaction with participants, being mindful of other potential influences on the study including their reactions, roles, and biases.

It was imperative, for the authenticity and validity of the research that I examine my positionality, as a black female researcher, serving as a senior school leader and contemplating headship. I was cognisant that my position as a researcher studying the personal capacity of 'powerful' people, in this case, headteachers, could pose the problem of sensitivity and openness in researching up (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 237). However, my experience was one of open discourse with female



headteachers, “the sisterhood” (Landman, 2006, p. 432) and also with the male headteachers who, according to Cohen *et al.* (2017, p. 239) would be “more open with female than with male researchers.”

To reduce bias that was introduced through the respondents’ answers to the questionnaires and interviews (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 517), the nature and purpose of the study were explained, and respondents had the opportunity to ask for further clarification. Respondents were assured that their anonymity and confidentiality (Denscombe, 2017, p. 213) would be maintained by assigning codes to the names and that any information that could identify them, their institution and locations, would be omitted. This encouraged respondents to participate in the interview more freely and answer questions more truthfully.

Finally, the physical, social and interpersonal environment in which interviews occur may affect the responses that are given (Brink, 1993; Denscombe, 2017). Respondents spoke freely and honestly during their face-to-face interviews. Each respondent was also given the opportunity to determine the location and timing of their interview, with chosen environments ranging from the respondents’ schools (after hours) to coffee shops and their homes.

### **3.6.7 Triangulation**

“Triangulation involves the practice of viewing things from more than one perspective” (Denscombe, 2017, p. 167). Triangulation makes it possible to validate the accuracy and authenticity of the findings. The research findings were therefore triangulated or cross-checked

against the related literature reviewed of personal capacity and the responses from the questionnaire and interviews.

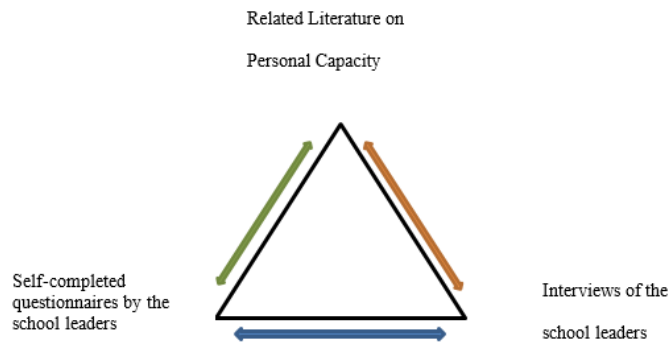


Figure 7. An illustration of the triangulation of the multi-method approach used for data collected.

As Creswell and Poth (2018) indicated, the data from multiple participants can be compared to see how well they corroborate and insisted that “unquestionably, the backbone of qualitative research is an extensive collection of data, typically from multiple sources of information” (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 260). Other authors (Blaikie (1991; Yin, 2003; Cox and Hassard, 2005) concur that triangulation is the agreement, convergence, and measure of the corroboration of data from multiple methods. This triangulation process was also extended to the research questions.

Research Questions	Literature Review	Self-completion questionnaire	Face-to-face Interviews
What constitutes the personal capacity of educational leaders?	✓	✓	✓
To what extent is the personal capacity of educational leaders a factor in their ability to effectively cope with challenges?	✓		✓
What role does personal capacity play in the career trajectory of school leaders?	✓	✓	✓

Table 7. Link between each research question and the triangulation of the different but complementary research.

The views of the school leaders in the interviews were triangulated with their responses on the questionnaires, and therefore the outcome was based on various perspectives.

### 3.6.8 Reliability

Whereas the validity of the case study had many sceptics, there is less opposition to its reliability or dependability (Denscombe, 2017, p. 327), that is, to whether their results are repeatable (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). Yin (2009, p. 45) has advocated documentation of procedures followed in the study to enable repetition. Denscombe (2017) suggested the use of audio and video recording to improve reliability, as the transcripts could then be produced repeatedly without subjectivity or bias (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). In using a fourth-generation iPad, I was able to both record and electronically store the transcripts which were subsequently stored as a hard copy.

## 3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is a growing prevalence of literature related to ethical concerns in research, coupled with the appearance of regulatory codes of research practice formulated by various agencies and professional bodies. These have been interpreted as reflections of an increased awareness that researchers are faced with some ethical dilemmas (Cohen *et al.*, 2017).

Educational research, in particular, is usually beset with a diversity of ethical issues which can be very problematic. It is especially true if it is an 'insider research' involving the researcher's institution where sensibilities are not uncommon and the impact of the research on professional relationships potentially conflicting (Cohen *et al.*, 2017). Despite such diversity, there are underlying principles summarised in the European Union Code of Ethics for Socio-Economic Research, such as voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity (Dench *et al.*, 2004). Gilbert (2008, p. 146) had been keen to advise that "ethical considerations impinge particularly sharply upon research in the human sciences." Bryman

(2016, p. 121) emphasised that ignoring these guidelines run the risk of compromising the integrity of a piece of research.

Similarly, the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011, pp. 3-4), though not to be regarded as “rules and regulations ... do represent the tenets of the best ethical practice.” BERA stipulates that researchers should conduct all educational research within an ethic of respect for the person and their knowledge, democratic values, quality of educational research and academic freedom. I sought to adhere to these guidelines, especially Section 10, that relates specifically to gaining informed consent. Each participant received a consent form (Appendix 9). The participants got a letter (Appendix 8) outlining the purpose of the research, guaranteeing confidentiality and advising them that they could choose to opt out at any time if they wanted to. Other assurances were given to eliminate or at best minimise the participants’ apprehension (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The researcher maintains the participants’ privacy, confidentiality, dignity, rights and anonymity at every stage of the study (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Denscombe, 2017).

Anonymity and confidentiality are regarded as key considerations in ethical research and even though a distinction is to be made between them, they usually appear as closely related concepts throughout the research literature (Wiles, 2012, p. 41). This approach has been adopted in this study. According to Cohen *et al.* (2011, p. 91), “the essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity.” This would apply to both the researcher and others. Thus, as the authors maintain, while in the case of questionnaires bearing absolutely no identifying marks, a respondent can be assured “complete and total anonymity”,

this could not be so in face-to-face interviews. The most they could be promised is confidentiality. The promise of confidentiality is the promise the researcher makes of “not disclosing information from a participant in any way that might identify that individual or that might enable the individual to be traced ... they will in no way make the connection known publicly” (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p. 92). This would be so even though the respondents themselves would not be anonymous to the participants.

The question has been raised, as to whether the data can be truly confidential if it is to be used in the research (Cohen *et al.* 2011, p. 93). Although the authors intimated that it is anonymity, rather than confidentiality, that should be addressed, they nevertheless pointed to yet an alternative suggestion, namely, that perhaps “the *scope* of confidentiality (its boundaries) should be clarified rather than a guarantee given of absolute confidentiality.” As Oliver (2010, p. 10) had argued, “Participants should be fully informed about all relevant aspects of the research, before they agree to take part... the scope of the confidentiality of the data provided, and of the anonymity of the respondents... should be clarified with the participants. Wiles (2012) explains:

In the research context, confidentiality is taken to mean that identifiable information about individuals collected during the process of research will not be disclosed and that the identity of research participants will be protected through various processes designed to anonymise them, unless they specifically choose to be identified (Wiles, 2012, p. 42).

With the foregoing considerations, therefore, the context of research within which the terms anonymity and confidentiality are used, is significant. Furthermore, while they should not be seen as identical concepts that are to be used interchangeably, neither do they need to be treated as being mutually exclusive to each other. Where at the outset the necessary discussions are had,

and clarifications are made, both anonymity and confidentiality, key considerations in ethical research, can be achieved.

Finally, in keeping with the need to adhere to professional ethics about educational research, I sought and was granted prior approval (Appendix 10) from the Ethical Review Committee of the University of Birmingham, which was consistent with the advice that:

...researchers should identify a code of ethics that represents their academic discipline or professional association. This code should be used about the research and, importantly, should be explicitly referred to in any account of the methods used in the research (Denscombe, 2017, p. 340).

### **3.8 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH DESIGN**

As the researcher, I have outlined the philosophical assumptions that guided this research and provided a rationale for the framework in which it was positioned. An attempt was made to justify the choice of methodology and methods and to establish my ontological and epistemological positions. Limitations inherent in the methodology as well as in the research tools used were taken into consideration. Issues of validity and reliability were also addressed. Finally, I have been mindful of ethical concerns and have given a succinct description of the overview of the issues involved.

## **4 CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

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### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, I present the findings of my research with the objective of exploring the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders features in their responses to the challenges that occur in the educational arena. I previously discussed the prevailing literature; the aim and context of the thesis framed by the three research questions and established my philosophical position within the ontological and epistemological positions. Against this background, I justified my choice of methodology and the chosen methods employed in collecting data relating to the research.

The categorisation of the findings from the responses to both the interviews and questionnaires by the school leaders is framed around emerging themes in the literature. These are then presented under subheadings reflecting commonalities within the data and additional findings relating to personal capacity and the challenges faced in the sphere of education. Finally, the responses are summarised and discussed under key findings for each research question. As there was no requirement to adhere to a common practice of separating the findings and discussion into two chapters, they are organised into a single chapter. The findings from the primary data collected from the questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews are presented and discussed, comparing and contrasting them with relevant secondary data. The primary data from the interviews were mainly represented as direct quotations and in most cases using indented block quotes where they extended to four or more lines.

The findings presented relate to personal capacity, specifically, as distinct from other possible factors that impact on or influence the headteachers' effectiveness. The rationale for focusing on personal capacity was explained in Chapter One. This re-emphasised focus resulted from reflecting on my personal experience as well as the experience of headteachers confronted with the challenges arising from reforms being introduced by the then Education Secretary. The negative and in some cases, fatal impact of these challenges on their social, mental and physical well-being made the prospect of becoming a headteacher appear rather daunting. Coupled with these concerns were predictions of an impending crisis of headteacher shortage and a reduction in the leadership pool as senior and middle leaders seemed to have been becoming increasingly disenchanted with headship. Although variations in the structure of leadership were pertinent considerations when deliberating on the responses of school leadership to the challenges, my concern was with the individual. I was aware of leadership recruitment and retention issues in both primary and secondary schools with differing leadership models, as, for example, the growing trend towards the distributed leadership model. I was not convinced however, that the structure by itself was a guarantee against the exasperation and disillusionment with which headteachers were struggling or that were causing middle and senior leaders to be shying away from headship. This assessment has been reinforced by Earley *et al.* (2012, p. 69) who, upon reviewing various leadership models underscored the need to, nevertheless, "develop the ability of [school leaders] to cope with uncertainty and change in a shifting climate."

An independent report (Smithers and Robinson, 2007) published by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) highlighted the fact that both primary and secondary headteachers were reeling in frustration over the pressures, ranging from increased bureaucracy to lack of work-life balance, that resulted from the reforms. A key question that surfaced was whether the job of



headteacher had become too big for one person (Smithers and Robinson, 2007, p. 32). The question was not unfounded, however, as Lane (2007) who had been studying the changes in education globally, had pointed to a relationship between the ability of educators to cope with the rapid changes and the chances of success in their roles. At the same time, I had to contend with the realisation that amidst these negative experiences and reports, there were headteachers who were actually thriving and being effective in their roles. I felt personally compelled to determine why it was so. What was there about these headteachers that enabled them to cope effectively? One factor that warranted attention was the concept of capacity, to be specific, the individual's capacity as discussed by Stamp (1980). She argued that there was a relationship between one's capability, which she described as personal capacity, and the level of work to be done. The concern, therefore, was whether or not school leaders and aspiring headteachers had the wherewithal, that is, the personal capacity to match these challenges that seemed to be unavoidable in the role of headteacher.

It is worthwhile noting that Cohen *et al.* (2017, p. 661) identified at least ten ways to present the research findings. These are by: groups, individuals, issues or themes, research questions, instruments such as questionnaires, case studies, narrative accounts, events, time sequence and time frame and finally, theoretical perspectives. It is understood that these are not all mutually exclusive and that they may be combined to enable the research question to be better answered. While it is not necessary to discuss all ten methods, it is important to recognise that each does have its merit. I opted for the fourth method, namely, research questions, as in contrast to the others, it "enables patterns, relationships, comparisons and qualifications across data types to be explored conveniently and clearly" (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 662). At the same time, I combined

this with the third method, that is, issues or themes. Here the data is framed around emergent themes in the literature although there was a risk that this “pre-ordinate” determination of the framework could render “the analysis unresponsive to additional relevant factors that could emerge *responsively* in the data” (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 662). To minimise this risk, however, I have ensured that although the research questions drove the data analysis, there was scope to include other important issues that emerged (Cohen *et al.*, 2017, p. 662).

## **4.2 PROFILES OF THE RESPONDENTS**

As discussed in chapter three (3.6.3), it was necessary that the senior leaders in the study constitute a representative cross-section of the senior leadership landscape. In keeping with the purpose of the study, each of the nineteen senior leaders, inclusive of headteachers, both retiring and serving, and deputies were hand-picked. According to Cohen *et al.* (2017), this is a feature of qualitative research, though not exclusively so. Table 8 summarises key features of their profiles, including typical demographic information such as age, gender and ethnicity. Here, and throughout the chapter, individual respondents will be referred to as headteacher 1-19 (HT1-19).

HT	Role	Age	Gender/ Ethnicity	NPQH	Type of school /size	Leadership team structure	OFSTED	Year in role/ promotion since interview
1	HT	Early 40s	M/WB	Yes	Secondary Academy (1200 +) (Single-sex (boys))	Co-headship HTs, DHTs, AHTs and directors	Outsta nding	1st headship 3 year as a headteacher . Progression in the same school
2	RHT	Late 60s	M/BB	No	Secondary Faith (Less 1000)	Distributive 1 HT and 1 DHT	Outsta nding	20+ years as headteacher, currently a consultant and author
3	HT	Early 40s	M/BB	Yes	Secondary (1000+)	Distributive 1 HT, 2 DHTs plus AHTs	Outsta nding	1 <sup>st</sup> headship More than 7 yrs experience as headteacher
4	HT	Early 40s	F/WB	Yes	Secondary Academy (1000+)	Distributive 1 HT, 2 DHTs plus AHTs	Outsta nding	2 <sup>nd</sup> headship (2+ years) More than 7 yrs experience as headteacher
5	RHT	Early 60s	F/BB	Yes	Secondary Faith (Less than 1000)	Distributive 1 HT, 1 DHT plus 3 AHTs	Requir es Improv ement	1 headship role 3 year as a headteacher writer
6	HT	Late 40s	M/WB	Yes	Free school	Proposed 1 HT, 2 DHTs	None	Principal designate 5+ years as deputy
7	DHT	Late 30s	F/BB	No	Primary Academy (Less than 1000)	Distributive 1 HT, 1 DHT plus AHTs	Outsta nding	1 <sup>st</sup> DHT role 3+ years as deputy
8	DHT	Mid 30s	F/WE	NPQH Partici pant	Secondary LA (1000+)	Distributive 1 HT plus 4 AHTs, 2 directors	Good	3+ years as deputy
9	DHT	Late 30s	F/BB	Yes	Secondary Academy (1200+)	Distributive 2 head of schools, 4 DHTs plus 10 AHTs and 4 directors	Outsta nding	3 years a Vice Principal at time of interview, promoted to 1 <sup>st</sup> headship 5 months later

HT	Role	Age2	Gender/ Ethnicity	NPQH	Type of school	Leadership team structure	OFSTED	Year in role/ promotion since interview
10	HT	Late 50s	F/WB	Yes	Secondary LA (1200+) single-sex (girls)	Outstanding 1 HT, 2 DHTs plus 4 AHTs	Requires Improvement	1 <sup>st</sup> headship 10 + years as headteacher in the same school. Will retire in 4 months
11	RHT	Mid 60s	M/BA-WB Mixed	No	Secondary LA (1200+)	Distributive 2 DHTs and 2 AHTs	Outstanding	2 <sup>nd</sup> headship 20+ years as a headteacher Consultant /trainer for Future Leaders and author of the PSHE curriculum (2000)
12	RHT	Early 70s	F/AC	No	Primary (500+)	1 HT and 1 DHTs	Outstanding	3 <sup>rd</sup> Headship 20+ years as a headteacher Consultant and writer
13	DHT	Late 30s	M/BA-WB Mixed	No	Independent secondary less 1000	Distributive 1 HT, 2 DHTs plus 3 AHTs	Outstanding	2 <sup>nd</sup> DHT 7+ years as deputy
14	HT	Early 60s	M/WB	Yes	Secondary (1200+) Single-sex (boys)	Co-headship 2 HTs, 5 DHTs, AHTs and directors	Outstanding	3 <sup>rd</sup> Headship, 20+ years as headteacher, Since first interviewed promoted to executive HT New Multi Academy Trust
15	HT	Late 50s	F/BB	Yes	Secondary (1000+)	Distributive 1 HT, 4 AHTs and 2 directors	Good	2 <sup>nd</sup> headship 10+ years as headteacher,
16	HT	Early 40s	F/P	Yes	Primary 500+	Distributive 1 HT, 1 DHT, 1 AHT	Outstanding	1 <sup>st</sup> headship, 4+ years as a headteacher
17	DHT	Mid 50s	M/WB	No	Secondary (1000+)	Distributive 1 HT, 4 AHTs and 2 directors	Good	26 + years as AHT
18	DHT	Early 50s	F/AC	No	Primary (500+)	Distributive 1 HT, 1 DHT, 1 AHT	Good	4+ as a DHT
19	DHT	Late 30s	F/WB	No	Secondary (less than 1000)	Distributive 1 HT, 2 DHTs and AHTs	Good	2 <sup>nd</sup> AHT/Deputy role

Table 8. Profiles of the school leaders in this study. Gender: F = female, M = male; Ethnicity: AC = African Caribbean, BA = Black African, BB = Black British, P = Pakistani, WB = White British.

The values of quantifiers (Coventry *et al.*, 2010) used in this study are described in Table 9, as it is essential to clarify the terms used to avoid ambiguity (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Quantifiers	Meanings
All	100% of all respondents
Majority	More than 75%
Most	between 50% and 74%
Some/several	between 30% and 49%
Few	less than 30%
None	0%

Table 9. Quantifiers that represent the sample.

The chapter concludes with an overall summary of the findings and the implications discussed in the ensuing chapter.

### 4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

#### What Constitutes the Personal Capacity of Educational Leaders?

The first research question sought to establish a definition of personal capacity by exploring the school leaders' understanding of the term. The analysis and coding of their responses were conducted, as described in the chapter on research design. These findings are presented under seven main headings: moral imperative, emotional intelligence, self-belief and self-efficacy, confidence, resilience, empowerment and identity, and growth mindset.

In the interviews, the respondents were asked to explain their understanding of the term 'personal capacity'. Although I had not explained its meaning to them, they were, to varying

degrees, able to convey their insight and understanding of the concept. They were unanimous, though with varying degrees of clarity, that personal capacity was, fundamentally, an ability, an ability to do, which is in keeping with Gurr and Drysdale's (2007) succinct definition. This understanding was also common in the range of meanings attached to the term 'capacity', whether it was viewed on the aggregate or individual levels (Basil and Morgan, 2008). Among the more explicit responses were:

I think, maybe I would link that phrase with ... the ability to keep putting yourself into stressful, demanding situations ... the ability to pick yourself up and get through the demands and the challenges. That's what I would see it as (HT1).

I think personal capacity is about your ability to grow, and your ability to learn, and your ability to cope ... your ability to understand yourself, ... your ability to be brave and step outside your comfort zone ...but with all of that having the ability to remain confident ... so I think that would be it for me (HT3).

... it's what you are able to do; it's what you are capable of" (HT8).  
I'd say it was about your ability to do something (HT13).

This ability was judged to be synonymous with potential, carrying with it the scope for development and education, as one senior leader explained:

I would define [it] as the potential, that which can be developed beyond our estimation and calculation ... so I start from that platform that everyone has the potential and the development of that potential, to me that is a person's capacity, so personal capacity is a function of development and education (HT2).

A significant majority shared the view that personal capacity is about your ability to cope with challenges. HT3 had this to say, "I think personal capacity is about your ability ... to cope, to cope with the challenges that are often in your way;" and according to HT5, "... there are certain qualities, I think, that give you that personal capacity then ... that you [as a headteacher] look for [to cope with changes]."

Concerning school leadership specifically, there was the notion that personal capacity incorporated practical leadership skills, one respondent insisting that “you’ve got to have ... the practical skills to make it sustainable” (HT1). Though the literature review identified a relationship between the personal capacity of school leaders and leadership skills, there was no exposition on this. For example, Potter and Brough’s (2004) discussion of what they saw as the nine elements of systemic capacity, alluded to but did not elaborate on, the various practical skills that should be expected to comprise personal capacity. Another headteacher was more philosophical in her interpretation of the concept, arguing that it was more than an existential issue where the concern was that of survival. For her, personal capacity included the ability to enjoy the task at hand, a quality that was deemed to be characteristic of intrinsic motivation, especially as it related to leaders (Deci and Flaste, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1996). As far as this headteacher was concerned, personal capacity is “a combination of attributes” and “it means, you do more than survive, you actually enjoy, and you get a buzz for the job” (HT5).

This conviction that personal capacity is “a combination of attributes” (HT5) was explicitly echoed by other respondents, for example, “I think it’s a combination of ... attributes” (HT4) and “your personal capacity is a range of qualities that you have, that you bring to the table” (HT10). While regarding it as an ability at its root, they were aware that it was not merely a single-faceted quality but instead a conglomeration of qualities, attributes and characteristics. Other respondents were not as direct, but it was clear that they saw personal capacity as comprising various qualities, attributes and characteristics. For instance, one described it as “the strength you have, the knowledge base from which you spring, and the confidence that is attached” (HT16). Other characteristics such as resilience, motivation, determination and the ability to

communicate, emerged as important. As a combination of attributes, it also accords with the general picture of personal capacity portrayed in the literature (Mitchell and Sackney, 2011; Gurr and Drysdale, 2007; Gurr, 2012) that it is comprised of various components (2.4.5). These, coupled with the fact that at least a third of the respondents spoke of personal capacity as a versatile component, testify to its complexity. As such, they align with Hopkins and Jackson's (2004, p. 95) description of capacity as complex and multidimensional, and strengthens their argument for "a concept of capacity that demonstrates flexibility, adaptability, responsiveness and adroitness."

The school leaders, in their responses to the self-completed questionnaires (Appendix 2), reflected on the importance of the components of personal capacity to headship. Those considered paramount were: vision and purpose, confidence, communication, good judgement, determination and motivation, resilience, emotional intelligence, networking, and self-awareness. From the interviews, moral purpose, emotional intelligence, self-belief/self-efficacy, empowerment and identity, resilience, and growth mindset were judged to be the most important. In combining both sets of responses, seven key themes emerged, namely:

- Moral imperative
- Emotional Intelligence: self-awareness, empathy
- Self-belief and self-efficacy
- Confidence
- Resilience
- Empowerment and identity
- Growth mindset

What follows is a discussion of each component.



#### 4.3.1 Moral Imperative

All the respondents agreed that as headteachers they could make the most impact on students' education and increase their life chances. They believed that educating young minds and the future generation was the most important job and so were driven by what is widely accepted to be a sense of moral purpose or moral imperative. There was a desire to accomplish the very best for all children and young people which was deemed to be one of the main hallmarks of effective leaders (Ingham, 2014, p. 14). The following response appropriately illustrates this sense of moral purpose:

I have a great love for children, and I suppose that guided me, that I wanted to see children achieve and when they did it was ... inspirational, to see how they responded to their achievement and I wanted to show them that everybody is capable of achieving (HT5).

Similarly:

My professional drive and determination is to provide the best education to the people; I would be in charge of ... their learning... if I had to make a decision, the decision would always fall on the side of doing your very best for the children and then everybody else that you have (HT16).

Over eighty per cent of respondents indicated that they were from working-class backgrounds:

I came from a very working-class background; I attended a secondary modern school then transfer to a grammar school when sixteen; that was something new in those days. I think I was lucky... my motivation comes from the fear of working down in the mines ... the fear of dying early, as many of my friends (HT14).

Other respondents, like HT14, understood the motivations and fears of their students in attending inner-city schools and counted it a privilege to increase their life chances. These included students from migrant families with whom some, HT3 for example, could identify:

... my own experience of that is knowing that both of my parents came over from [the Caribbean] in the 60s. My father was a postal worker, my mother was an auxiliary nurse, and they were very clear that through educating myself and my sister, that we would be able to get opportunities that they were never able to access through not having had the opportunity to fulfil their educational ambitions. And for me, I feel that's exactly what happened so I'm a real believer in the fundamental role of education, which is about giving people opportunities that society may not have otherwise have given them (HT3).

Moral purpose operated as an intrinsic motivation for the headteachers, regardless of the different pathways they took to headship (Higham *et al.*, 2015). In fact, it has been argued to be the *raison d'être* for the teaching profession. This desire to positively influence the learning and lives of young people was not unique to the United Kingdom, however, as in Australia, for example, it emerged as a most important factor among potential aspirants to headship in their education system (Cranston, 2007).

#### 4.3.2 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is portrayed as comprising such elements as self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 2005). Several of the respondents spoke of self-awareness and emotional intelligence interchangeably, which, although not the full picture, is consistent with the notion of self-awareness as the “keystone” of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2005, p. 43). Ninety per cent of them considered emotional intelligence to be a very important attribute of effective leadership; a conclusion arrived at in earlier studies (Bullock, 2009; Goleman *et al.*, 2013). During the interviews, many claimed that they had a good understanding of their emotional intelligence, and that of their staff. They were very familiar with the concept and especially, as indicated in the questionnaires, of the relationship between emotional intelligence and people management.

During the interviews, it became apparent that most of the male respondents had never given much thought or consideration to their emotional intelligence and its significance to their leadership. Interestingly, this seeming lack of awareness did not militate against their leadership effectiveness as they were all headteachers of Ofsted-rated outstanding schools. This discrepancy could be explained by the fact that the headteachers' experience and relationship with their staff, coupled with their leadership style, compensated for this lack. For example, as stated by HT14, he was not overly concerned about how he came across to his staff as they already knew him to be a genuine person, that is, that he was always guided by the moral imperative of wanting the best for his students and staff.

I don't worry too much about it, about how I'm coming across because I know I'm genuine and once people see that genuine aspect will forgive a lot. If I'm in my own school sometimes I say things to people in very harsh manner, but they will always forgive me ... I think the important thing there is ... if you are passionate about something i.e. of the students' progress, and it means breaking a few eggs, then you're going to break those few eggs (HT14).

Conversely, most of the female respondents seemed to be more aware of their emotional intelligence and that of others. According to one female respondent, "[It is important to understand] my self-awareness and emotional intelligence ... understanding how I work and understanding how other people work" (HT11). However, the respondents varied in how much importance they attached to being aware of their emotional intelligence. For example, some respondents recognised the effect of emotional intelligence on their ability to effectively perform in their roles, and so organised their daily routine accordingly. Thus, as HT5 further explained:

As a head I had an open-door policy, you know, people were invited to come and see me. I ... also had a clinic every week for parents to come and see me ... and I used to go from five to nine ... because it was Thursday evening but that was the best time I could slot it in and I had to sacrifice to give that time.

However, HT5 realised that her open accessibility to staff was having a toll on her both physically and emotionally. She felt she was an emotionally strong person but in reflecting further on her emotional intelligence, had this to say:

You've got to be aware of yourself and at times you sacrifice yourself and you forget you and think about other people and ... that was one of the mistakes I made ... I think, I was more concerned about other people, about their problems and thinking about that (HT5). HT11 believed that there was merit in maintaining an open-door policy but that its success or effectiveness depended on one's emotional intelligence, specifically, their self-awareness:

I think the next thing is you need to be self-aware ... but I think about being self-aware you need to create a persona that works best for you ... That [having an open door] can work so long as you know you're doing that, and you know how you're doing it... for instance, I had an open-door policy. I think the problem with that is a clique of people know that the door was open and other people never come ..., ... I think the important thing is, heads need to know what kind of persona they have in work which might be slightly different from their outside persona and be absolutely consistent as to how they apply that persona in all situations (HT11).

Other changes included reducing the number of duties, such as lunch and gate duties, and scheduling meetings with parents as much as possible, instead of responding to impromptu demands. They reported that by scaling down on their activities more "mind space" (HT3) was created and there were less stress and fatigue. This awareness also helped school leaders to be more proactive, to be more empathetic and to focus more strategically on their leadership, as illustrated in HT3/4's response:

What I know is that my emotional capacity is less towards the end of a term and year and so I would try to avoid meetings which are going to be quite confrontational. Also, where people are angry, I try to look strategically at finding the balance and being more proactive in management and not as reactive (HT3/4).

The perception of ninety per cent of the respondents that emotional intelligence is important to effective leadership is significant, especially when viewed within the context of a changing

educational landscape strewn with challenges. It is, in fact, consistent with Cherniss's (2000, p. 10) prediction that emotional intelligence would become progressively important in an increasingly changing world of work with its increasing demands on a person's cognitive, emotional and physical resources. Such importance would be due to its potential for coping in the face of adversity (Edward and Warelow, 2005). As such, emotional intelligence sits as one of the qualities, attributes or characteristics that would constitute the personal capacity of school leaders.

A few respondents admitted that they saw it necessary to further develop awareness of their emotional intelligence by actively reflecting on and challenging their leadership behaviours. In other words, they saw the need to engage in more reflective practice. For example, according to HT3:

I reflect a lot ... I reflected on my own performance and my own views and my positions a lot, because I find that's important to me. I know it's a common saying but I am my own worst critic. If things aren't right I'm the first person to say to myself 'do you know what, you got that wrong', and try to learn from it. And so I reflect a lot. I'm very aware of my own emotions and what I bring to the table (HT3).

The necessity for such engagement was underscored by one headteacher (HT1) who, in reflection, said he was aware of the need to be more people-sensitive, particularly in his management of conflicts and issues. Another (HT8) was quite explicit about her understanding of the relationship between self-awareness and self-management, stating, "You've got to be aware, you got to be able to reflect, you've got to keep checking your progress." To yet another, reflective practice seemed quite routine. In his own words, "I think I am aware of the benefit of reflecting on my practice, partly because I probably think quite a lot of what I do" (HT2). A few of

the respondents thought that in addition to improving their management effectiveness, engaging in reflective practice enhanced their ability to cope daily. Reflective practice was not identified as a key factor in the literature review. However, it was a significant category that came out of the interviews. Additionally, several studies (Day, 2000; Gill, 2014; Moran and Sherwood, 2017) attest both to its value in enhancing emotional intelligence and to its place in the leadership journey of effective school leaders. Day (2000, p. 113), in particular, concluded from his research into effective leadership and reflective practice, that “the evidence ... suggests that if principals are to become and remain effective, they need to nurture their critical thinking and emotional intelligence through reflection.”

Although the school leaders attached varying degrees of importance to emotional intelligence, they all displayed a general understanding of its various elements, particularly self-awareness, empathy and relationships. A key point for emphasis here is that, both in the literature and in the research, emotional intelligence is pictured as being itself a non-discrete component with various aspects, abilities and competencies and this is reflected in the portrayal of personal capacity as essentially a multifaceted ability. The other components also demonstrate this characteristic, a discussion of which will now continue.

#### **4.3.3 Self-Belief and Self-Efficacy**

Throughout the interviews, the school leaders cited the importance of self-belief and self-efficacy in coping with obstacles and adversities daily, in keeping with the existing literature. From the outset, Bandura (1997, p. 191) had argued that people’s “ability to cope with obstacles and aversive experiences is determined by their self-efficacy, that is, what they believe about their

capabilities” (Bandura, 1977). For HT7, this meant believing that she could influence, strengthen and support teachers in delivering her vision for the students. She further shared, “I think that is a skill I have developed over time ... a belief in yourself to be able to change ... make changes ... they are my strengths” (HT7). One vice principal insisted that her ability to function in her role as an educational leader was due to a strong background shaped by years of experience in both formal and informal roles, with the input of role models and mentors who provided coaching and guidance along the way (HT9).

What prepared me? I think it’s on a number of levels. Within a professional capacity I have had a number of role models, a number of mentors who have coached me and guided me in terms of the area I needed to develop ... I think actually there is a personal capacity that you have that comes from your background and your experiences prior to you being in the role that you are in ... So I think all of that comes to bear and so it helps build that personal capacity that you use within the role of school leader (HT9).

She continued to delineate her leadership capabilities, underscoring that their development was due to years of experience working or functioning in various roles:

So, your ability to have clear vision, to understand the need for clarity, to be able to understand the need to act as a role model, knowing when to pace set, knowing when to approach, when you need to be more autocratic and when you need to be more...democratic. All of those experience I’ve had up to today, I think plays a big part in this (HT9).

As seen, HT9 believed that together these contributed to the development of her personal capacity and that they gave her the confidence to function.

This awareness regarding the development of her personal capacity and with that her self-belief accords with Mitchell and Sackney’s (2011) argument. They claimed that personal capacity is built

through the deconstruction and reconstruction of one's professional narrative and that "coming to terms with their professional narrative can help educators ... develop a greater sense of self-efficacy" (Mitchell and Sackney, 2011, p. 31). They further pointed to other studies which concluded that people perform better and are more emotionally stable when they believe that their efforts will yield desirable results, in other words, when they have a high level of self-efficacy. Other research had shown that self-efficacy was one of the key influences on leader achievement (Dimmock, 2012).

HT13 further demonstrated the positive correlation between personal capacity and self-efficacy and self-belief. He felt that both personal capacity and strong leadership were largely about self-belief and candidly asserted that "[my present role] all felt within my capabilities and [I] never got really worried that I wasn't going to be able to cope professionally." HT5 seemed to regard personal capacity as a semantic issue but inadvertently linked it to self-efficacy, explaining that

when you talk about personal capacity I look at somebody who has the confidence to be able to do something or know they have confidence that they can bring about change, or they are capable of doing it ... they have the strength; they have the intellect; they have the interpersonal skills ... and you must have the personal capacity to know what you're capable of (HT5).

The key factor here is the confidence in one's capabilities to accomplish an end, which is consistent with the general understanding of self-efficacy appearing in the literature (Bandura, 1977; Maddux, 1995; Schunk and Pajares, 2009).



#### 4.3.4 Confidence

In their responses to the questionnaires, all the respondents viewed confidence as an important component of personal capacity. During the interviews, they all reported having confidence in themselves and their abilities, and that this was what enabled them to cope day by day. This confidence was not seen as innate but as something capable of being nurtured and grown with time and experience. Some suggested that they had acquired confidence, or the lack thereof, from early experiences in their formative years of parental, school and societal influences (Gronn, 1999). One considered it to be self-evident, stating, “You’ve got to give yourself a bit of time to build confidence” (HT11).

One respondent believed the best leaders not only had but also displayed confidence as it is hard to follow leaders who are doubtful or uncertain (HT13). A senior headteacher of over thirty years of school leadership emphasised that the school's position on the league table and Ofsted report could either validate or demoralise leadership confidence but was of the opinion that in a situation like this, mentoring by a senior headteacher would be valuable. Referring to a relatively junior headteacher, he was sure that:

[according to the] performance tables, she is not performing on top of her game now, and I realise that’s coming from lack of confidence which happens, so I would be an ideal mentor to people like that because what she’s going through is what all of us went through (HT14).

On the whole, therefore, confidence and experience seemed to be intertwined, the former gained through the latter and the latter providing the basis for the former.

It was not clear whether the respondents were using confidence and self-efficacy interchangeably, as their descriptions of both encompassed the idea of having confidence in one's capabilities to accomplish the desired objective and of having the ability to cope. Both were also concerned about the role that experience played in their acquisition and development. This apparent identification of self-efficacy with confidence has been evidenced in various studies (Druckman and Bjork, 1994; Stajkovic and Luthans 2002; Kardong-Edgren, 2013; Oney and Oksuzoglu-Guven, 2015). Bandura (1997), however, had sought to distinguish between the two concepts, arguing that:

the construct of self-efficacy differs from the colloquial term "confidence." Confidence is a nondescript term that refers to the strength of belief but does not necessarily specify what the certainty is about. I can be supremely confident that I will fail at an endeavour. Perceived self-efficacy refers to belief in one's agentive capabilities that one can produce given levels of attainment. A self-efficacy assessment, therefore, includes both an affirmation of a capability level and the strength of that belief. Confidence is a catchword rather than a construct embedded in a theoretical system (Bandura, 1997, 382).

Druckman and Bjork (1994, pp. 174-175) did not adopt Bandura's distinction but chose to use the terms interchangeably. Their choice was in light of the more general and familiar usage of the term self-confidence, which they described as "the belief that one can successfully execute a specific activity ... a judgement of one's ability to perform at a certain level."

It is possible to understand such confidence as an expression of self-belief and self-efficacy, though it may seem, at first glance, to contradict Bandura in his attempt to distinguish between confidence and self-efficacy. However, it is important to bear in mind that Bandura was speaking of the colloquial use of the term 'confidence'. What is necessary to point out here is that, rather than speaking colloquially, the respondents were making direct and specific reference to

confidence in their abilities to cope daily. This confidence was not necessarily viewed as an innate component but rather as something that could be nurtured and grown with time and experience. Rhodes *et al.* (2009) pointed to several studies in which the need to develop self-confidence, and the importance of networks in accomplishing this, had been extensively argued and demonstrated. Of further importance is the observation that not only can confidence become devastated by such events as an Ofsted inspection, but interventions such as mentoring could rebuild it.

On the other hand, in a critical review of the literature regarding self-confidence, Oney and Oksuzoglu-Guven (2015) concluded that the term needed to be distinguished from self-efficacy and similar constructs. According to these authors, whereas self-efficacy concerned observable abilities based on previous knowledge and assured certainty of outcome, confidence referred to the strength of a belief or conviction and was not based on any level of perceived competence. They concluded, however, that it was possible to separate the variety of definitions of self-confidence into both general and specific domains, the former referring to confidence irrespective of any specific context, while the latter referred to confidence within a specific context and at a given point in time. Based on this conceptualisation of self-confidence, Oney and Oksuzoglu-Guven (2015, p. 158) proposed that:

*Proposition 1.* In familiar and recurrent problem solving and behaviours, general self-confidence does not influence the coping abilities of individuals.

*Proposition 2.* In unfamiliar and non-recurrent problem solving and behaviours, specific self-confidence does not influence the coping abilities of individuals

*Proposition 3.* In familiar and recurrent problem solving and behaviours, the higher the specific self-confidence, the higher will be the coping abilities of individuals.

These proposals have implications for the ability of school leaders to cope in their respective contexts, the suggestion being that one's ability to cope in a particular context is influenced by the possession of confidence, either general or specific.

#### **4.3.5 Resilience**

The majority of the interviewees considered the concept of resilience to be of great significance. This implied determination, overcoming, bouncing back, optimism and calmness in crises (Patterson and Kelleher, 2005). The importance they attached to resilience correlated with the findings from the questionnaires which indicated that ninety-five per cent of them viewed resilience as most important to headship. The respondents passionately shared situations that tested their resilience, and there was a general appreciation of a direct relationship to personal capacity. As one headteacher explained, "I would link [personal capacity] with the idea of resilience ... the ability to keep putting yourself in stressful, demanding situations ... and the ability to pick yourself up and get through the demands and the challenges" (HT1).

Another headteacher echoes the idea of 'picking yourself up' and going again, explaining, "I think personal capacity ... is about resilience, about your ability to pick yourself up and get going ... it's the ability to get up and move on" (HT9). As an illustration, he proceeded to relate his response to a government announcement in September 2013, that only a student's first entry to GCSE examinations would count in their school's performance tables. It came as a bombshell as there was a practice of schools doing an early entry in November as a raising achievement strategy, thus giving pupils the opportunity to improve their grades in a re-sit examination. He recollected, "I remember thinking that I had got it wrong. I felt I was going to have a heart attack. I thought,

‘Oh my God, what is going to be the impact on students’ lives?’ .... you talk about personal capacity, that is where it comes into play ... the resilience, you have to bounce back” (HT9). Others mentioned governmental changes such as those about performance-related pay which caused an upsurge of union activism and attack upon the headteachers (ATL, 2016; Whittacker, 2017). Many of the respondents admitted that they had not previously known the extent of their resilience until with adverse circumstances confronted them. This potential for adversity to produce resilience in the individual is the recurrent theme throughout Patterson and Kelleher’s (2005, p. 3) work in which they argued that “the boundaries of your resilience capacity are determined by life’s accumulated experiences.”

A large proportion of female and ethnic minority male respondents reported numerous situations in which they had to demonstrate a tremendous amount of resilience. Though not a previous consideration in the literature, this suggests that the impact of gender and race on resilience was to be considered as a factor influencing personal capacity. One such female headteacher described resilience as a bovine, or strong, characteristic in that “not everybody has the emotional resilience of a ... what animal can I compare it to? I just think strong [as an] ox. Very few people have that” (HT17). Others described challenging circumstances they had to endure as school leaders. The most common was lack of support from the local authority, bullying by trade unions, and lack of support from parents and governors. Another female headteacher (HT12) recalled having had to learn how to navigate the proverbial “boys’ club” and yet another female, a newly appointed headteacher, recollected an incident involving racial abuse from which she had to bounce back to keep going:

I went through a very tough time as a newly appointed headteacher in that very difficult context. It wasn't just the community that was the challenge; they were fairly easy to win over in comparison to the staff ... one janitor passing by me said, "we don't do bloody Paki here" (HT16).

The findings confirm previous research (Luthar *et al.*, 2000; Patterson and Kelleher, 2005; Campbell-Sills *et al.*, 2006 and Bernhard and Werner, 2009) which sees resilience, not only as a significant coping strategy but as linked to personal capacity (Reich *et al.*, 2010). This linkage has been more than incidental as resilience has been associated directly or indirectly with some of the components that comprise personal capacity. For example, Edward and Warelow (2005) linked emotional intelligence to resilience when considering the ability to cope, with resilience itself regarded as a 'must have' for survival while being recognised for its potential to be strengthened by self-efficacy and belief.

Although not previously addressed in the literature review, the effect of gender and race on resilience surfaced in the data as a major factor with women, for example, viewed as more emotionally intelligent than their male counterparts. Women were also believed to be more resilient than men in fulfilling their roles as school leaders. Females' resilience was referred to by both headteachers and their deputies as a vital part of their daily leadership experiences. They cited their personal circumstances 'juggling many balls' – as primary carers, as the sole parent, as objects of hostility, having to contend with the 'boys club' inherent within the educational system – examples of how they had to exercise more resilience than men on a daily basis. In the case of ethnic minority female headteachers, there was the proverbial 'double jeopardy' effect

(Greenman and Xie, 2008; Juan *et al.* 2016) in which they experienced the effects of both racial and gender bias.

#### **4.3.6 Empowerment and Identity**

Identity emerged in the literature as a key characteristic of personal capacity (Baser and Morgan, 2008). Personal factors, including typical demographic information such as age, gender, ethnicity and length of incumbency, are recognised to be common indicators of identity (Fable, 1997; Giddens, 2006; Cleveland *et al.*, 2011; Centre of Teaching Excellence, 2015). These were not specifically identified in the review of the literature but are presented here as relevant due to the data showing that their personal factors and hence their identity impacted the ability of headteachers to cope. Empowerment and identity appeared together in the literature as a single characteristic of personal capacity with people's ability to take personal control of their own lives and behaviour as a central feature (Rowlans, 1995; Drury *et al.*, 2015). It is understood to involve a sense of identity which, in the context of school leadership, exerts a powerful influence in determining how school leaders approach their work (Collay, 2006).

There were stark discrepancies between the gender and age groups of school leaders in the sample and their perceived ability to take control and manage daily. In the sample, school leaders of all ages expressed an inability to cope with various aspects of the daily operations of school leadership. The effect of age on coping has long been an issue of controversy. It has been observed that middle-aged men (forty-five to fifty-four years) were more likely to appraise their problems as both challenges and annoyances than the older men. Similarly, the school leaders under forty-five years of age were managing less well than their older male colleagues who

reported that they were able to cope, as Aldwin *et al.* (1996) also found. A subsequent study found that there were higher levels of job stress and less job satisfaction among managers between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five years, than their counterparts in the thirty-six to forty-five and the forty-six to fifty-five age groups (Chandraiah *et al.*, 2003).

These age-related differences were not experienced by the female school leaders as they all reported that they were struggling to cope. They reported being caught up in the relentless pursuit of excellence; working twice as hard as their male counterparts to overcome gender biases and stereotypes and be considered equal. They also seemed to have been carrying the 'double burden syndrome' (Weatherall *et al.*, 1994). Regardless of their professional success, they had the added responsibility of being the main caregiver; in fact, all the female school leaders interviewed in this study were the main carers of children and ageing parents. On the other hand, this seeming lack of control could have been due to the structure of the leadership teams within which they served and the leadership styles they adopted. The findings showed that the women exercised direct control of the operational processes in their schools, whereas their male counterparts the older male school leaders, focussed mainly on providing strategic leadership.

According to the data the senior female leaders, in contrast to their male counterparts, were less confident in their ability to cope with their roles. The lack of confidence seems to be at odds with the earlier findings (4.3.2) which showed that women were more aware of their emotional intelligence and engaged in reflective practice, which itself contributed, not only to management effectiveness but to their ability to daily cope as well. However, it is consistent with earlier studies



(Ptacek *et al.*, 1994) which found that men and women cope differently. Female senior educational leaders are also more likely to experience strain or adverse reactions to stressful situations than their male counterparts (Richard and Krieschok, 1989). The discrepancy may be accounted for by taking into consideration the observation that female leaders, including headteachers, seemed to be plagued with self-doubt, displaying negative attitudes toward their abilities even when qualified for their roles (Coleman, 2007; Porter, 2009).

The ethnicity of the school leaders is categorised into six groups representing fifty-eight per cent of school leaders who identified themselves as ethnic minorities, as shown in table 10.

Ethnicity	n=	Male	Female	Male		Female		Total
				HT	DHT	HT	DHT	
African Caribbean	2	0	2	0	0	1	1	2
Black British	6	2	4	2	0	2	2	6
Black /White mixed	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	2
Pakistani	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
White British	7	3	4	3	1	2	1	7
White Other (Turkish)	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Total	19	7	11	6	2	6	5	19

*Table 10. Number of respondents categorised by ethnicity, gender leadership roles.*

The ethnicity of the school leaders emerged as significant, not only because it is one of the constituents of identity, but also because it is one of the factors that impinge on the ability to cope. Research into occupational stress among ethnic or racial minorities has added validity to this latter consideration (Perrewe *et al.*, 2014). At the same time, Ferris *et al.* (2014), out of concern that insufficient work had been done in this area, attempted to address the deficiency by proposing a conceptualisation of race and work stress that sought to explain the dynamics occurring between them. They argued that factors such as socialisation processes, social networks, information and resource access, and mentoring factors influenced differences

between minorities and non-minorities. Other studies (Miller and Travis, 2005; MacKay and Entienne, 2006; McNamara *et al.*, 2009; Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010) returned similar findings regarding both the prevalence of occupational stress among ethnic minorities and the factors that led to it. The effect of adverse factors on the ability to cope (Dewe *et al.*, 2007; Kovacs, 2007) could be potentially exhausting. This was so, not just of ethnic minority teachers, in general (Miller and Travis, 2005, p. 326) but of headteachers in particular (Phillips *et al.*, 2007; Howard, 2011) and especially of ethnic minority headteachers (Echols, 2006; Mullen and Robertson, 2014). They would, therefore, need to be addressed further (Ferris *et al.*, 2014, p. 28).

Some of these ethnic minority school leaders felt they were more likely to be overlooked for promotion to headship as governing bodies, when appointing, still seek to find the ‘Google image’ of a headteacher, that is, a Caucasian male. There is an exception when searching for primary school headteachers, however, as there will be a more balanced representation of both Caucasian males and females. Much work has been done by lobby groups, such as the Women in Leadership Forum, to ensure that Google images are more inclusive (Figure 7).



Figure 8. A Google image search results for ‘headteacher’.

Nonetheless, the situation has not changed in the case of ethnic minority school leaders as they are virtually non-existent in Google images. Those in the sample reported that they had been faced with adverse factors similar to those reported by Ferris *et al.* (2014, p. 28), for example, “heightened demands placed upon them to overcome obstacles to their success or limited control ... that result from not having access to high-quality network connections [and] information.” A case in point was the racist abuse a headteacher experienced when a janitor walking past her remarked, “We don’t do bloody Paki here” (HT16). Another example was that of a respondent who admitted that, as a black headteacher, he was sensitive to the issue of black teachers being marginalised from vital training programmes and so felt the need to make extra effort to access one such programme.

When they [Ofsted] sent out the programme I looked at it, and I said, ‘Well, you know, I better get involved with this thing to understand it’ so I applied to be trained ... and when I went, of course, there were fifty-three of us and ... I was the only black person on that ... so I was on a mission; I am sensitive about the issue of blacks ... being left out, so I applied, but also I thought it would be useful for [me] to understand it so that ... if we’re inspected we know how it works (HT2).

All the respondents had the basic qualification of a bachelor’s degree and additionally, were members of professional associations and networks and had both professional and academic qualifications, as shown in Table 11.

Qualifications	Respondents
NPQH	65% (n=12)
First degree	100 % (n=19)
Second degree	47% (n=9)
Third degree EdD/PhD	21% (n=4)

Table 11. Professional and academic qualifications of the respondents.

Sixty-five per cent of the respondents, including all the headteachers, had completed the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) while one had just started, forty-seven per cent held a master's degree, and twenty-one per cent had completed a doctorate.

The respondents' acquisition of both professional and academic qualifications reflects their belief that the empowerment of individuals, which would include the development of personal skills and capabilities and hence of personal capacity, ought to be the focus of capacity building on the whole (Sen, 2000). This appreciation of the role that professional and academic qualifications play in the empowerment of individuals, and its place in capacity building, was particularly borne out by one respondent who explicitly described personal capacity as "a function of development and education" (HT2). He related his overall concern for whole school development and how he had, in fact, sought to empower himself through further studies to be able to help his school in its development. Hence:

I had to look into those things, how schools can work effectively. So ... back to innovation, I also decided to do my masters ... I was doing a master's in administration at the institute, and my study was basically on teacher appraisal because ... I considered that to be something that would be very [helpful] to the school so that I had to implement [it] ... I thought that ... it would help with the development of the staff ... will enhance the school (HT2).

Another headteacher, reflecting on her role as an educational leader, explained:

I am a leader ... doing a master's in education and keeping myself up to date with just new findings, research ... mentoring for different NQTs, trained teachers ... and I don't think it's just about getting outstanding from your school or Ofsted ... they come and say 'well look we've chosen you because of the ethos in your school, what you take on board, the projects you introduce into your school' (HT7).

Consistent with its vision of educational excellence for all children in England's schools, the government has turned its focus on empowering school leaders through development and training (DfE, 2016a). The intention behind the pursuit of such empowerment was to build the personal capacity of the school leaders, and more widely, the overall capacity of the school system. The importance of developing skills and knowledge as a means of empowerment was borne out in the findings and correlated with Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) description of the raw materials needed to build personal capacity.

The findings further suggested that the NPQH still enjoyed prestige among school leaders as the only nationally recognised qualification for headship. Even when faced with a policy shift in which the NPQH was no longer a prerequisite for the role, both headteachers and aspiring headteachers were still considering it critical to their leadership competence. As far as they were concerned, and as supported in the literature, empowerment comes through the development of skills and knowledge and the NPQH provided the scope for such development. They were aware, however, that the necessary skills and knowledge come not only through qualifications but professional networks at any level. The findings further suggested that active members of networks, that is, those in one leadership role or another, were more informed and better able to navigate their way through or withstand the pace of changes and were also able to pre-empt future changes. There was a strong correlation between those who were leaders of and executive members of professional networks and those who were also leaders of outstanding or successful schools. Also, there was a strong positive correlation between those who were coaching and mentoring other headteachers in one context or the other and those who were also leading outstanding schools. As they engaged in the process of building knowledge and skills, their capacity grew.

The empowerment of school leaders was also influenced by their leadership context. Some of the best contexts for the empowerment of both serving and aspiring headteachers in the accession and incumbent phases of their career trajectory were system and distributive leadership models. Another, co-headship, emerged in the findings as a model that could retain local talent and empower leaders (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007). It is a relationship in which mutual coaching and mentoring can thrive and in which, as Mitchell and Sackney (2011) have indicated, through a process of deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction, one's professional narrative can be built and strengthened. Co-headship, some might argue, could be the liberation that aspiring female headteachers need to encourage them to take up headship while caring for and planning a family (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007). It is understood though, that if not well managed, co-headship can become chaotic and frustrating, as it requires good personal relationships in which communication and trust are paramount.

#### **4.3.7 Growth Mindset**

As discussed in chapter two, mindset (Dweck, 2006) is important to the research. The strong positive correlation between the respondents' attitudes to personal and professional development and their pursuit of effective leadership suggested that they possessed a growth mindset, a notable feature being that they "see their ability as something that can be developed through dedication, hard work and training" (2.4.4). The data, in fact, showed that they had acquired a wide range of skills, training and qualifications. For example, all the headteachers held NPQH qualifications and were very active members of networks. None of the male deputy headteachers held NQPH qualifications. However, twenty-five per cent of the female deputy headteachers did.

Not only was growth mindset demonstrated in the respondents' attitudes towards their development but also towards the development of leadership potential in others and the organisation itself, to ensure succession. As previously elucidated in the literature review (Chase, 2010), leaders with growth, in contrast to a fixed mindset, can transform both themselves and others to achieve collective goals. For example, one headteacher construed her role as an educational leader to incorporate "developing leadership capacity in the staff that we got in the school whether they will be exercising that here or in other schools later on in their career" (HT10). Some headteachers were mentoring or training other leaders at the national level. One was quite frank about the mutual benefit to be derived from enabling others to develop in their roles. He explained that "if you start developing those headship skills lower down the school then you will stop doing all these tasks and fill all your time up and instead you will start to find other people to do all that for you and do it better than you" (HT1).

A few of the school leaders clearly, though in some cases, inadvertently, identified personal capacity with a growth mindset, referring to personal capacity as the ability to grow and develop, a characteristic that is indicative of a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). Thus, "I think personal capacity is about your ability to grow, and your ability to learn, and your ability to cope, to cope with the challenges that are often in your way. As you have your journey towards growth and I guess your capacity to understand" (HT3). He and other respondents felt that this growth was facilitated by the practice of reflecting on, and analysing, what went well and what went wrong:

I reflect a lot...I reflected on my performance and my views and my positions a lot ... I am my own worst critic. If things aren't right, I'm the first person to say to myself, 'Do you know what, you got that wrong', and try to learn from it. And so, I reflect a lot" (HT3).

HT2 valued the potential for growth in those who can look at their mistakes and learn from the problems they encounter:

All of us have the potential to do good but a tendency to make a lot of mistakes ... So, I would be looking for somebody who ... sees possibilities and not so much the problems. A person who sees problems as there to be solved and to conquer problems and not to see problems as a thing to pull you back. In fact, you can learn from problems. It's about how you grow as a result of that; being able to [see] problems (HT2).

Another prided herself on being a reflective leader, and for the self-knowledge, she gained from it:

I am very much aware of what my strengths are and my weaknesses. I think I'm a highly reflective leader and as a result that is one of the things I'm very clear on ...it's knowing that things are not always going to go well but you're going to learn from them, you're going to make mistakes but it's the ability to get up and move on (HT9).

Although HT8 was reluctant to describe herself as a reflective leader, she appreciated the importance of being reflective and was, therefore, working on self-improvement:

In terms of myself, yes. I know great leaders are meant to be self-reflective, that's an area I'm trying to improve at the moment ... you got to be able to reflect; you've got to keep checking your progress (HT8).

The responses, then, were in keeping with the view espoused in chapter 2, that leaders with a growth mindset are key to success. They are identified by their ability to respond to challenges with courage, their ability to learn from mistakes, their possession of passion and drive, and their ability to help and support others through their failures by inspiring and motivating them to work on the development of their abilities.

Another aspect of reflective practice is the notion of the black box thinking (Syed, 2015) which borrows from the use of the black box (the Flight Data Recorder and the Cockpit Voice Recorder)



in the aviation industry to describe the ability to learn and grow from mistakes. This ability was epitomised by HT14, who engaged in this type of reflective practice and thereby transformed his leadership behaviour and his institution from an underperforming inner-city boys' school to a top performing school. Among the things he did was to hold weekly data analysis meetings to explore students' progress and attainment data and review and evaluate the impact of teaching strategies, and students' attitude to learning. These led to yearly increases in the school's performance at both GCSE and A-levels, and improvement in the students' learning attitude and behaviour in the community. HT14 had inadvertently practised what Syed (2015) described and promoted as black box thinking. I would describe him as a policy facilitator and a change maker rather than as a policy conformist. HT14 has since been promoted to the post of executive headteacher of a multi-academy trust with the additional responsibility of coaching and mentoring other headteachers in using the same practice to ensure their schools' success. This type of mindset, promoted by Dweck (2006) and reinforced by Syed (2015), furthers the idea of learning from failure. It produces perseverance and resilience, recognised as two essential ingredients in the ability to cope with challenging circumstances.

#### **4.3.8 Summary of Research Question One**

Overall, the findings from the questionnaires and the interviews conveyed an understanding of personal capacity that was consistent with what had emerged in the literature reviewed. The findings from the respondents depicted personal capacity as, fundamentally, one's ability or potential. In the case of school leaders, they had the ability to cope specifically with challenges in their role as educational leaders. Instead of being seen as a one-dimensional entity, personal capacity was found to be multifaceted, amounting to a combination or range of attributes,

qualities, and characteristics equivalent to the components of personal capacity described in the literature. These attributes, qualities and characteristics were ascribed varying degrees of prominence and importance, and included, but were not limited to, leadership skills. Personal capacity was further understood to be more than an adaptation for survival but instead a characteristic that enabled one to enjoy the task at hand. The ability to engage in reflective practice and the influence of personal factors such as age, gender and ethnicity were not explored in the review of the literature but surfaced in the responses of the school leaders. Personal capacity was also seen to incorporate a growth mindset: school leaders demonstrated, by their commitment to personal and professional development, that the leadership potential of both themselves and their staff, could be developed by dedication, hard work, and training.

Therefore, taking into consideration both the responses from the school leaders and the understanding of personal capacity that emerged in the literature review, I have been able to arrive at a concise response to the question of what constitutes the personal capacity of educational leaders. At its core, the personal capacity of educational leaders can be described as: “the distinct ability of individuals to adapt and respond to challenging situations and circumstances to effectively function in their roles. As such, this ability is not to be seen as a fixed, innate, single-faceted trait or quality. Rather, it is multifaceted in nature and is comprised of a dynamic combination of non-discrete components underpinned by key qualities and characteristics, namely, moral imperative, resilience, self-belief and self-efficacy, confidence, emotional intelligence, empowerment and identity, and driven by a growth mindset.”

## **4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION TWO**

### **To What Extent is the Personal Capacity of Educational Leaders a Factor in their Ability to Cope with Challenges?**

Having arrived at a concept of personal capacity in response to research question one, I present, analyse, and discuss the findings with a specific focus on the challenges faced by school leaders. The main challenges arising from policy changes and reforms, such as decentralisation of the local authority and curriculum and assessment reforms, are discussed under the themes of intensification of the decision-making process, and pace of reforms.

#### **4.4.1 Intensification of the Decision-making Process**

Intensification refers to “the increased volume, scope, speed and complexity of constraints on and demands of decision-making” (MacBeath *et al.*, 2009, p.10). It has expressed itself in the increased pressure on the decision-making process in schools, a result of government policies, in particular, the devolution of powers by the local authorities, and the pace at which the government expects school leaders to implement the reforms (MacBeath, 2009; Brundrett, 2016). According to HT5, “the copious [governmental] changes have put teachers under [a] tremendous amount of pressure, and as a head you see people crippling under it, and you have to keep up to speed ... [it places] heavy pressure on headteachers to [keep up].” The decentralisation of the education services of the local authority means that schools are directly responsible for their management. This includes financial management, procurement, and teacher management issues. The intensification has arisen because of the change to accountability structures. According to the school leaders in this study and as collaborated by

Earley *et al.* (2012), budgetary constraints due to insufficient funding are the most crucial of their concerns.

It is important to realise that this phenomenon of intensification, with the concomitant pressures, was common to the school leaders in this study, despite the disparities between the schools in which they served. To be specific, the respondents served in a wide range of schools, including academies, community, free, private, and independent schools from both the secondary and primary educational sectors. They were of varying sizes and geographical locations, namely, London (mainly inner-city), Hertfordshire, Shropshire, and Birmingham (also inner-city), with widely differing socio-economic circumstances. At one end, were schools in areas and communities described as “tough inner-city” (HT11) and “very deprived” (HT16). At the other end, were schools enjoying affluence and privileged status. One respondent (HT13), for instance, reported, “We have gone big in the international [wealthy clientele] ... we spread our net all over the world ... There are loads of people who want to come here and get a British education ... but it’s hard to recruit local students ... partly because of the economics [their ability to pay].” Despite these differences, they all experienced similar pressures as a result of intensification and boasted similar Ofsted ratings, all but one being judged to be good or outstanding. HT16, for example, while bemoaning that her school was “in challenging contexts [and] you face a little bit more of a challenge than the average head,” was quick to admit that “every school has its challenges.”

The decentralisation of local authorities added yet another layer of intensification for the school leaders amidst the stream of increasing pressure from reforms. The respondents viewed these

as government's attempt to improve the British standing on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) league tables. In enquiring into how potential aspirants to headship perceive the headteacher role, Guihen (2017) found that many branded the educational culture in England as unstable, subject to rapid change, and littered with challenges and pressures that could deter them from secondary headship. The decentralisation left the school leaders without protection, support or the necessary training from the local authorities in implementing new reforms such as performance-related pay (PRP). HT4 recalled being subjected to personal and professional abuse by staff unions in the process of implementing these reforms; it was with great resilience and support from her local headteachers' network that she remained in the post. The fact that at least seventy per cent of the school leaders in this sample reported having to struggle and failed to implement reforms or policies at the rate expected by the government corroborates the case. Similar attitudes were reported in the 2012 review of the educational landscape (Earley *et al.*, 2012) in which school leaders indicated that although they were required to take the lead on such changes as performance-related pay, they were uncomfortable about them. Another study (Wragg *et al.*, 2003) found that most headteachers in primary and secondary schools were opposed to the introduction of performance-related pay.

All the respondents expressed similar frustration and anguish at the speed of these reforms, especially the curriculum reforms (Cassidy, 2014) and budgetary cuts to schools. These reforms included stricter Ofsted standards, curriculum changes, more challenging GCSEs, new assessments in primary schools, English Baccalaureate (EBacc), attainment 8, progress 8, and the 9-1 grading. Other reforms, such as academisation of schools, the growth of free schools, the renewed focus on British values and character education, and the Prevent agenda, have also put

schools under tremendous pressure. As no additional resources were provided to support school leaders in their implementation, school leaders experienced greater stress and longer working days, with a negative impact on personal and family life. Some deputies reported that simply witnessing the pressure placed on headteachers was distressing. For example:

The stress I see my head go through on a daily basis, especially with unions, all because of the government hand down directives that they (heads) have to implement. Where is Mr Gove when the headteachers are facing the backlash from staff and staff Unions? Now you have governors think they can run the school. .... I will never take up a headship. You can't pay me enough ... (HT18).

Another (HT19) remonstrated, "There are too many pressure on heads now; it's no longer a 'headteacher' role, is it? They are expected to be Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) but without the infrastructures to carry out the job." Both teachers and headteachers felt that the impact of the rapid pace of the changes was deterring people from the profession as there had been a lot of casualties (HT17). He went on to explain that he knew of headteachers who died on the job from heart failure and strokes.

The ability of school leaders to cope with such challenging circumstances has been regarded as a major leadership task (Harris and Chapman (2002) and has been attributed to personal capacity. This somewhat corresponds to the definition of personal capacity in this study (Harris and Chapman, 2002; Harris and Fink, 2006; MacBeath, 2009; Earley *et al.*, 2012; Gu and Johansson, 2013). Earley, *et al.* (2012, p. 23) aptly articulated the point, emphasising that "personal characteristics such as commitment, resilience, passion and understanding can affect the abilities and capacities of heads to apply these leadership practices successfully."

#### 4.4.2 Pace of Reforms

The intensification of school leadership which resulted from government's reforms has also resulted in school leaders being compelled to work at a relentless pace to keep up with the rapidity of these reforms and the climate of uncertainty and unpredictability they create (MacBeath *et al.*, 2009; Earley *et al.*, 2012). The subsequent effect has been increased workload and stress as reported by the respondents.

Seventeen of the nineteen respondents alluded to "relentless striving" (Goleman, 1999, p.65). The striving is characterised by "compulsory hard working at the expense of all else in life; runs on empty; vulnerable to burnout" (HT19) and "never becoming complacent because complacency in education leadership, is your own death sentence" (HT8). The immensity of this excessive workload is further illustrated by HT16 who complained, "I work all day, all the time. I come home at stupid hours, work seven days a week ... I've done that because I just feel that I have a huge responsibility and I can't afford to fail in the role." In such a climate of uncertainty and change, school leaders evidently need to have the ability to cope (Earley *et al.*, 2012).

In their research, Dimmock and Hattie (1996) showed that principals with high self-efficacy were more likely to accommodate and cope with change than were their counterparts. Some studies also identified a positive relationship between self-efficacy and the ability to cope (Bandura, 1977; Dimmock and Hattie, 1996; Schaubroeck and Merritt, 1997; Grau *et al.*, 2001). As brought out in the literature review (2.4.6) the development of one's personal capacity can lead to a greater sense of efficacy (Mitchell and Sackney, 2011) and, by implication, therefore, to the ability of principals or headteachers to cope with such challenging circumstances of increasing

workload. Other coping mechanisms reported by the respondents included creating effective teams, networking with other leaders, and keeping abreast of the national changes. As illustrated by one headteacher, “If I look at [my life] as a whole, it becomes unmanageable ... having people who I can be myself with ... in addition to strategically keeping one step ahead always; these are the coping mechanisms I use” (HT1).

Others felt it was important to have support systems to deal with the challenges, for example, spouses and family members, leadership teams and governors, professional associations and both national and social networks. Thus, as one headteacher related, “I opened up a Twitter account ...it was a fantastic thing as well because it opened up a world of educational research that I wasn’t aware of ...also helped to keep you level-headed” (HT3). For others, accountability structures such as a professional coach, a critical friend from the school, the local authority, or the governing body, were deemed invaluable. Others made use of emotional outlets as stress relievers which involved exercising a sense of humour, remaining calm, and staying focussed. Some headteachers engaged in daily interactions with students by teaching a class or doing lunchtime duty to keep the children at the centre of their moral purpose in becoming a headteacher. Finally, some saw it necessary to make a conscious effort to obtain rest which meant signing off at the end of a workday and during the holidays.

Co-headship (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007) is another strategy valued for its potential in enabling management of the challenge of workload. Here two headteachers share the headship of a school. One headteacher, new to the co-headship structure, saw it as “a very privileged position ... you’ve got someone to share that with ... [you] have this benefit of having somebody



else that you can throw ideas around. It just makes life much easier” (HT1). A senior headteacher in a co-headship was of the opinion, however, that “not everybody can be a co-head...you got to have the emotional intelligence ... [and] resilience” (HT14). Without trivialising such judicious admonition, it should be mentioned that co-headship is also valued for its potential to “reduce stress, increase the capacity [of headteachers] and the resilience” (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007, p. 58).

The correlation between leadership structure and workload was apparent during the interviews. It is consistent with the observation that “leadership structures are often frequently redesigned to meet changing needs” (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007, p. 37), a phenomenon to be expected in a climate of increasing workload brought on by a changing educational landscape. As an illustration, research into effective school leadership has shown a trend away from the traditional model of a single-head to distributed leadership, regarded as “a potential means of ameliorating some of the workload issues ... currently being faced by school leaders” (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007, p. viii). Coupled with this, is the assertion that “some patterns of distribution are more effective than others” (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b, p. 13) as further illustrated in the findings of this study. Presented here is a comparison I have made between the two most extreme cases in the sample, school A (co-headship) and B (a single-headship).

School A is an outstanding Ofsted-rated all-boys community school in London with approximately 1400 students from ages 11-18, having two male headteachers. School B is a mixed community school, also in London, with approximately one thousand, one hundred (1100) students and a female headteacher. Both schools boasted a distributive leadership structure. Two leaders were

interviewed from each school, that is, both co-heads from school A, and a headteacher and assistant headteacher from school B. The leadership structures for both schools are shown in Figures 8 and 9.

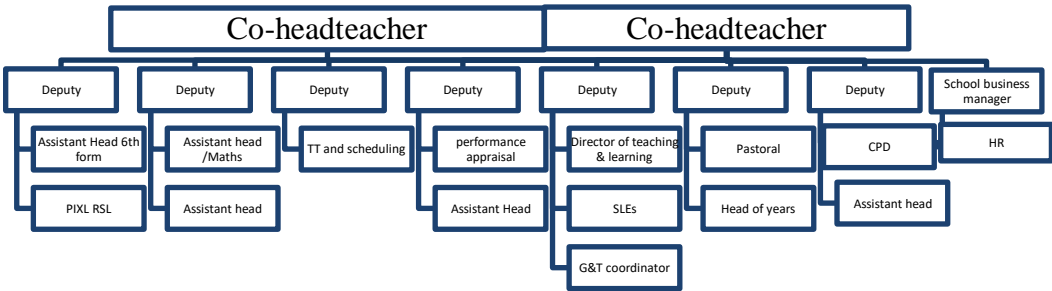


Figure 9. Leadership Structure in School A

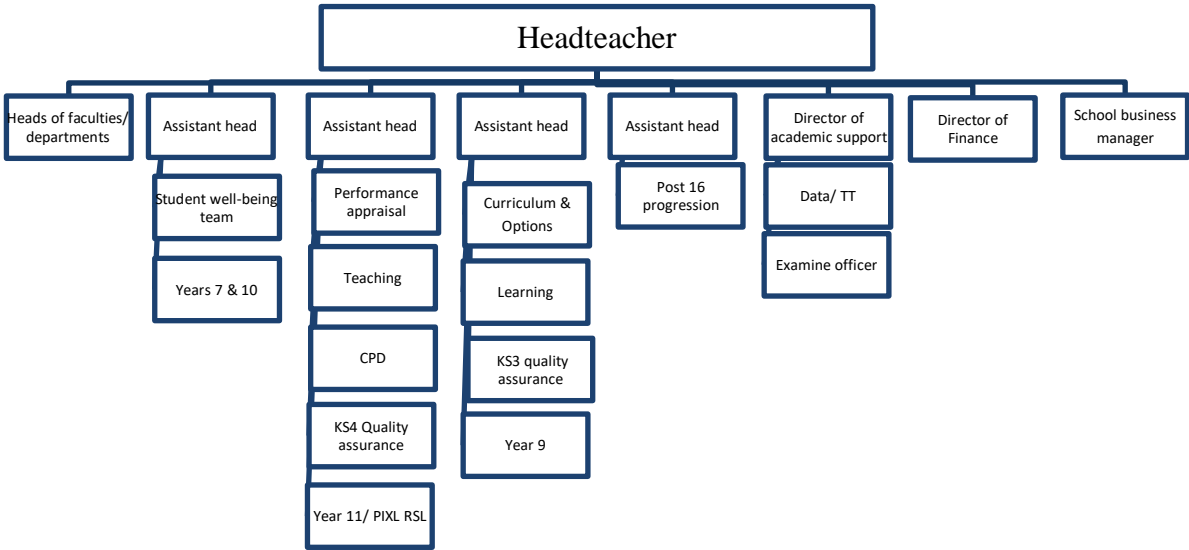


Figure 10. Leadership Structure in School B

School A’s leadership team was very large, consisting of two headteachers, seven deputy headteachers, two directors and numerous assistant headteachers at different levels. This was in

contrast to school B which had one headteacher, four assistant headteachers, one director, a bursar and a business manager. In School A, leadership meetings were conducted with both headteachers in attendance. They shared an office to accommodate their daily meetings and to facilitate a cohesive team approach to leadership. The workload was significantly lessened as the headteachers shared the daily routines of duties and meetings, each co-headteacher supervising only one lunchtime duty per week, the deputy headteachers having two lunchtime duties.

In contrast, in school B, which had an Ofsted rating of good, members of the leadership team had two lunchtime duties daily, with roles as shown in Figure 9. There was daily senior leadership team (SLT) briefing at 8:00 am and two weekly SLT meetings, that is, a one-hour meeting during curriculum time and a two-hour meeting after school. The assistant headteacher from school B expressed her desire to become a headteacher, but the workload resulting from this single-headed structure was deterring her. Commenting on the related workload, one respondent lamented that it was having a devastating impact on both her family life and health. She has since suffered a stroke, a sobering fact, considering that she was only in her mid-thirties. Ingham (2014) noted that the workload resulting from the single-headship structure is one of two notably common deterrents to headship throughout England.

The unrelenting and rapid pace of change also posed challenges for the school leaders that impacted on their health and well-being. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2006, p. 1) takes a holistic approach to health, defining it as the “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” The physical health of individuals is understood to be influenced by their ability to satisfy the basic needs of themselves and their

dependents. The definition of mental health that the UK's Faculty of Public Health (Mental Health Foundation, 2016, p. 10) adopted is, "a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to his or her community."

When the respondents were asked about the impact of the job on their well-being, that is, their physical, mental, and social well being, the headteachers' answers, in particular, were largely negative. All the serving and retired headteachers reported that they suffered from exhaustion and sleep deprivation; nine out of ten experienced extreme stress and physical ill health. Many reported feelings of anxiety and low mood. For example, HT1 reported that "physically, I worked harder when I was a [head of the department] but now as headteacher, I spend most nights awake worrying about something or the other...it is difficult to cope." He was not the only one, as another said, "I finished work at about [midnight]. Yesterday was the worst, and at the end of it, I just wanted to sit and cry. I don't ever seem to switch [off], which is not good you don't have the pleasure of a normal life" (HT9).

Though respondents acknowledged the seriousness of poor mental health, it was accepted by many as a normal part of the job; as HT15 related, "A headteacher colleague (female) is now off on stress leave because of unions and another headteacher (male) in the neighbouring local authority just committed suicide. This is a tough job." Cooper and Kelly (1993) had reported that women do suffer greater job dissatisfaction than their male counterparts although it was the men who reported greater mental ill-health.

The indicators of mental ill-health are very high for all the groups, as shown in Figure 10.

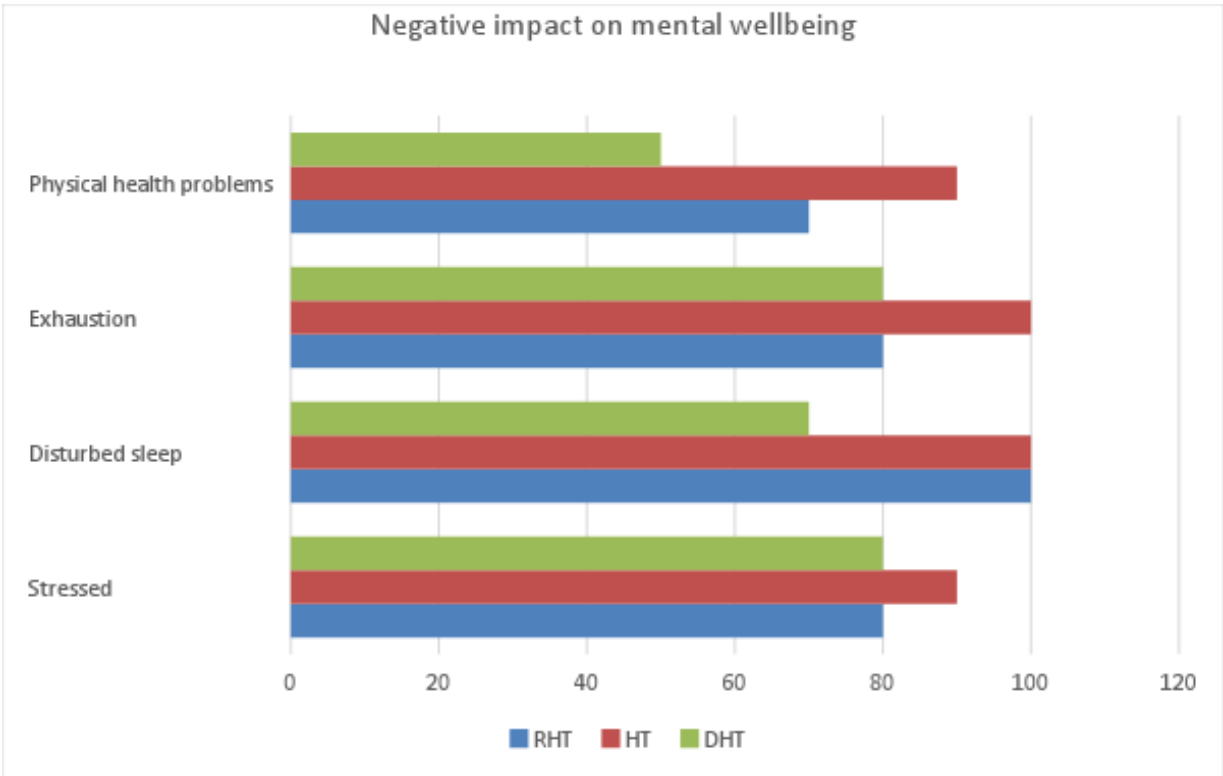


Figure 11. Negative Impact on Respondents’ Mental Well-being

The negative impact on headteachers’ mental well-being was significantly greater in all the categories in comparison to the deputy headteachers. Headteachers continued to experience symptoms such as disturbed sleep patterns after retirement, an indication of the irreparable effects on some headteachers. It was also noticeable that serving headteachers had the highest self-reported rates of stress, exhaustion, and physical health problems and, as one explained, “I hadn’t fully appreciated the huge mental and physical impact being a headteacher would have on my personal life” (HT6).

One of the main challenges reportedly faced by school leaders, particularly under, and since, Michael Gove’s administration as the education minister, has been the pace and nature of

educational reforms. Although this phenomenon of change is not new to school leaders (Earley *et al.* 2012), the rapid pace and often erratic nature of these changes have been significant and somewhat unprecedented. The phenomenon, coupled with the reforms being carried out under Michael Wilshaw, the then Chief Inspector of Ofsted, impregnated the education sector with, as has been seen by some headteachers and what I have chosen to describe as, a toxic embryo of catastrophic failures.

Fullan's (2007; 2016) observation that headteachers are crucial to successful change was a common understanding among the respondents. Their contention was with regards to the result of government's interpretation of this observation. The issuing of diktats to implement, without local authority support or consultation, resulted in many frustrated and demoralised school leaders. Alternatively, some have argued that decentralisation is a positive phenomenon since it gives schools greater autonomy. However, this devolution of power can result in poor leadership and thwarted school improvement as school leaders who lack the personal capacity, struggle to cope with the rapid changes (Moller and Schratz, 2008).

The issue here is not the devolution of powers as such but, rather, the inability of the school leaders to cope, as the rapid pace of the reforms prevented their personal capacity from being given sufficient time to develop. The findings concur with Fullan's (2007) insistence that, regardless of the reasons given for the failure to cope with these changes, the capacity, specifically, the personal capacity of school leaders, is a determining factor. In a climate of unrelenting changes and reforms, "the ability of educators ... to cope with rapid [and constant] change is essential to sustained success" (Lane, 2007, p. 85).

#### 4.4.3 Personal Capacity and Coping Experiences

If Fullan's (2007; 2016) observation and the respondents' views that headteachers are crucial to successful implementation of reforms are correct, then the personal capacity of headteachers must be at the forefront of any plans for educational reforms. To illustrate the significance of personal capacity in enabling school leaders to cope with challenges, a comparison between the personal capacity of four headteachers, as assessed by themselves, is shown on the spider diagram.

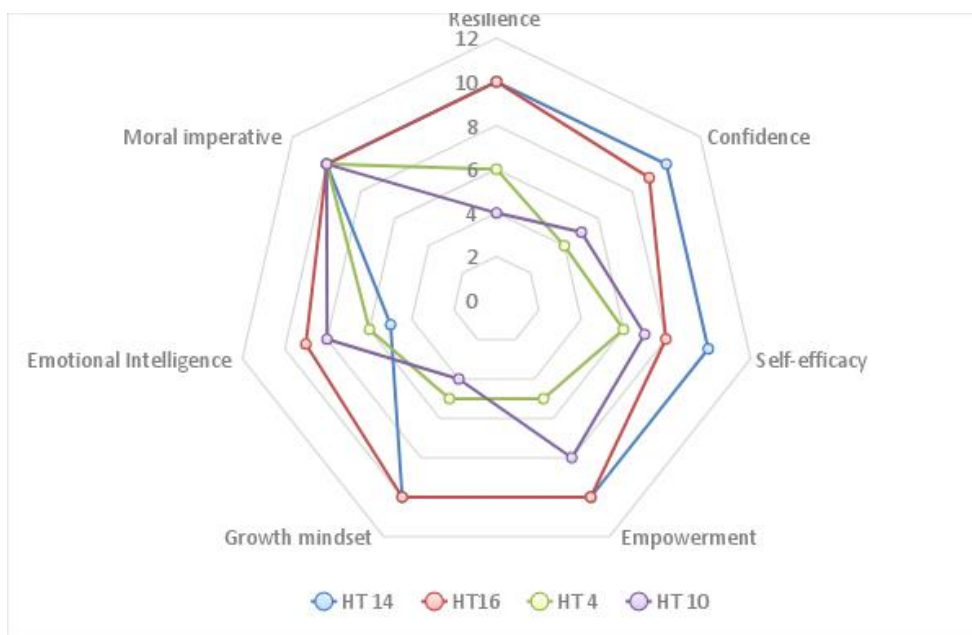


Figure 12. Personal capacity profile of headteachers self-rated low and high personal capacity

To put the discussion presented in this section in context, it is necessary to present a more detailed account of the experiences of each of these four headteachers in relation to their personal capacity and coping challenges, as reported by them in the interview and subsequent updates.

## **Vignettes of the personal capacity and coping experiences of four headteachers**

### **i) Headteacher sixteen**

HT16 was six years into her first headship at a primary school located in a deprived community and rated as outstanding by Ofsted. She considers herself to be an educational leader first and foremost but is concerned that the headteacher role has evolved into something of a business model and that this brings with it added responsibilities. To maintain her commitment to the educational leadership she had become trained as a national leader and since the interview also as an Ofsted inspector, keeping the focus on education and standards:

I have tried to retain my position as an educational leader and I invest a lot of time with my staff and pupils in the classroom in order to maintain that, and purely because I believe that being a school in challenging context I cannot afford to take my eye off the ball, so while other aspects of school are important, my time, role, I see, as being involved in the education of the children and ensuring that my staff remain highly motivated, and their CPD is around education and automatically benefit the children in the classroom (HT16).

HT16 came into teaching driven by a moral imperative, that is, a desire to provide the very best learning experience for children. She gained experience in the classroom and assiduously engaged in professional and leadership development programmes to enhance her knowledge and expertise. She detailed how, even as a headteacher, she maintained her focus as an educational leader par excellence:

Even though I'm a head teacher now, I get involved in the entire school in regards to the subjects, what's happening with the curriculum, ... so that I know what's happening and also to ensure that I can advise my staff where possible ... being a head teacher but keeping an eye on the curriculum at the same time and pushing myself to continue to develop, understand and learn, continue to learn has helped me gather that experience and maintain my position as an educational leader.



She was aware of her emotional intelligence which she understood regarding resilience and which she linked to the ability to cope with challenges. This, she said, was driven by internal values:

I am very aware that I'm a very resilient individual and I can cope highly, highly effectively with some of the challenges I have faced over the time I've been head teacher ... I went through a very tough time as a newly appointed head teacher in that very difficult context ... I think my resilience, my ability to cope under severe pressure is driven by my internal values, moral values, values around social justice (HT16).

HT16 proffered a very comprehensive understanding of personal capacity which amounted to an accumulation of such elements or qualities as confidence, knowledge, strength, beliefs, spiritual development, determination, resilience and being energetic. Thus:

I think it means... the obvious answer would be confidence ... but I think it goes deeper than that ... personal capacity is surrounded by that aspect of knowledge base, confidence and also the strength that you hold and the beliefs that you have. Your beliefs are something that is shaped by your life experiences and your internal understanding and also to do with your spiritual development. So personal capacity to me is about the strength you have, the knowledge base from which you spring, and the confidence that is attached to that (HT16);

and as to how it would be expressed in a person, she further explained:

... personal capacity is surrounded by all of those aspects and which is then seen in physical terms, you would see an individual being very determined, very driven, you know, going after things, ... not accepting failure, if you like or seeing that ... finding ways in which to succeed. And that to me is personal capacity; and that is energy that goes with it, and that altogether accumulates personal capacity (HT16).

She attributed her ability to cope to the fact that she was a very strong and determined individual, to her self-awareness regarding her strengths and weaknesses and to her ability to draw upon the strengths of others around her to accomplish her priorities.

My personal ability to cope with my situation? Yes I think the fact that I am a very strong individual, really determined. I know me, I know what I'm good at, I know what I'm not good at, and I use that to my advantage; so if there's something that I'm good at I work on that and make sure that I know everything that enables me to succeed in what I do. Is there something that I'm not good at? All I know is that there is an area of development, I personally draw on the people around me and look to see who in my team has that capacity and are able to fill that gap, if you like. So I draw on people and I draw on their strength in order to ensure that whatever my priorities are for the job role that I need, it is being met (HT16).

She placed great emphasis on prioritising her work so as to be able to cope with all the demands of her role. There was hardly any doubt that her school, and particularly the interests and needs of the children, were her priorities. As she made clear:

the first thing is I never ever compromise the children at my school. I see that as my first and ultimate responsibility, so no matter what else I do. When it comes down to it if I have to prioritise I give priority first and foremost to my position as a head teacher at the school and the challenging context of those children. They come first ... for example, I'm working with [supporting] a school in special measures and they are in dire condition and I realise that [I could not continue to give the support] I won't compromise my school and my children and my staff for me to support the others (HT16).

When asked if she had considered early retirement, HT16 indicated that her moral values would not allow her to retire early:

I have thought about when I would want to retire and at this moment I think ... I mean as an individual ... because I'm very morally led I would never give up ... this is how I see retirement.

At the same time, she would be prepared to retire if her work had ceased to have a positive effect on those she was serving, that it would impact them negatively or that she herself had lost all energy, drive and passion.

If my work is not good enough whatever I am and whatever I do, if I get to the stage when I think if what I'm doing is not good enough and it's going to impact negatively on the people that you serve and the community that you serve and the adults that you lead, then that will be the time that I'll be thinking get out of there ... If I got to the stage in my life where I thought, you know what I haven't got it in me any more, I haven't got the energy or the drive or the passion that I once held, then that would be the time that would retire. If I couldn't do it anymore, I would retire. But that's just on the moral basis (HT16).

In reporting on the impact of her job on her personally, that is, her physical, mental and social well-being, HT16 admits that the challenge and the impact have been enormous, both physically and emotionally. On the physical side, both her diet and physical exercise had suffered, all this because she loathed the thought of taking time out to address her physical needs, at the risk of thereby failing the children. She unfolded:

just recently I've been diagnosed with a severe vitamin deficiency ... because I've not concentrated on my diet; I've not concentrated on physical, you know, exercising. I sit and work all day all the time. I come home at stupid hours, work seven days a week and I've done that because I just feel that I have a huge responsibility and I can't afford to fail in the role that I have been assigned and to let people down because I always think these children have got just one chance, and me lazing around thinking, another day I'll do it tomorrow or the next day to me isn't good enough, you know that time wasting. That's the physical (HT16).

The emotional impact of the challenges she encountered was of a roller coaster type, ranging from feelings of pride and satisfaction to shame, from the agony of ostracism and near oblivion to the elation and joy of national recognition. Initially, it was agonising, as she continued to explain:

My first two years ... my leadership was questioned, not by anybody official but certainly I was painted by somebody who was a less than desirable ... my staff that was there and they spread a lot of negative rumours about me, all over, my professional colleagues, other headteachers didn't know me and already knew through those words and the

voices of those who became disaffected and eventually the school, so I felt quite ashamed about that (HT16).

Even after being exonerated in an investigation into the allegations made against her she had to struggle with the restrictions on her freedom to share the outcomes of the investigation:

... I couldn't tell anybody about what was happening to me ... and when there was a huge investigation and the report exonerated me, again I couldn't publish that it was for me ... and the general public and the professional bodies across the educational authority – none of them could actually see that report; I couldn't flag it up to anybody and say "look I've been exonerated, it was all lies it was all made up". I had to keep quiet about that but that was quite a challenge for me and quite an emotional ride that I had to be a part of and I couldn't do anything about it ... I was almost hidden; I kept myself hidden from the rest of the world for about a period of three years (HT16).

The negativism all changed 'overnight' when both the school and herself began receiving awards:

And it was only when the success of my school that was recognised locally, and actually not just recognised locally but was recognised nationally and people started to turn around and look because I was awarded. I received a letter two consecutive years from the minister of education ... congratulating me and my leadership and the success of my school and highlighting the fact that we were number one in [year] as a school across the entire country but then in [the next year] I received another letter which then said you are not just, in terms of schools but you are among the top schools in the entire country (HT16).

Successive years continued to see her receiving more awards on a national scale. The effects were phenomenal and emotionally vindicating:

I'll never forget the day I went to headteachers' conference in the local authority and this woman who would never have spoken to me - they must have been speaking about me and as I was walking past their table, for the first time ever she called out my name and I turned around to see who called my name out and I turned and I looked and she said nothing to me; she just looked at me but said nothing and I realised what she was doing, she was pointing out to whoever she was talking about me, and that hurt, that hurt ... Now all of a sudden she's my friend too, she is my friend too. It's a different world that

I'm in at the moment, as opposed to the one that I was traumatised in ... I was in that profession, and I had to prove myself to come out of being a victim (HT16).

What was particularly euphoric was the fact that it was not only her that had now risen from the doldrums but the school also:

Now for a school like mine that was deemed to be ... a failing school, a school that was hard to shift, to rise to the level it has and to be told not only your local authority but that you are across the entire country, was a great achievement, and that was the time when all of a sudden the reputation that had been spread of me negatively across the local authority suddenly changed overnight. All of a sudden I had head teachers from all over the local authority starting to sit up and listen ... (HT16).

HT16 felt that both headteachers and staff were subjected to a lot of pressure due to a large number of changes being initiated by the government and the rapid rate at which it was being done. Those identified included changes to the national curriculum, assessment, pay and performance related pay (PRP), and the previously introduced appraisal and capability guidelines.

All of those things have put an extenuating level of pressure on teachers and on headteachers too ... so many changes in such a rapidly short space of time including the assessment without levels. It all happened so fast, the pace of change over the under new ... government, this new venture has been so fast ... this fast-paced change; there has been a lot of casualties, serious casualties ... there are people so disaffected because of the changes they just haven't been able to cope (HT16).

She further described the effects of the government initiatives as both traumatising and exhausted with potentially fatal consequences:

It's exhausting; it's exhausting. And then to have external examiners come in and tell you it's still not good enough. It's no wonder that you hear about suicidal behaviours of teachers in this profession because they are related to this profession, medical conditions that are related to the teaching profession alone and that's down to stress and been told constantly that you're not good enough, that you were incompetent and to do something about it. It's traumatising (HT16).

HT16 did not think any of the government initiatives were hard to implement, but she attributed this to the staff's mindset which was similar to hers and which she had built in them over time.

In my school, none of the initiatives is difficult to implement. My staff have a mindset that is similar to mine. It has been built over time. No matter what I give them, they run with it ... So I think for us, because we worked ahead of time, some of those pressures weren't so heavy or as intense and those schools who haven't got the capacity to do that kind of forward thinking, well I think it comes down to leadership and management. If you got a head teacher that's not ahead of the game then the school isn't going to be ahead of the game and the staff won't be ahead of the game. So you know, in those schools where the head teacher isn't as strategic or forward thinking they probably face a lot more, in terms of challenge than perhaps my school has (HT16).

Notwithstanding, when asked if she found the entire process to be a deterrent to middle leaders and deputies aspiring towards headship, she was emphatic:

100%, 100% deterrent. People don't want to be told they're not good enough when they work exceptionally hard ... the vast majority of people in this profession want to do their best ... very few fall into the category of consciously incompetent because I don't think anyone wants to be consciously incompetent, even if it's down to self-pride ... I have seen so many people who ... are quite happy to do the assistant head or deputy head but they certainly don't want the headship because they are scared of being told directly by all these external people that they are just not good enough and it's not nice, it's not. Not everybody has the emotional resilience of ... I don't know, what animal can I compare it to, I just think strong – ox (HT16).

One challenge HT16 foresaw in the immediate future was the need to bounce back from the disappointing rating of good that the school had received in the previous Ofsted inspection and to secure the outstanding rating in the upcoming Ofsted inspection, that they felt they had been denied. Another challenge was in regards to whether she should remain in her school developing sustainability or whether to move on to pursue executive headship or even to train as an Ofsted inspector. The actual challenge then would be to develop the middle and team leaders so that

the school would be prepared to continue functioning without her. A final challenge was for her to ensure that the governors of the school were secure enough and capable of meeting the needs of the school in the twenty-first 21<sup>st</sup>-century provision. She was concerned that the school's governors had not sufficiently come to grips with the government's move towards academisation and were therefore unprepared for such eventuality.

we are not an academy, and a lot of schools in the authority where I work had been forced into academy status because of their [standing] nature and my governors haven't considered an academy status ... (HT16).

In concluding she said:

So I think the challenge for me at the moment is: getting the governors to understand the situation that some of these schools are in, maintained schools are in and making a judgement call and if that judgement call is now, we look externally and recruit private organisations that can deal with some of the services that the local authority initially gave us, and investing in doing that (HT16).

ii) Headteacher fourteen

HT14 has had over forty years' experience as a headteacher. He has served as headteacher in a large secondary boys' school in London, rated by Ofsted as 'Outstanding'. Over the past twenty years, he successfully led a large secondary boys' school in London, from being a low-performing inner-city school to becoming an oversubscribed 11-18 years school. Under his leadership the school developed an effective co-leadership model exemplified at both senior and middle leadership, that is, two headteachers and two heads of each department and a large leadership team comprising five deputies, six assistant headteachers and three directors. In addition to his responsibilities as head of his current school to which he is confined for three days per week on

average, he works with other schools as a partner in excellence associate and also as an area associate. He also serves as the chief executive of a recently established multi-academy trust.

HT14 did not consider himself to be an educational leader in the strictest sense of the term but claimed as his greatest gift, his ability to know his staff and select the right person for the right role. As he puts it, as the leader in the school:

I know which people to choose for jobs, and probably that's my greatest gift, actually putting my people on the right seats, if you like; putting the right people on the bus first of all and then [going] on the bus putting them on the right seats. Sometimes I appoint people, I don't know what they going to do but I do know that they have attributes that I like, ... and quite often it is not just teachers, it is the educational organisations. Quite often you get people in the organisation who are not teachers, who are able to show initiative (HT14).

HT14 believed that his background served as motivation for his own success which in turn gave him the drive to see others succeed:

I ... came from very working-class background ... probably my motivation comes from fear, fear of working down a mine, fear of dying early, as many of my friends have died suddenly because they went into those tough environments ... plus the fact, my own success, I realised even the lowest could succeed. And I think going to the school, from a very middle-class school where I was in before [named school], to a very lowly school - it gives me great pleasure to say that the results now in my lowly school ... is now beating that middle-class school that I came from. And that gives me great joy (HT14).

When asked what it was that he looked for in people with the personal capacity to cope, HT14 pointed to people who recognise what they can do; people who can take hard criticisms and corrections and then positively respond to them. Alongside this was his belief that emotional intelligence and resilience, which can be developed through mentoring, are essential components that make an effective headteacher. Responding to the related question he stated:



Resilience, understanding resilience is probably a big one ... I don't want people to fall over ... because I don't fall over when I get hit bad ... and people don't think head teachers don't get hit, ... I would be an ideal mentor for people like that [who are hit bad] because it's what all of us have gone through at some point or other ... resilience involves the ability to come back, have good ideas, and at the end of it have the endgame in mind (HT14).

HT14 displayed scant regard for government initiatives due the volume and rapidity of changes which, in his view, were the effect of political expediency and personal career gratification:

I've never paid much attention to them, apart from OFSTED ... I don't think there is any government initiative ... my wife is the primary school teacher and is pulling her hair out. She's a maths teacher and she says, "Again another change; enormous schemes of work the next year and as primary teacher you do a hundred and one subjects" ... because whatever the political persuasion comes in they've got to make their own name in a very short space of time. I think there have been 40 to 50 educational secretaries since 1975. If you ask me their names I can't remember, I don't know what they did. I don't know what the impact was. They probably did something for their own careers ... I don't think government initiatives is a relevant question any more (HT14).

At the same time, HT14 does not think that changes have to be a deterrent to aspiring headteachers if aspirants have ambition for self, pupils and staff. He mused:

I think this deterrent thing: if you're ambitious then you are not going to worry about things like that. I wouldn't even be thinking about things like that. You have to have a personal ambition ... as well because the ideal person for headship I suppose, are people who got their own ambition ... but alongside that, ambition to the students as well... and ambition for their colleagues (HT14).

Of the immediate challenges facing education, the key ones that HT14 saw, centred around politically driven government action which had the effect of discounting the self-motivation and self-esteem of students.

You've got a new government coming in and you really don't know what the challenges are going to be ... I mean the challenge that we're currently facing is ... what for me anyway are the key things and that's around the government discounting a lot of what

we cherish as educationalists in terms of the, self-motivation ... self-esteem I mean. The self-esteem of students because they are challenging the self-esteem of students by some of their actions, external examinations, discounting the second entries that sort of stuff, which only can be down to political drives, you know, it's taking us backwards (HT14)

HT14 was of the opinion, however, that it is a challenge

measuring what is good for the child or children and how we can improve their motivation ... and the biggest challenge [was in] making the government realise that ... once you set children on the motivational path you don't know where it's going to end (HT14).

He believed that very good headteachers are able to motivate children by giving them confidence and helping them to have confidence in themselves and their abilities.

iii) Headteacher ten

HT10 has been a headteacher of a secondary girls' school in London, which had just been rated by Ofsted as 'Requires Improvement', a significant drop from having been rated an outstanding school historically. She had been serving in this, her first headship, for ten years but was now planning to retire by the end of the academic year. HT10 considers herself a leader in education with the understanding that "the core task of the school is about delivering education and life chances for young people and also developing leadership capacity in the staff."

Even though headship itself was not her original consideration, HT10 regarded teaching as a sort of innate quality. She explained, "I guess going into teaching was kind of in my DNA if you like."

Against this backdrop, she described personal capacity as:

the “ability to have vision, resilience ... a lot of resilience, energy, ... about being prepared to, almost to give a part of your life to the role because, I think, you know you do have to live and breathe it” (HT10).

She was quite aware of her emotional capacity and this, as she further explained, was:

partly because I probably think quite a lot about what I do and but also I think I’ve had various opportunities in terms of my path through life that has made me reflect ... you’ve got to be quite reflective and unpack your own baggage and reflect on how you manage a whole range of pressures” (HT10).

One of the ways in which HT10 managed the pressures of the job was by compartmentalising different parts of her life, a coping strategy that she had developed over the years. She had developed this mechanism after having been brought to the verge of quitting her job earlier in her headship. She explained:

I inherited an incredibly difficult deputy, and there was a point where I had to decide whether I was going to stick with it or whether I was going to walk away from the job and I’m still here; so I decided to stick with it but I mean, that was quite a degree of personal cost at the time ... I would say now, in recent years I probably find it easier to balance, easier to perhaps compartmentalise different parts of my life ... I try to have Friday night and Saturday which are no work zones (HT10).

Another coping mechanism that she drew upon and benefited from was the support of her husband:

I’m lucky in that I’ve got a very supportive husband who kind of also soaks up some of the angst at times and handles that because he is had a very responsible job, not in education but very people involved. But he’s very good at being a listening post, if you like and reflecting things back for me (HT10).

Her decision to retire, however, was ostensibly not due to the drop in the school's performance but rather, to the feeling that the costs of working under the pressures of the role outweighed the benefits. In other words, she thought it was no longer worth it:

The thing that really made my decision [for retirement], really pushed me to make my decision was a friend who I was at university with, shared a house together and she was a teacher and died two years ago aged 56 financially then why are you still doing it? And when you look at it in those terms you kind of get to the point when you think actually I do need to step off the treadmill (HT10).

HT10 viewed systems of leadership, along with other leadership models that were being introduced alongside academies to address headteacher shortages, as being situation specific and whose effectiveness depended on three things: the circumstances of the school at a particular time, the people who you have available within the school at a particular time and the levels of expertise and experience that they had. She was convinced that recent changes in educational policies were a deterrent to middle leaders moving into headship and had found it difficult to respond to the changes in affecting students' options because these changes were militating against the moral driving force underlying their roles, namely, the needs of the students.

This moral commitment to children's well-being was demonstrated in non-governmental initiatives that they had implemented. She elaborated:

I do quite a lot of things that are ... that we are not necessarily required to do but that which we like to choose to do ... For example, we've recently done quite a lot of work on mental-health and we had a thing about mental-health and well-being and a pop-up village some weeks ago, which was a part of a wider piece of work we've done. We haven't been told to do that by anybody. We think that's important to be addressing both ... making sure that there are ... not a stigma but also raising young people's' awareness and staff awareness actually, about mental health issues and people's' ability to talk when

they are feeling stressed and all of those things, so it's kind of ... we're directed to do it but we do it because it's the right thing to do (HT10).

In looking ahead, HT10 saw headteachers being faced with the challenge of supporting the staff's morale following on from their difficult experience with Ofsted in which they were rated 'Requires Improvement'.

The most difficult thing for us is Ofsted because we had a difficult experience with Ofsted earlier this year and so we're currently a 'requires improvement' school in terms of managing ... despite the fact that we still think we are a good school and all of the data suggests that we were good school. Keeping peoples chins up if you like (HT10).

HT10 was also concerned about a looming budget problem, there being insufficient funding to meet the increasing demands. Related to that would be issues of recruitment:

each year it gets a bit harder to balance the budget because we keep having to do more things with no money, well no extra money ... with costs like pensions, national insurance and wages are going up ... it's not a comfortable place to be when you know your staff find it very difficult to afford to live. The next looming problem would be also recruitment (HT10).

#### iv) Headteacher four

HT4 previously served five years in a secondary school in the Midlands and was now serving in a London secondary school rated by Ofsted as outstanding. The school is situated in a relatively affluent area with the majority of the student population is from middle-class families. In describing her earliest leadership experience, she reminisced on her role as a student leader in sixth form, in which she enjoyed having others looking to her for leadership and valuing her contribution:

I think the first really meaningful [experience] was actually when I was in the sixth form and I was the deputy house captain or vice captain and the thing that I enjoyed the most about that, we were given the task of organising an event for the younger students and it

was left to myself and my partner who was the house captain, and we organised a big treasure hunt for our younger students and really enjoyed that and I found out things about myself that I didn't realise before. And I enjoyed that sense of younger people looking to me to lead and valuing what I had to show them and share with them. So yes, that was my earliest I think. It really resonated with me (HT4).

Becoming a headteacher, however, was not planned. For her, it was an act of serendipity.

I was first head, and that was a kind of accidental headship because the head went sick and I had to step into the role, and he was the executive head so worked with him in a federation model, so he was a huge influence, and I'm still in contact with him now (HT4).

HT4's conceptualisation of personal capacity is rather succinct:

I think it is a combination of, I suppose, attributes, if that's the right word, attributes and the context of the environment that you find yourself in (HT4).

She believed that these attributes together enabled leaders to deal with the challenges encountered in their roles:

when they [the attributes] are aligned well it means that you can do an awful lot more than you think you can. And some of the challenges that you face, perhaps in your personal life, whether it's as a parent, or a friend or family member, those [attributes] inform your leadership and the way you deal with situations (HT4).

She understood personal capacity to involve both empathy as well as the ability to survive in the job. She, however, saw it as more than these and therefore further explained:

It's the recognition that even in the most testing situations, and you face them on a daily basis as a head actually, you have a sort of understanding that you can move through it, and the more of those situations the more of the nettles [difficulties] that you grasp and you survive. You do more than survive ... it's not that you enjoy it but you learn from it and you get a buzz from that, or you don't and I think if you don't then you say it's not the job for me (HT4).

Key features that she thought should be looked for in those with personal capacity are that:

they're not daunted by barriers; they see them as things which can be overcome, so yes, and optimism, you need optimism, not blind optimism but that sense that things can

improve, they may not improve in the way you anticipated but things can always shift (HT4).

HT4 reported that she had become increasingly aware of her emotional capacity as she gained more experience in headship and that this has enabled her to employ strategies to cope with situations in her role as headteacher. For example:

as I've got older, and this is my second headship, ... even things like looking more carefully at how I diarise meetings ... What I know is that my emotional capacity is less towards the end of a term and [the end of] a year, so I would look to avoid meetings which are going to be really quite confrontational, where people are angry and [I would be ] trying to actually look strategically at finding the balance and being more proactive in management and not as reactive (HT4).

She found this awareness of her emotional capacity to be essential in coping with stress. This was particularly so during the first year of her headship in which she underwent loneliness and great stress, due to separation from her family.

I haven't always coped with that well, you know, when I was younger, younger in the role. Even the first year I came here, which was incredibly lonely, I don't think I've felt as lonely in my life, and you know, facing a lot of hostility from different stakeholders, hostility wariness, mistrust, all that sort of thing and I was living away from my family, my daughters were still living in [named borough] so I only saw them at weekends which was incredibly difficult ... You need that balance [of family structure] ... to be able to tap into those different parts of me is really important (HT4).

HT4 had seriously contemplated early retirement due to the huge toll exacted on the role of headteacher. Notwithstanding, she did not envisage being entirely divorced from education and so was considering alternatives within the sector, such as an executive role. However, she believed that increased pressures such as new accountability measures, were too risky and were deterring prospective aspirants from headship. In her own team, she lamented:

there is nobody currently who is saying that they want to be a head and that's a concern. A couple are toying with the idea of deputy headship but nobody really wants that total accountability or the pressure that they see ... they're not naive, they know any pressure that comes ... A case in point with my team, if I said right, you could be an associate head and work with me with a view to when I move on you taking over, there's probably at least a couple that might then but at the moment they would say why would I want to? I don't want that pressure." (HT4).

She detested the micromanagement that the new accountability system was forcing the governors to engage in and its potentially deleterious effect on headteachers. Hence:

Governors are, of course, increasingly themselves. being held accountable and so the pressure is transferred to heads and that feels pretty relentless. You are under scrutiny all the time ... and actually with my governing body... you have to be very careful to keep that balance of not being micromanaged and having that imposed on you because the joy is gone. If you have to be a head leading with one arm tied behind your back ... forget it, I would walk off and do it (HT4).

Of all the challenges that she has had to contend with over her two headships, the most difficult had been the militancy of the teachers' union representative. It brought her to the brink of resigning. She explained:

I've never experienced anything like it. It had destabilised my staff. They are unhappy, at each other's throats, morale is low; and that has happened quite rapidly between the period of February and I suppose it really peaked early May ... Results have gone up and up and yet they are more discontented, miserable, anti-, anti-me as I heard more anti-everything than they have ever been and that is really hard; ... it is the only time I have come close to resigning because I actually thought four years, huge amount of work...not just me, my team, everybody and it's been reduced to this? That's the point where you do question why am I doing this? (HT4).

HT4 found the experience to have been especially disappointing, bewildering and painful, as she considered it reasonable for her to expect that after four years she would have had enough



'credit in the bank' regarding her personal reputation, to prevent people from believing malicious rumours or such the like. She proceeded to relate an example:

I'll give you an example, where this local rep stood in front of a meeting of my staff [of nearly an hundred] ... and told them that I had placed staff on capability ... [in fact] since I have been head nobody has been placed on capability ... that's really hard, really hard and it hurts, it's painful, it's personally painful; and the comments about me personally, about my children, you know, it's been no holds barred (HT4).

When asked about her coping mechanisms HT4 revealed some weak moments:

Sometimes I cope really well, sometimes just I burst into tears, you know and throw my toys out the pram and I'm going to resign, you know; I said; 'I'm resigning, I've had it' (HT4).

Despite these weak moments, however, HT4 had been able to bounce back and was still in her headship role leading an outstanding school. Strategies and mechanisms that she had utilised included

I've booked a holiday which was really [impossible] last year but this year I've said I need to do that, I need to recharge my batteries because to come back and do what's going to be required which is to repair the damage that she's done to my staff is going to take a lot of, you know, different sort of interaction ... I've also kind of conversely or perversely perhaps done a lot more at weekends of social things, you know, gone to pop concerts, went to a hen weekend on the weekend. I was knackered it was the last thing I wanted to do but it was great. It was completely different. I came back yesterday still knackered but I felt like I had had a mental break, so doing that sort of stuff as well (HT4).

HT4 also highlighted the benefit of having a network system as part of her coping mechanism:

The only other thing that I would add, which again I think is quite unique to [named local authority] ... is that the support and the camaraderie of the head teachers is absolutely brilliant. They are you know, fantastic. We do lots of emailing almost on a daily basis sometimes, and a lot of it's humour as well, and that has kept, I think, all of us sane the last few months where we've been battling. Yes, it's definitely part of whole support system ... I mean, compared to my previous contact in [named local authority] where heads were not supportive. It was very much, you know, you're on your own but a lot of

back stabbing. No, it's very different here, very different ... Sometimes only other heads can support you because there are some things you can't share with your own team (HT4).

### **A comparison of Personal capacity of the four headteachers**

Having presented a profile of these four headteachers it can be observed that two of these headteachers, namely, HT16 and HT14, represented some of the interviewees with the highest personal capacity. The conclusion drawn from HT10 is that personal capacity can deteriorate while HT4 shows that personal capacity can be rebuilt. HT14 who had one of the highest personal capacity ratings overall, having coped effectively with changes and the various reforms over the past two decades, effectively engages in networking, leading and coaching other headteachers, which is an expression of a growth mindset. The obvious discrepancy here is his low score on emotional intelligence, though the interview added clarity to what here seems like an anomaly. He rationalised that his experience, commitment and love for his staff and students compensated for this lack. As he stated, "Even when I don't handle things well, they forgive me because they know my heart" (HT14) It is easy to see how the staff could have excused this seeming lack of emotional intelligence because within five minutes of conversation with him one becomes convinced of his passion for educating this generation. He is a successful system leader, having coached and developed other headteachers; he displays a resilience developed through years of experience and has a strong moral purpose, that is, a deep conviction that he is increasing the life chances of his students, thereby demonstrating aspects of personal capacity that has enabled him to cope effectively in his role.

HT16, whose personal capacity was also rated amongst the highest, though not able to report many years of experience in school leadership, displayed like passion and a morale purpose, that is, commitment and love for teaching and for increasing students' life chances. She had scored highly in all the components, though slightly lower in self-efficacy and confidence. This could have been a direct effect of the adverse experiences she had encountered in her school. Notwithstanding, she had shown that she had the distinct ability to adapt and respond to challenging situations and circumstances, in order effectively cope and function in her role. She also shared how she overcame these challenges through determination, resilience and a growth mindset and went on to successfully lead her school to be in the top one per cent nationally. To cap it all, both she and her school received national awards for her service to education.

A low personal capacity rating correlates with the inability to cope effectively with change. HT4, who at the time of the interview was rated very low for personal capacity, was on the brink of being forced out of her job by the staff union. The likelihood of her losing her job resulted from having to implement the PRP and the changes to policy and practice that followed. During this upheaval, she felt she lacked support from either a colleague, a network, the local authority or her family, who had yet to join her in her new locality. Her mental health declined rapidly to the level that she had reduced her work week to only two days in office. When contacted to review her transcript of the interview, she shared how other local headteachers, hearing of her dilemma, had rallied around her, shared their expertise through coaching and supported her in combating the issues. Since the interview, she has been back in the office enjoying a level of normality as she continues to lead her school with renewed vigour and confidence. Thus, HT4 has thereby attested to the understanding of personal capacity that emerged in the literature, that it, is not a fixed or static characteristic but rather one that can be built or rebuilt and also that its

components such as self-efficacy, confidence and resilience, that she was now demonstrating, can be developed, howbeit, in her case, through the local network of headteachers.

Alternatively, HT10, who also scored low on personal capacity, has shown that it is possible for personal capacity to deteriorate as easily as it is to be developed. She never had before experienced failure of an Ofsted inspection but after one such failure concluded that there was no redemption for her:

At this time in my life [career] there is no coming back from this. To be honest, I do not have the motivation even to try (HT10).

It was evident that with two years from the previously mandated retirement age and other personal factors such as family commitment, HT10 was not motivated to continue in her role, despite many years of leading outstanding schools. The suggestion here, as earlier demonstrated by HT4, is that personal capacity is an underlying factor enabling headteachers to cope with changes. Although HT4 was subjected to personal and professional abuse by staff unions in the process of implementing these reforms, with a supportive network, a factor of personal capacity, she was able to bounce back and remain in the post.

To further highlight the significance of personal capacity in enabling school leaders to cope with challenges, I have depicted the correlation between their personal capacity and their coping experiences on a four-quadrant grid (Figure 13). The horizontal axis represents their self-rated personal capacities ranging from high to low. The vertical axis represents their reported experiences with challenges ranging from coping effectively to not coping at all (total failure).

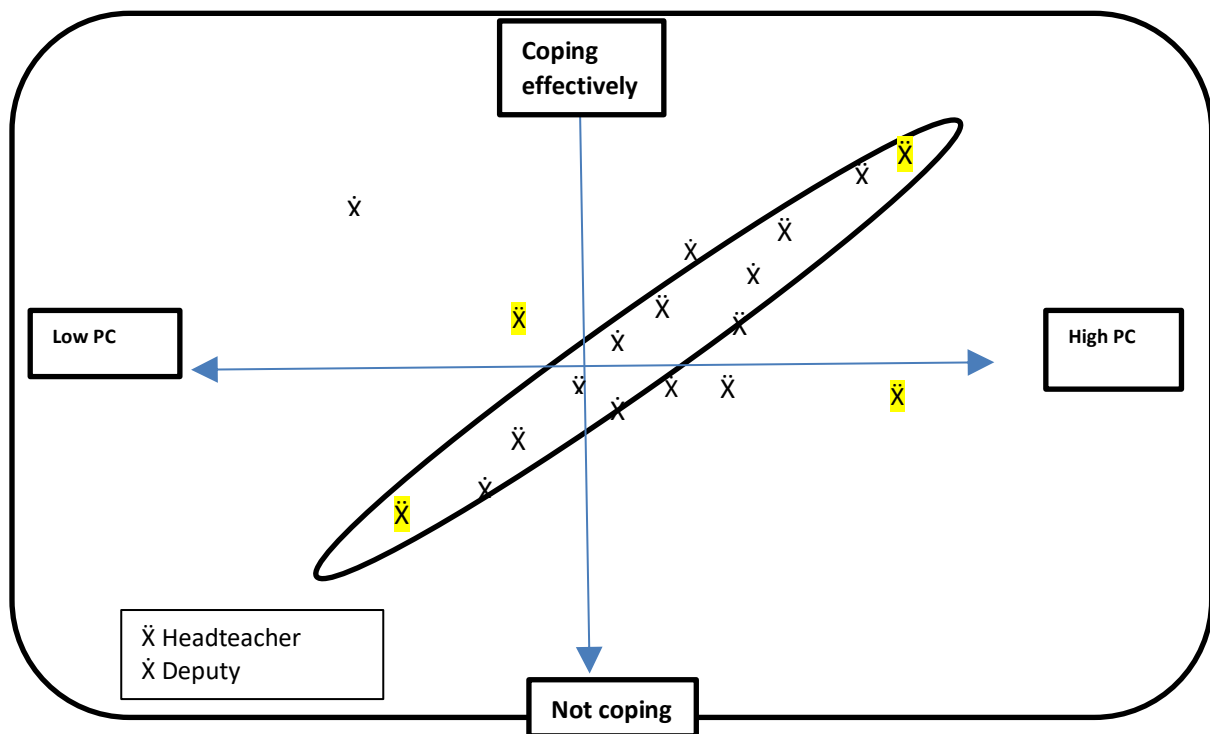


Figure 13. Correlation between personal capacity and coping with challenges

The quadrants describe the positionality of each respondent as follows:

- Quadrant one – high personal capacity and positive experience of coping
- Quadrant two – low personal capacity and positive experience of coping
- Quadrant three – low personal capacity and negative experience of coping
- Quadrant four – high personal capacity and negative experience of coping

The graph shows that there is largely a strong positive correlation between the school leaders' personal capacity and their experiences of coping. Where this occurs, it is circled as shown. The four headteachers that were discussed previously are highlighted to show their positions relative to the rest of the sample. However, it is important that the background of the deputy represented by the anomaly be understood. He received a low personal capacity rating though he reported that he was coping within his role. This paradox could be explained by the fact that

his retirement was very imminent and, in reality, most of his work had been reassigned to others by the headteacher.

In conclusion therefore, the study shows that there is definitely a positive correlation between headteachers' ability to cope with the challenges in their role and their personal capacity: those with high personal capacity can be expected to cope; conversely, it is highly likely that those with low personal capacity, will fail to do so. The findings also suggested that personal capacity is not dependent on the type of school or context but on the individual's own ability to function in one's role. In a climate of ongoing reforms and unrelenting challenges, the personal capacity of headteachers, therefore, cannot be ignored, if indeed, as Fullan (2007; 2016) has intimated and the interviewees have confirmed, they are at the centre of educational change. This is what Moller and Schratz (2008) had also argued. They had recognised the central role that educational administrators played in the transformation of the educational system in Eastern Europe but were critical of the fact that the development of their personal capacity had been neglected, resulting in the entire process of reformation being stymied/stagnated. Those at the centre of the changes just were not able to cope. They had lacked the personal capacity. The conclusion has deep implications for recruitment and retention as well as talent management and identification.

#### **4.4.4 Summary of Research Question two**

The main challenges arising from the rapid pace of policy changes and reforms were the intensification of the decision-making process. Intensification, that is, "the increased volume, scope, speed and complexity of constraints on and demands of decision-making" (MacBeath *et*

*al.*, 2009, p.10), was the common experience of the school leaders in this study, irrespective of the type of school in which they served. The decentralisation of the educational services by local authorities added yet another layer of intensification, as the school leaders did not receive the necessary training in implementing the reforms. As a consequence of the decentralisation, the school leaders were left without the legal support and protection and were thus rendered personally and professionally vulnerable to staff unions. The impact of the unrelenting and rapid pace of change, the climate of uncertainty and unpredictability, increased workload, managing the impact on and expectations of staff, including potential aspirants to headship, have had a negative and even fatal impact on the health and well-being of school leaders.

School leaders had employed various strategies to cope with the challenges. The most successful of these included the creation of effective teams, networking with other leaders and keeping abreast of the national changes. It also involved drawing upon support systems such as spouses and family members, leadership teams and governors, professional associations and both national and social networks, accountability structures such as a professional coach, a critical friend from the school and even the local authority or the governing body. Leadership structures such as co-headship and forms of system leadership were also methods adopted to cope with the challenges.

The comparison between the personal capacity of the school leaders found that there was a strong positive correlation between their personal capacity and their experiences of coping: headteachers who coped effectively had a high personal capacity rating while, conversely, a low personal capacity rating correlated with the inability to cope. Also, it was found that although it

is possible to build personal capacity and individual components such as self-efficacy, resilience and growth mindset, personal capacity can also deteriorate.

## **4.5 RESEARCH QUESTION THREE**

### **What Role Does Personal Capacity Play in the Career Trajectory of School Leaders?**

Gronn's (1999) career model of leadership was found to be very helpful in addressing this research question. He had delineated four sequential phases, the formation, accession, incumbency and divestiture phases, through which he thought it possible to follow the entire career journey of leaders to headship. In this model, the progression of senior leaders to headship would be expected to occur in the second or accession phase where leadership aspirants begin to evaluate their capacity for leadership and, being assured that they do have the personal capacity for headship, begin to vie for the next step, the headteacher role.

The study included seven deputies and eight serving headteachers. Gronn (1999, p. 38) argued that:

By this stage leaders have developed and honed their public personas, they have learned to project their authoritativeness, and they now seek to give further expression to their quest for mastery and self-realisation by gaining experience through circulating amongst various elite postings and leadership roles.

For this reason, it was imperative that I focus on the personal capacity of these leaders who by this stage should have refined their skills, notwithstanding their "inner psychological tug of war" (Gronn 1999, p. 39) during these accession and incumbency stages.



There were four retired headteachers in the study, but their experiences of the divestiture stage varied in that they did not all leave the divestiture stage due to “ageing, illness, lack of fulfilment or incapacity” Gronn (1999, p. 39). On the contrary, though it was true for two of them, the other two were still actively involved in the training and development of future leaders. Gronn’s (1999) model is here adapted to show components of personal capacity which influence the different phases of the leadership journey. The diagram summarises the findings in which personal capacity is pictured as a multifaceted ability that is identifiable over one’s career trajectory. Respondents were able to highlight their experiences at, and throughout, the different phases of their leadership journey, commencing with the deputy (inclusive of all senior leaders) headteachers in the accession phase through to the headteachers in both incumbency and the divestiture phase.

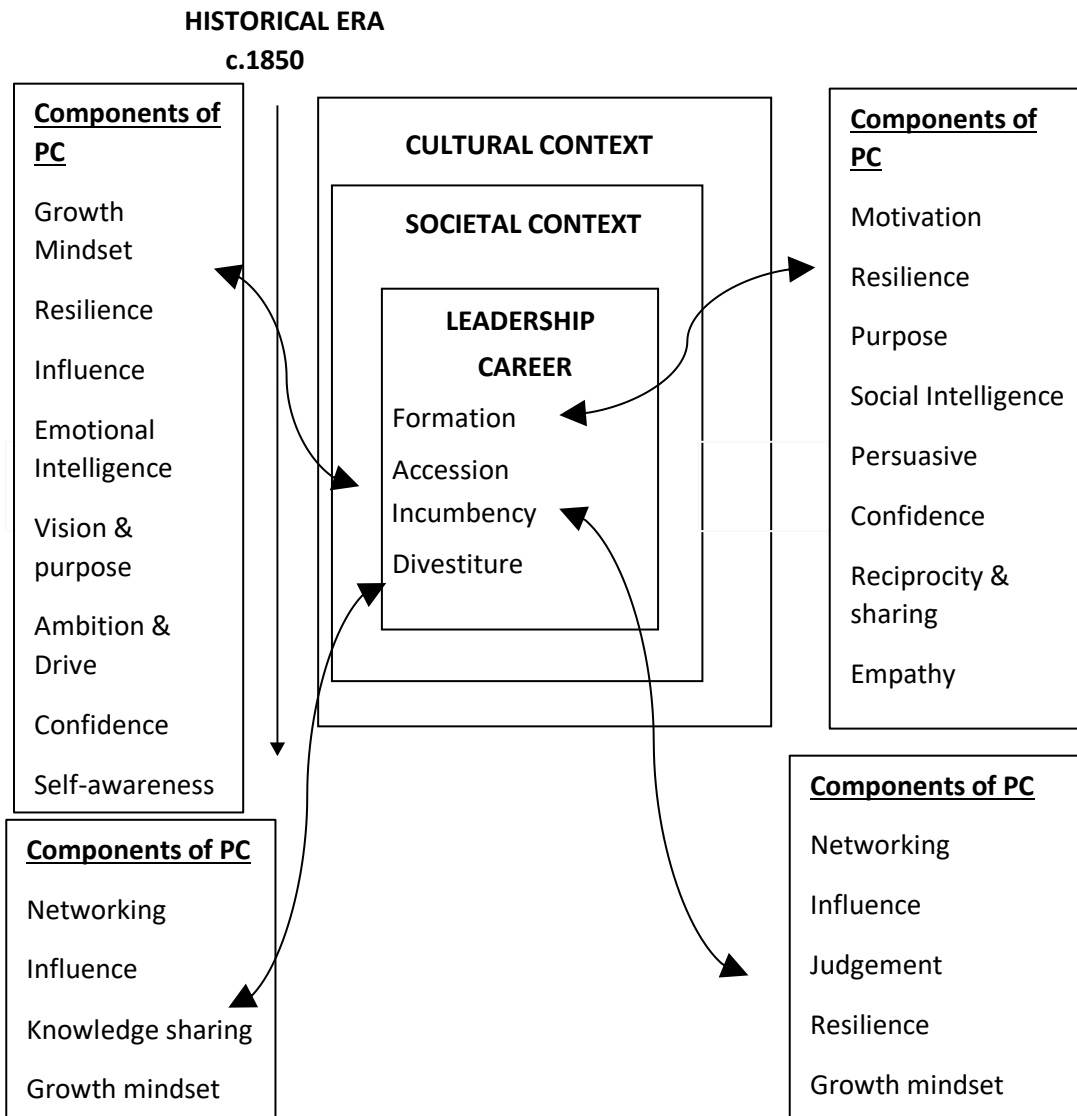


Figure 14. Diagram showing the relationship between Gronn's model and personal capacity

Also, Gronn's (1999) model acknowledges the ongoing impact of social and cultural influences on the leaders. The model made it possible to determine whether, in keeping with research question three, personal capacity played any role in their progression through the phases and if so, what that role was.

To present the findings regarding the accession phase, I have considered it worthwhile to identify the number of senior leaders who were aspiring to headship and those who were not. The

respondents were asked about the perception of the role of a headteacher vis-à-vis their career progression. Table 12 summarises their responses.

Respondents	Perception of role or progression	Percentage of respondents
Deputy headteachers	Would like to become a headteacher in the next 12 months	28.5% of NPQH trained DHT
	Very hesitant/fearful at present but would like to become a headteacher at some point in the future	43% including NPQH trained DHT
	Happy in present role no interest in becoming a headteacher and retiring in the next 12 months	28.5% of the DHT
Headteachers	New heads very excited by the opportunity and challenge (less than a year)	22% of the serving head
	Would like to take on another headship but find it very risky in the current climate.	22% of HT, leading good or outstanding schools and would like the challenge of a 'Requires Improvement' (RI) school
	Undaunted by fear and thrive on a challenge.	44% of HT are system leaders
	The job has become unbearable, will be retiring in the next 12 months	11% - originally 22% but one head with the support of the local HT forum has returned to work
Retired leaders	Served as system leaders	66% of RHT - both are still contributing to teacher training as authors and as coaches on Future leaders

*Table 12. The respondent's perception of and interest in the role of a headteacher.*

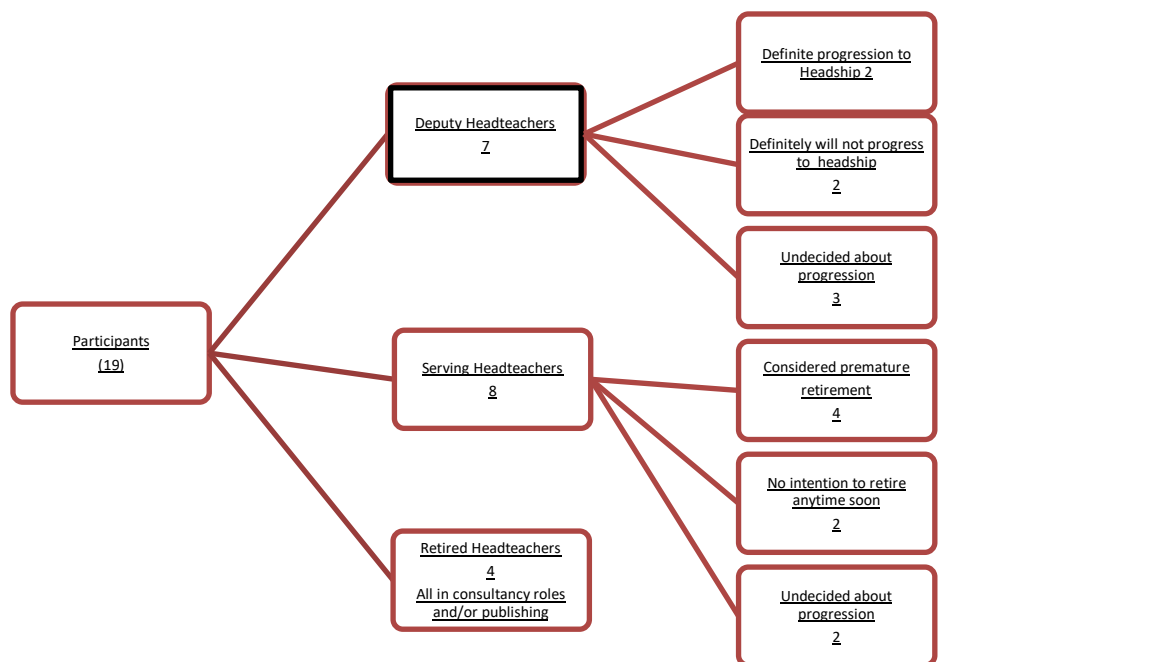


Figure 15. Career progression intentions of respondents

Two of the seven deputy headteachers stated that they had no interest in becoming a headteacher. Three were undecided, and two asserted that headship was the next step. These findings did not reflect the natural progression to Gronn’s (1999) incumbency phase. They were in keeping, however, with Dimmock’s (2012) observation that even where the demand for headteachers was on the increase, more middle leaders were being turned off from the prospect of progressing to headship, and fewer senior leaders were making the transition. Other authors, such as Graham (2004), have shown that, although teachers may aspire to become middle-level leaders or even vice-principals, they too tend not to aspire for the principalship. Recruitment of headteachers continues to be an ongoing issue, as attested by the National Association of Headteacher’s survey (NAHT, 2016). It reported that “schools that had vacancies [were] struggling to recruit headteachers/principals in sixty-nine per cent (69%) of cases” (NAHT, 2016, p. 2). It was also attested to by the Teach First, *et al.* (2016) projection of an impending shortage of nineteen thousand school leaders by the year 2022.

#### 4.5.1 Deterrents to Headship

The findings identified four main barriers or deterrents to becoming a headteacher that aspiring deputy headteachers have had to contend with (MacBeath *et al.*, 2009; Chagger and Bischoff, 2015). These were fear of failure, work-life balance and well-being, lack of positive role models, and, as previously discussed (4.4.2), the pace of educational reforms.

##### **Fear of Failure**

Headteachers' fear of failure and its effect on them, as witnessed by many deputy headteachers, stood as a precipitous obstacle to headship. This fear of failure was evident throughout most of the interviews. The respondents described the culture as castigatory, with the job and financial insecurity being the norm, and with headteachers in trepidation over "risks to their mortgages" (HT15). There was also the fear of not finding another headship post if they were not successful in their current ones, a concern expressed in HT3's rhetorical question, "Where do fail headteachers go?" Such fears stemmed from insecurities brought on by increased accountability, with the related implications for job security.

One headteacher (HT10), who has since retired, shared in anguish the experience of having her school being graded 'Requires Improvement' (RI) under the new framework. This report was devastating for her, a headteacher of a historically outstanding single-sex school that had never been given such a low grading. She felt demoralised, and it seemed that her ten years of leading the school was coming to a close. "It's a sad way to end one's career, but I don't have the strength to carry on," she admitted. The negative impact of this and other failures have resulted in job vulnerability, hence, the growing fear by many headteachers and deputy headteachers. This fear

has resulted in hesitancy in decision making, which can be catastrophic in this current climate of unparalleled challenges. As one headteacher mused, “Who employs a failed headteacher? I have a mortgage and a young family” (HT3); and another, “[Headteachers] are not well supported. You have a culture that is very punitive” (HT2). They were concerned that failure of their schools would call into question their proficiency to fulfil their roles as headteachers.

The majority of deputy headteachers in this study articulated similar frustrations and fears regarding job security. They believed that headteachers would be the first to lose their jobs if their school was rated less than good and taken over by academy chains. Both headteachers and deputy headteachers felt headteachers were isolated and lacking support, especially when confronted with negative repercussions from staff and their unions in implementing the reforms. Chagger and Bisschoff (2015) found that the issue of job security, which was related to the increased accountability measures, and the associated fears, posed a barrier to headship. They found that deputy headteachers, in particular, baulk at the public accountability that headteachers are subjected to through such indicators as Ofsted inspections and league tables.

Personal capacity, as defined in this study, incorporates confidence within oneself and specifically in one’s capabilities to be able to counteract the potentially crippling effect of the fear of failure that both headteachers and deputy headteachers experience when faced with challenges to their jobs and the associated consequences brought about by the increased accountability. Driven by a mindset that is characteristic of personal capacity, those with high personal capacity refuse to accept failure as an end in itself but rather as an opportunity to learn and achieve success. The potentially demoralising effect of a failed Ofsted inspection, for example, would only drive them

to explore and make use of whatever networks are available for their growth and improvement, and that of the school on the whole, so enabling them to bounce back and be suitably prepared for the next inspection.

### **Work-Life Balance and Well-being**

Another potential deterrent was the difficulty of maintaining what the respondents believed to be a good work-life balance. The meaning of this concept has seemed rather complex and elusive (Manfredi and Doherty, 2006; Bruton, 2012) but there is a general acknowledgement that it refers to an acceptable and satisfying balance being struck between work and leisure, between social and professional lives, between time spent with family and at work.

The majority of the respondents reported a conflict between work and family life, the latter including commitments such as caring for either children or parents, being with the family or relaxing by themselves and with friends. The ability or inability of headteachers to create the balance between their role as a headteacher and time for the family, greatly influenced the decision of senior leaders to make the transition to headship. Male respondents reported difficulties with work-life balance. For example, one male respondent, who lived near to the school premises disclosed, “my children attend the school, I leave with them at seven-thirty, they usually had to wait around until five – staff meeting or whatever meeting, so they suffered a little bit” (HT2).

The female deputy headteachers shared greater concerns than their male counterparts, especially those males whose spouses fulfilled the carer role while they merely assisted. There

was one exception, however; a female deputy headteacher whose spouse ran his business from home. She found this to be a real advantage “in the sense that he helps out a lot” (HT19). The tension is heightened, however, by the cultural expectations some women faced, as HT8 explained, “My family [community] loves the idea of me being a deputy headteacher and even a headteacher ... but they expect me to still be the [typical mum in our culture] and to come home and cook and clean.” The lack of support for female school leaders in balancing family commitments and work had resulted in them deferring or declining opportunities to transition to headship, by those ridden with the compunction of taking their work home daily and the negative impact it had on their families, especially when younger children were involved. As one deputy retold a conversation she overheard between her daughter and a friend:

I was cooking, and they were doing their homework and my daughters friend said, ‘oh you’re so lucky, your mum’s a teacher she can help you with your homework’ and my daughter (9 years old) turned and said, ‘my mum never helps me with my homework, she’s always too busy marking or planning.’ I thought, oh my gosh, she’s absolutely right! (HT7).

Another shared that she had to rely on others to care for her child:

[My daughter] has always had an au pair up until the age she is now [12 years old], who looked after her. When I was at work, I didn’t have to worry about her because if I had to worry about her, I can’t do my job (HT15).

These responses point to the impact of gender on family life as yet another barrier among the “complex range of interacting factors” that deter senior female leaders from progressing to headship (Fuller, 2017, p. 55). Moreover, the responses demonstrate that “occupying the role of principal appears to have serious implications for women about marriage and family” (Coleman, 2003, p. 1). In the USA, this impact of gender on family life has appeared as twin obstacles to the



progression of women to the principalship, with “family responsibilities” being superseded by “stereotypical gender views” (Cliffe, 2016, p. 2776). People with a growth mindset tend not to accept failure as an end in themselves. It is to be expected, therefore, that women who adopt a growth mindset would seek out and make use of necessary networks, both professional and in their community, to overcome these obstacles.

The ability to achieve a good and desirable work-life balance involves being able to have and exercise personal control over one’s time and work, a theme that can be found running through efforts to address the issue of work-life balance (Manfredi and Doherty, 2006, Bruton, 2012). Both authors point to a positive correlation between the seniority of one’s role and the relative degree of control they have over their working time. If indeed, “having enough autonomy in one’s work ... [enables] people to carve out the flexibility that they need to achieve a better sense of ‘harmony’ in their lives” (Manfredi and Doherty, 2006, p. 18), then headteachers are better poised to exercise personal control over their work-life balance since they, in comparison to others, do have that autonomy. As personal capacity involves the ability to engage in reflective practice, headteachers with this quality would, in reflecting on their work, become aware of where their work-life balance is suffering and be therefore able to prioritise their activities and make the necessary adjustments to their schedule.

Where gender is concerned, headteachers in possession of personal capacity would, by definition, be aware of and have regard to their respective identities and the factors that are unique to their genders. As a result, they would have taken personal control of their lives by negotiating their roles before, and during, the incumbency phase of their tenure. The continued

existence and prevalence of stereotypical gender views suggest a need for resilience on the part of women especially, which would be borne out of a determination to overcome whatever challenges may arise and to achieve their goals.

The respondents also described the negative impact of job-related stress on several aspects of their well-being. For example, affective (or emotional) well-being was poor, with respondents reporting exhaustion, anxiety, and low mood. Respondents also reported the negative impact of job-related stress on physical well-being, citing stress-related conditions such as insomnia and hypertension. The respondents serving in inner-city schools were impacted significantly more than school leaders in other regions and independent schools. Van Horn *et al.*'s (2004) model of occupational well-being includes cognitive, professional, and social well-being, as well as affective and physical well-being. In other words, one's level of cognitive functioning, commitment and motivation, and relationships with staff and students also influence one's overall well-being at work. The respondents in this study described the importance of emotional intelligence, motivation, and networking, highlighting these aspects of personal capacity as an important part of occupational well-being and therefore job satisfaction and career progression.

### **Lack of Positive Role Models**

All the respondents recognised the crucial role that the headteacher can play as a mentor or role model in the development of their senior leaders on the road to headship. Conversely, there was also the awareness of the negative effect a poor role model, that is, one not portraying the role in a positive light, can have on the aspirations of senior leaders. In this case, the indictment is not so much that they are failing to do their jobs, but rather, that they are too candid with their

deputies about their struggles. The tendency to be self-indicting was illustrated by one headteacher who, realising that he might have been a poor role model to one of his deputy headteachers and had thereby dampened his aspirations to headship, admitted:

I have probably put one of my deputies off headship significantly by being possibly more open about some of the pressures than maybe I ought to have been, and I suspect that ... it's put them off. ... one of my assistants has said to me, ... '[you've] got a young family, like I've got a relatively young family as well ... I see how many hours you work I don't want to do that'. I'm conscious that I have not always been a great role model for the job ... regarding some of the things they see me doing, which is not necessarily the most attractive part of the job (HT3).

Another was perturbed over the fact that senior leaders were apparently shying away from the demands of headship. She proceeded to implicate herself for being a poor role model to them. She complained, "There is nobody currently who are saying that they want to be a headteacher and that's a concern ... nobody wants that total accountability or the pressure that they see, and sometimes I feel bad because I think, ... what model am I showing?" (HT4).

These responses demonstrate how poor role models can be potential deterrents to senior leaders in their leadership journey. Chagger and Bisschoff (2009) have alluded to the possibility of poor role modelling ranging from the relationship between the deputy and the headteacher to the type or amount of experiences and opportunities given to deputy headteachers to enable them to grow and develop. Whatever form it may take, the verdict is that "negative role models and negative experience of working as a deputy can be detrimental" (Chagger and Bisschoff, 2009, p. 57). Notwithstanding, it has been recognised that poor role models can inadvertently and indirectly influence their deputy headteachers to at least avoid negative patterns of leadership and instead, improve on them (MacBeath *et al.*, 2009; Forrester and Gunter, 2010). In

considering what it is that enables such deputy headteachers to bounce back from the potentially damaging effects of deputising under a poor role model and still find within themselves the determination to aspire towards and make the transition to headship, I propose that it is their personal capacity.

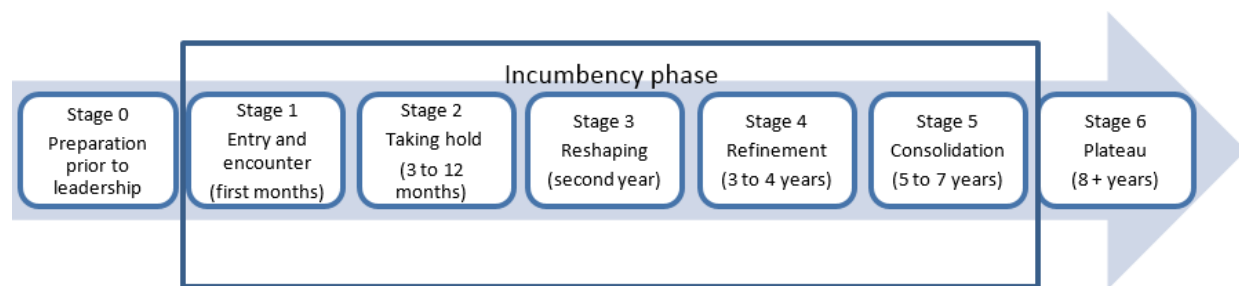
With personal capacity, as defined in this study, senior leaders caught up in such situations would be able to bounce back from the damage to their career and persevere to achieve their goal. Such resilience and perseverance, it has been seen, is what enables individuals to cope with adverse circumstances. It stems from a mindset that refuses to see failures, obstacles and challenges as setbacks but rather as opportunities to learn, grow and improve. With such a mindset, and with confidence in oneself and belief in one's capabilities, the deputy headteacher would not cease aspiring to headship. For the moment he or she may be trapped and stifled under a headteacher who is proving to be a poor or even negative role model. However, they would continue to seek out and make the most of opportunities for the growth and development of their capabilities. Eventually, these would find expression in headship.

#### **4.5.2 Deterrents within Headship**

Having presented a summary of some main deterrents to headship that deputy headteachers encountered, it was essential to discuss the deterrents that confronted headteachers in moving from the incumbency to the divestiture phase of their trajectory, as some of these were common to deputies moving into the incumbency stage. This commonality was supported by MacBeath (2009, p. 408) who stated that "there is an inherent connection between what serving principals find dissatisfying in their job and the disincentives reported by well-qualified potential candidates

for headship.” The experience of headteachers in the incumbency phase and their progression to the divestiture phase, therefore, necessitated closer attention.

To present the impact of the deterrents, or dissatisfiers, on the serving headteachers, I superimposed Earley and Weindling’s (2007) model onto the incumbency phase of Gronn’s (1999) model. They focussed on the leadership stages specifically, and so their model enables a more detailed visualisation of the journey of headteachers.



*Figure 16. Superimposition of Earley and Weindling's model onto the incumbency phase of Gronn's model*

In keeping with Earley and Weindling’s (2007) model, there is one headteacher in stage one (entry and encounter), none in stages two (taking hold) or three (reshaping), one in stage four (refinement), four in stage five (consolidation) and three in stage six (plateau). Thus, relatively fewer were entering the incumbency phase than those nearing the end. This disproportionality between the earlier and later stages of the incumbency phase cogently illustrates the effect of the dissatisfiers on the headteachers’ progression. It also highlights the ongoing concerns of recruitment and retention of headteachers.

The incumbent headteachers reportedly had the most difficulty achieving their desired work-life balance, albeit a universal challenge for the school leaders in this study. One female headteacher

(stage 6) said she usually read and responded to emails at ten o'clock in the night and had often gone to bed with her iPad. Another headteacher (stage 6), who bemoaned being unable to continue in her role after being downgraded from 'Outstanding' to 'Requires Improvement', felt she lacked the strength to give any more to the job. Her decision to resign following the downgrading by Ofsted has become a common trend which has been contributing to the increasing shortage of headteachers (Lynch and Worth, 2017, p. 1). Experiences such as these suggest the need for resilience to be able to bounce back and continue in the role.

In describing his progression, HT3 (stage 5) reflected on the first two to three years of his headship. He experienced fears and anxiety over the new demands of the job, was plagued with insomnia as he prepared for meetings with the SLT, and left meetings with feelings of loneliness as he wrestled with decisions that he would have to make. He felt the mental and physical demands of the job deprived him of room for recreational activities and hobbies. Despite these struggles in the earlier years of his journey, as a thirty-four-year-old headteacher, he endured and reached the end of the consolidation stage seven years later. He, however, confessed that in this current climate of copious changes, he is afraid to move to another headship. He considers it 'risky' (HT3).

The need for personal capacity also shows up in the incumbency stage. Headteachers need to demonstrate to their deputies that it is worth aspiring to headship, that it is possible to achieve a good or reasonable work-life balance, and that one does not have to end his or her career journey prematurely through burn out or the related ills of stress and strain. Personal capacity enables them to be aware, not only of themselves and their own needs but, also, the needs of

others. It also assumes that leaders are intrinsically motivated and guided by personal values, vision and a sense of moral purpose which serve as a buffer against intensifying pressures as well as a compass amidst a welter of relentless changes. For many, the moral imperative is to prepare children for the future and thereby increase their life chances. Whatever it may be, headteachers in the incumbency phase of their trajectory are ideally placed to demonstrate and exemplify possession of the personal capacity to be intrinsically motivated despite the existence of potential deterrents to headship, and thereby help in its development in their deputies.

#### **4.5.3 Incentives**

Despite the discussion of the various deterrents, the respondents agreed that there were incentives or influencing factors that would warrant school leaders aspiring to, or remaining in, headship. Some of the common factors influencing their decisions were either intrinsic or extrinsic, namely, the scope for autonomy, the prospects of continuing professional development and the enjoyment of status and remuneration that came with the post.

#### **Autonomy**

The respondents affirmed themselves as educational leaders and welcomed the opportunity to lead, to be in control, and to be in a position where they could direct and influence the outcomes for children. One headteacher was quite candid in his response:

You've got to accept and understand and even be motivated by the fact [that] the buck stops with you ... means that you're empowered, and you've got real opportunity and creativity, you know, you've got huge influence, You can do what you like as a head, you've got massive influence over other people and influence is the flip side of accountability and you've got to understand the two things go together, and you've got

to be the type of person that actually likes to be in control of your destiny and therefore of others destiny, influencing others destinies as well (HT1).

Similar views have been expressed in Draper's (2016) investigation into the expectations and experiences of headship, for example, where more than fifty per cent of deputy headteachers indicated that they were either very likely or fairly likely to apply for headship. They highlighted two main incentives, namely, the challenge to be in charge and the prospect of being able to implement their ideas. Other headteachers were more focussed on the benefits that would accrue to the students as HT9 was keen to point out:

While I realise that actually if I really want to change the lives of children or young people, I have to put myself in a position where I have got the power to do so, to have the power to make decisions, to have the power to influence outcomes on a much larger scale than you do when you are a classroom teacher or even a senior leader (HT9).

This focus on the benefits to the students is supported by Ingham (2014, p. 31) who sought to make it clear that "autonomy does not exist in a vacuum" and that actually, "what matters is what is done with the freedom and autonomy." This freedom and autonomy brought about by the recent national policies, has provided the headteachers with "a range of opportunities for schools to change gear, embrace new challenges or reinvent themselves while continuing to raise standards" (Matthews *et al.*, 2014, p. 51).

### **Continuing Professional Development**

The headteachers in the divestiture phase and the retired headteachers were of the opinion that there was currently more support, regarding training and networking, for new headteachers in comparison to when they started their careers. As one responded, "I didn't find any support ... [no] school improvement partners" (HT5). The respondents all viewed the development of



national teacher standards, including the NPQH programme, positively. Two deputies were presently participants on the new NQPH programme, despite it not being a prerequisite for headship, and at least fifty per cent of the respondents welcomed the new National Standards for Excellence for Headteachers as it created a framework within which headteachers could continue to develop. This positive attitude toward professional development has been evidenced in Scotland also, where headteachers view such opportunities as a source of satisfaction (MacBeath, 2009). Its value as a retention incentive has also been recognised (NCSL, 2010).

Mentoring and coaching through various networks, locally and nationally, were very high on the respondents' list of positive continuing professional development available to aspiring and existing headteachers. As explained by one deputy headteacher "... I have had a number of mentors who have coached me and guided me in terms of the area I needed to develop" (HT9). She further explained that aspiring headteachers could receive coaching and mentoring, not only in their school but through "... networks, they have mentors that are there to mentor you through this process or coach you through the process. Also, there are organisations ...trying to fill the gaps ... break down some of the barriers to headship." Another positive factor was that continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities were now available for retired headteachers to continue working. "When I retired in 2006, I then was doing some work for future leaders, ... mentoring younger people who are on the accelerated path to headship" (HT11). On the other hand, the majority of the respondents believed that it was important for aspiring and potential leaders to have access to shadowing leaders. This approach to CPD has been further promoted by the Getting Ahead London (GAL) initiative launched by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. Participants are said to have been "overwhelmingly positive about the main

programme elements of leadership coaching, shadowing and opportunities for networking” (Matthews and Bugler, 2017, p. 4).

Overall, all the respondents agreed that they had desired and received support to develop in their role as school leaders. The support included mentoring, coaching, visits to other schools, secondments, networking with fellow leaders in other schools, role swap within their schools, and the opportunity to shadow and act in different leadership positions. Mentoring and coaching were experienced the most and shadowing opportunities the least. Admittedly, for many, the only opportunity to work in other schools came through the NPQH and GAL programmes.

Some headteachers related that they initially had no real aspiration to or confidence that they could become a headteacher. However, due to years of experience in leadership roles, exposure to various continuous professional development (CPD) programmes and mentoring by others, they had come to believe that they could take on and be successful in their role. In other words, therefore, they found headship attractive for the mere reason that they had developed a sense of self-efficacy regarding their capabilities (Bandura, 1997). For example, “I was thirty-four when I started this job [as a headteacher] ... headship came earlier than I expected, it wasn’t in my plan to do it” (HT3). Another interviewee recounted a similar experience of serendipity, “I don’t think I originally intended to be a head or a deputy; that was more accidental” (HT10). She felt that her self-belief had increased following her experience of acting headship, “[It] made me think yes! I could do it and do it well” (HT10).

## **Status and Remuneration**

Most of the respondents agreed that the headteacher's salary was an incentive, although they hastened to declare that they were not in the role for the money. According to one respondent, progression to headship meant increased accountability and with that added pressure, so "you have to pay people a salary; if you want to take accountability at that level then they need to be financially rewarded" (HT4). There was the suggestion also that with the demanding nature of headship, headteachers deserved to be rewarded as sensationally as executives were. "It's a completely demanding job, you're incredibly exposed and the pay, while being okay, it's not the kind of sensational pay that you earn if you're an executive" (HT11). A third respondent was quite adamant that the salary mattered and asserted:

We're going to have further shortages in the profession; people just can't do it. And you're not paying people well enough to do it. This profession doesn't pay people well enough to work as if they were running a private business with huge stakeholders ... the salary doesn't reflect that [headteachers] are having to work ten times harder (HT17).

Other studies (MacBeath, 2009, NCSL, 2010, Ingham, 2014) had come to similar conclusions. MacBeath (2009) and Ingham (2014) in particular, pointed out that headteachers derived a sense of fulfilment from the esteem and respect that their status brought to them, and that their salaries reflected this.

## **Personal Capacity and Incentives**

Where autonomy as an incentive is concerned, it is the scope for personal control that serves as the attraction of deputies to, or satisfaction of headteachers with, headship that is the motivating factor. Autonomy indeed carries with it a sense of identity, which is in itself empowering. It

assumes that both aspirants and incumbents have within themselves the confidence and self-efficacy to fulfil the demands of the role. This empowerment can indeed degenerate into an ethical issue of concern (McDonald, 2004). However, at its optimum, it provides school leaders with the opportunity to realise their moral purpose of improving children's life chances. Within personal capacity, as defined in this study, therefore, are the ingredients for a constructive exercise of autonomy.

Deputy headteachers who welcomed opportunities for continuing professional development in a headteacher role were demonstrating thereby that they had the personal capacity to cope with challenges that may necessitate further growth and development. They would not shrink back from the rigours of professional development under such pretexts as, for example, inability to learn further or lack of inherent headship qualities. Instead, they will avail themselves of such training, mentoring, coaching and networking opportunities as will enable them to grow and develop so that they can effectively carry out their responsibilities. All this presupposes a mindset that does not see one's ability as innate, fixed and incapable of change or improvement but rather as something that dedication, hard work and the requisite training can develop; a mindset that sees failure only as an opportunity to work harder until they achieve success.

The fact that some headteachers acknowledged that money and status do play a role in the decision to proceed to, or remain in headship, does seem to militate against the picture that has so far been painted of personal capacity in this study. Leaders, in particular, it was argued, are characteristically motivated not by external rewards or threats but by an inner sense of moral purpose. However, their reticence in admitting that these were indeed incentives suggests their

awareness that the consideration of status and remuneration was somewhat unconventional. On the other hand, the fact that they had transitioned or were still aspiring to headship amidst their dissatisfactions with the remuneration and status suggested that other factors besides these extrinsic rewards were operating. It is not unreasonable to conclude that they were being propelled intrinsically by a moral imperative.

#### **4.5.4 Talent Management and Succession Planning**

The final interview question asked of the respondents was, “What are the three most significant challenges you are anticipating over the next twelve months?” Ninety per cent of the respondents named talent management and succession planning among the top two significant challenges they envisioned for the future. These challenges are also listed among the top three concerns of the public sector (Lucy *et al.* 2015), thus confirming the “prognostications of an impending crisis in England caused by the increasing shortage of headteachers” (1.1). Among the implications for the recruitment and retention of headteachers, there is the need for proactivity in talent identification and succession planning, as expressed in the notion, ‘growing your own leader’ (HT15). The majority of the respondents indicated on the questionnaire that developing others was an important part of their role as headteachers, an assertion reiterated throughout the interviews. Some headteachers were concerned about the lack of aspiration for progression by their deputy headteachers. One recounted that “years ago, [deputy headteachers] used to go off and get a headship, that was the norm, but they’re staying where they are and not moving on, that’s because of the pressures now ...” (HT11).

On the other hand, others, as a result of being talent-spotted and given leadership opportunities, rose to the challenge, having developed a belief in their capabilities. As HT10 related, “I don’t think I originally intended to be a head or a deputy; [it] was more accidental ... my experience of acting headship made me think [believe] that, yes, I could actually do it and do it well.” Chagger and Bischoff (2015) have been explicit in articulating the importance of self-belief in talent management. They claimed that “increasing an individual’s feelings of self-efficacy appears to be a potentially important element in talent management and the success of the leadership journey [and] persistent low self-efficacy may lead to the avoidance or withdrawal from a leadership journey” (Chagger and Bischoff, 2015, p. 48). Given that the development of personal capacity can lead to a greater sense of self-efficacy (Mitchell and Sackney, 2011), this also has implications for the role that personal capacity can play in talent management.

Traditionally, when recruiting headteachers, the focus is on the attributes that are easier to identify, measure, and articulate. These include qualifications, job-specific competencies, knowledge, and skills. The findings show that the focus should now incorporate personal capacity as recruiters need to focus on prospective candidates for leadership development. As the complexity of education increases and the reformation continues, the sector will require leaders at all levels and ultimately at headship who are resourceful, prompt in their response, adaptable to change, and who can handle uncertainty prudently. The preceding therefore necessitates a rethink of the current practice and policy regarding talent management, retention and training of school leaders.

Continuous development of personal capacity in school leaders will enable them to be more successful in coping with the changing landscape. The identification and development of talents have always been one of the most important strategic tools used by organisations. What the findings suggest is that there is the need for a shift from the traditional perspectives and training focus. Stakeholders must, therefore, give more attention to personal capacity and its components such as identity, adaptability and resilience. Headteachers and governors need to become more astute in identifying and supporting the development of personal capacity in aspiring senior leaders and headteachers to enable them to cope with the various challenges that come with the role of headteachers. Early identification of any deficiency in personal capacity at each phase of Gronn's (1999) career model should now be the focus of mentoring, coaching and formal leadership programmes.

The findings seem to suggest that early exposure to the more challenging aspects of leadership can reduce disenchantment at the point of transition. The early exposure can be achieved by engaging potential leaders in headship-related activities throughout the accession phase of their career. By adopting this approach, it addresses the concern regarding lack of aspiration to headship amongst senior leaders. These leadership activities would enable the development of potential leaders, regardless of gender or race. Aspects of personal capacity, such as resilience, would be developed through challenges and failures. The individual's mindset could be identified by their attitude to learning, reflection, analysis of failure, and implementation of follow-up actions.

According to Massie (2015), one strategy for continued enchantment is the opportunity for talents to be shared. School leaders with high personal capacity can share expertise through networking and system leadership and demonstrate adaptability in different contexts. Their progression does not necessarily follow a linear path as they would be amenable to rotating and 'gap filling' leadership roles in a wider context, for example, across an academy chain and in interim leadership or secondment roles. This strategy would go a long way in cultivating enchantment as it would provide the breadth, intellectual flexibility and opportunity to develop the personal capacity of the prospective headteacher. This strategy has the potential of increasing the number of female and ethnic minority headteachers, seeing that senior female leaders tend to be hesitant in making the transition due to the perceived impact of the related workload on their family lives, and ethnic minorities tend to lack the opportunities to expand the breadth of their leadership experience.

A seeming contradiction running through the findings regarding female and ethnic minority respondents was that they were not coping in their roles despite the fact that their personal capacities were medium to high. This phenomenon suggested another layer of intricacies that they associated with the perception of their leadership roles. It points to Reed and Evans' (2008, p. 488) proposal that this feeling among women and ethnic minorities, of being overwhelmed in their roles, could be as a result of the additionality of "gendered and racialised role expectations." Female leaders tend to take on the additionality of mothering, that is, providing the carer's role at work. The ethnic minority respondents, in particular, believe there is an expectation that they are to be the role models for staff, students, and their community. This 'double-jeopardy'



(Greenman and Xie, 2008) in which there is an accumulation of racial and gender bias would particularly apply to women from ethnic minority backgrounds.

#### **4.5.5 Summary of research question three**

The findings did not reflect the-expected natural progression to the incumbency phase of Gronn's (1999) model but were in keeping with the observation (Dimmock, 2012) that middle leaders and senior leaders were not making the transition to headship. Four main deterrents to progressing to headship were identified as fear of failure, work-life balance and well-being, lack of positive role models, and the pace of educational reforms.

The fear of failure was due to what the school leaders described as a castigatory culture that threatened job and financial security and which has resulted in hesitancy in decision-making.

The negative impact of job-related stress on several aspects of their well-being was another deterring factor. Both males and females reported difficulties in maintaining a good work-life balance but the female deputy headteachers shared greater concerns than their male counterparts.

The findings revealed that there is a "complex range of interacting factors" (Fuller, 2017, p. 55) deterring senior female leaders from progressing to headship such as lack of appropriate support in balancing family commitments and work. These factors had made it necessary that they defer or demur opportunities to make the transition. Other factors faced by females from ethnic minority groups included the additionality of mothering, that is, performing the role of carers and being role models especially for staff and students within their communities. Simultaneously, they have had to contend with the challenges of racial discrimination, a phenomenon that could

be described as a 'double-jeopardy' (Juan *et al.* 2016, p. 225) which suggests that there is an accumulation of disadvantages with every minority identity.

Headteachers can play a crucial role as a mentor or role model in the development of their senior leaders on the road to headship. Alternatively, those who prove to be poor role models to their senior leaders can deter them from aspiring to the headship role. Paradoxically, poor role models can inadvertently and indirectly influence their deputy headteachers to at least avoid negative patterns of leadership and instead, make improvements.

Despite the deterrents, there were incentives influencing senior leaders to seek after headship. These included a sense of moral purpose, the scope for autonomy, the prospects of continuing professional development, and the enjoyment of status and remuneration. Autonomy appears as an incentive due to the scope it gives for personal control. For school leaders with personal capacity, it will be an opportunity for the constructive realisation of their moral purpose to improve children's life chances. Headteachers and deputies tended to welcome the various forms of continued professional development that had become available to deputy headteachers, headteachers and retired headteachers, as it served to develop their confidence and sense of self-efficacy regarding their capabilities to function effectively in their roles.

This attitude towards continuing professional development is symptomatic of individuals having the personal capacity that enables them to cope with challenges that may both necessitate and accompany further growth and development. Finally, the fact that headteachers had made the transition or that deputies were still aspiring to headship despite their dissatisfactions with the

remuneration and status, suggested that they were not being driven extrinsically by these external factors but rather intrinsically, that is, by a moral imperative.

Talent management and succession planning were among the top two significant challenges that the majority of the respondents envisioned for the future. Some were concerned that their deputies were not availing themselves of opportunities to prepare themselves for headship. Other deputies, however, as a result of being talent-spotted and given leadership opportunities, had acquired a sense of belief in their capabilities and were thereby able to rise to the challenges. As a characteristic of personal capacity, the sense of belief that was acquired has implications for the role that personal capacity can play in talent management.

## **4.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR**

I now bring together the salient points emerging from the findings of the research that have been summarised under each research question.

- Personal capacity is “the distinct ability of individuals to adapt and respond to challenges; it is comprised of essential qualities and characteristics, namely, moral imperative, resilience, self-belief and self-efficacy, confidence, emotional intelligence, empowerment and identity, and a growth mindset”.
- Personal capacity can be developed at all phases of school leaders’ trajectory (Gronn’s model) as it acknowledges the influence of socialisation and cultural agencies (professional networks, family and community) on the leaders throughout their career;

- Personal capacity can be identified in aspiring leaders by their response to challenges at the early stages of their career journey.
- The development of personal capacity in headteachers during the earlier stages of the incumbency phase (years 1 to 3), is essential to ensure their retention.
- The importance of talent spotting in the early stages of the teaching career to facilitate more opportunities for exposure to leadership through mentoring, coaching, shadowing and apprentice-type work experiences with a view to developing personal capacity.
- The development of personal capacity in aspiring headteachers is key in their transition to headship as shown by the incorporation of personal capacity into Gronn's (1999) leadership development framework (Figure 14).
- Female ethnic minority headteachers experience the phenomenon of 'double jeopardy' in their transition to headship.
- The development of the personal capacity of school leaders should result in an enhancement of school leaders' ability to cope with challenges inherent in contexts of predictability.
- School leaders derived greater satisfaction when exercising personal control in responding to non-government in contrast to government initiatives, as the former afforded them the opportunity to take charge of the management of their work life.
- School leaders are incentivised by the scope for autonomy, the prospects of continuing professional development, and the enjoyment of status and remuneration.

**The implications are:**

- Consideration of how potential leaders are identified and developed.

- Review of existing leadership training and development programmes to incorporate a focus on personal capacity.
- A focus on enhancing the personal capacity of incumbent headteachers during the first three years.

## 5 CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an amalgamation of the conclusions drawn from the findings of this small research study, together with the research questions by which it was driven, the review of the literature that informed it and the research methodology that supported the research methods employed in collecting the relevant data. This concluding chapter also seeks to identify the contribution to knowledge and implications for practice, leadership, policy, training and further research.

Evidence of an impending recruitment crisis of headteachers caught up in a climate of change in the educational landscape, had led to the recognition that there was a relationship between the ability of school leaders to cope and their response to challenges they encounter in their roles. The purpose of this study was to explore that relationship and its implication for the recruitment and retention of headteachers. Attention given to the concept of personal capacity in relation to the ability of school leaders to cope, and to their career trajectory in their development as school leaders, had also stimulated interest and provided grounds for enquiry. The aim of the research, therefore, was to explore the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders influences their response to challenges that occur in the changing educational arena.

This study has provided a definition of personal capacity, thereby filling a gap in the literature and adding to the repertoire of knowledge on educational leadership. It has also opened possible areas of study to be explored in future research and further afforded a reflective commentary on

the implications of personal capacity that should be of value to policy-makers, governors, headteachers and prospective leaders.

The research questions driving the study were:

1. What constitutes the personal capacity of educational leaders?
2. To what extent is the personal capacity of educational leaders a factor in their ability to cope effectively with challenges?
3. What role does personal capacity play in the trajectory of school leaders?

The conclusions here drawn are presented, not as a basis for generalisation, but rather, as further insight into the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders features in their response to challenges in the educational arena.

## **5.2 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **5.2.1 What Constitutes the Personal Capacity of Educational Leaders?**

Personal capacity is understood to be, fundamentally, individuals' ability or potential and in the case of school leaders, their ability to cope, specifically with challenges in their role as educational leaders. It is multifaceted, in that it is comprised of a combination or range of attributes, qualities, and characteristics that are not limited to leadership skills. It is more than an adaptation for survival but enables one to find the task at hand personally gratifying. It contains the ability to engage in reflective practice and personal factors such as age, gender and ethnicity can exert influence on it. Personal capacity incorporates a growth mindset in which the leadership potential of both headteachers and their staff can be developed. Hence, while a definition of

personal capacity has been found to be difficult and to a large extent, elusive, it has nevertheless been possible to define it as:

the distinct ability of individuals to adapt and respond to challenging situations and circumstances in order to effectively carry out their roles. This ability is, therefore, not to be seen as a fixed, innate, single-faceted trait or quality but as a multifaceted capability comprised of a dynamic combination of non-discrete components. These components are underpinned by key qualities and characteristics, namely, moral imperative, resilience, self-belief and self-efficacy, confidence, emotional intelligence, empowerment and identity, and are driven by a growth mindset.

Personal capacity is, therefore, a characteristic that enables leaders to be resourceful, adaptable, responsive, and capable of managing change and unpredictability. The importance of formulating a definition took its cue from the concern indicated at the outset of this study (1.2), that the national standards lacked a comprehensive statement on the concept and policy-makers were not giving sufficient consideration to the personal capacity of school leaders. This was so despite the recognition that there was a looming crisis of increasing shortage of headteachers, and that the reluctance of senior leaders to strive for the unfilled posts, may have been an indication of their inability or lack of capacity to cope with the pressures and demands of the changing climate.

I have called attention to the scarcity of relevant literature on personal capacity, without ignoring key works preceding the current study. These works ranged from an understanding of personal capacity that located it within schools as learning communities to a brief statement describing it as the ability to do what was demanded. They seemed limited for reasons that included their



brevity and failure to articulate the multifaceted nature and versatility of the human factor, especially as it relates to leaders who would be expected to be intrinsically versus extrinsically motivated. The definition I have arrived at has further clarified and contextualised the actual nature of this ability, drawing insights gained by other researchers, as well as the experiences of the senior leaders. The result is a tapestry of overlapping nuances that is not so broad as to render the concept a nebulous accretion of ideas or so narrow as to ignore the versatility that is to be expected of leaders in general and school leaders in particular, who necessarily have to contend with ongoing change and consequent challenges.

#### **5.2.2 To What Extent is the Personal Capacity a Factor in their Ability to Cope?**

The main challenges the school leaders encountered resulted from the many policy changes and reforms, as well as the rapid pace at which these reforms were expected to be implemented. These challenges included the intensification of the decision-making process compounded by the decentralisation of the educational services of the local authority, which led to an increase in workload and job-related stress. These impacted negatively on the school leaders' health and well-being.

To cope with the challenges, the school leaders employed various strategies. These included: the creation of effective teams and adoption of different leadership structures; networking with other leaders through professional associations both locally and nationally to keep abreast of the national changes; drawing upon support and accountability systems such as family, critical friends, coach/mentor and governors. At the same time, they were adaptable and resilient in the face of the challenges while ensuring that their decisions were based on their moral purpose.

There is a positive correlation between the personal capacity of school leaders and their ability to cope with challenges. A high level of personal capacity does assure a high level of success among headteachers while conversely, a low level of personal capacity can be expected to yield opposite results. To be even more specific, school leaders with high personal capacity are able to cope because they:

- Have developed a mindset in which failure is diagnosed in detail and rectified to ensure future success;
- Manage their workload and that of their staff through apposite leadership structures and systems;
- Understand and exploit the importance of networking so that they can access and maintain the expertise needed to keep abreast of pending reforms.

I concur with Fullan (2007) that the headteacher's personal capacity to cope is crucial to the successful implementation of change. This stance, however, should not be misconstrued as acquiescence to the rallying cry in the 'heroics of leadership' genre which has come under much criticism by advocates of distributive leadership. On the contrary, it is an acknowledgement of the importance of each member of the team operating at their optimum individual capacity. As discussed, many school leaders have failed to deliver due to the inadequate development of their personal capacity. The recognition that the prevailing model of leadership in England has been that of the single person as an organisational leader has only served to reinforce the need for individual leaders with high personal capacity to cope with the challenges of policy changes and reforms.

### 5.2.3 What Role Does Personal Capacity Play in the Trajectory of School Leaders?

The central concern here is whether and how personal capacity can enable school leaders to transition from the accession through to the divestiture phase of their leadership career despite the challenges discussed. The issues in the current educational landscape that need to be taken into consideration by aspirants to headship or by those responsible for recruiting them have called into question the personal capacity of school leaders. From the discussion of the findings, it can be concluded that it is essential for deputies to develop their personal capacity and for deputies with high personal capacity to be recruited. This would include those who at least demonstrate the propensity for growth in the main components of personal capacity, as it is this calibre of senior leaders who will be able to overcome the barriers or deterrents and make the transition to headship. Also, the personal capacity of headteachers in the early stages of their appointment to headship, Gronn's (1999) incumbency phase, needs to be developed to ensure retention. The need for development exists regardless of whether those barriers have to do with risks related to the prevalence of excessive accountability and the stress that comes with it, or whether they have to do with the negative impact on their well-being.

Headteachers who aspired to and remained in headship did so, not because they were satisfied with the remuneration and status of headship, but because they were intrinsically motivated by a moral imperative, that is, to increase the life chances of children, a characteristic of headteachers with high personal capacity. These school leaders also welcomed the opportunity to use the autonomy afforded in headship for the constructive realisation of the moral purpose of ensuring children's well-being, rather than for unethical ends. The growth mindset of aspiring headteachers with personal capacity enabled them to be receptive to and embrace continued

professional development, not as a burden but as an opportunity for growth and development. This resulted in increased confidence and sense of self-efficacy regarding their capabilities to function effectively in their roles. Also, school leaders who were talent-spotted and given leadership opportunities acquired a sense of belief in their capabilities and were thereby able to rise to the challenges of headship. Female ethnic minority headteachers, however, experienced the phenomenon of 'double jeopardy' in their transition to headship.

### **5.3 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE**

The main contributions of this study are presented in this section with a view to disseminate them through conference presentations including postings on the BERA blog, writing articles for the SSAT trust and Aldridge multi-academy forum and the 'Getting Ahead London' summer conference which is grant funded by the Mayor of London and delivered by Challenge Partners with the aim of providing aspiring London headteachers with the skills, experience, networks and knowledge to take the step up to headship. This research has generated various themes and key ideas that contribute to the repertoire of knowledge on educational leaders and their ability to cope with challenges arising from rapid changes in education. The study is informed by the responses of twenty school leaders in London, Hertfordshire and Birmingham which takes into account a review of the literature. The main findings were presented and discussed in Chapter Four. However, although all these findings would, as suggested by Briggs and Coleman (2007, p. 7), encourage small change in practice, only the most substantive contributions are presented here.

Firstly, the study has articulated a definition of personal capacity that enhances an understanding of the concept as it relates to school leaders in particular. This definition judiciously draws from and builds upon elements of personal capacity that have been strewn across the literature, as well as on insights from the experiences and perceptions of a sample of school leaders, including headteachers, both serving and retired. Earlier attempts to define personal capacity have been deemed complex and elusive in nature (Hopkins and Jackson, 2003, p. 87) but although the fitness for purpose of this definition has yet to be fully tested, this study shows that, despite the difficulty, a definition is achievable. The definition can be appreciated, therefore, for what is, namely, a small yet distinctive contribution to the literature, thereby adding to the repertoire of knowledge on personal capacity.

As was discussed previously (2.2), the concept had appeared in the health sector as one of nine elements of capacity building, to be specific, systemic capacity, with focus on such factors as knowledge, skills and confidence. From a social cognitive perspective, personal capacity provides grounds for self-efficacy that is, the belief a person had in his or her capabilities to bring about the accomplishment of a particular outcome. Personal capacity also appears in the context of energy policy and environmental sustainability (Middlemiss and Parrish, 2010) with professionalism being a central feature in how it is characterised but with no real attempt being made to define the concept.

In the educational arena, Frost and Harris (2003, p. 487) had grouped personal capacity among several factors to determine “the extent and nature of leadership that can be exercised by teachers.” The authors were addressing teacher leadership, but their discussion of personal

capacity could, to some extent, apply to headteachers as school leaders, in the general understanding of the term. Their discussion is very instructive and does afford an insight into what personal capacity involves and an appreciation of how it could be understood and applied. They had not, however, provided a definition for personal capacity and neither was there any indication that they were trying to formulate one.

Gurr and Drysdale (2007) also grouped personal capacity alongside several factors that influenced capacity building in general but particularly in relation to schools. They described it as the ability to do what is demanded but recognised that, nonetheless, the description was inadequate. Although they did not provide a definition, as such, over their succinct description of the concept, they did propose a model in which they identified four elements which could be effective in strengthening personal capacity. These were: understanding and managing self; creating new knowledge; individual professional pedagogy; and networking. In their discussion of personal capacity, Mitchell and Sackney (2011) included such elements as values, assumptions, competences and practices held by the individual. While it was possible that Mitchell and Sackney's (2011) understanding of the concept could indeed be ascertained from the text, their focus was on how personal capacity could be built or constructed and not on how the term should be defined.

Altogether, therefore, these diverse shades of meaning, within and beyond the educational sector, testified to the need for a more coherent, unified articulation of the concept, such as this study has provided and which is restated here for emphasis, namely, that personal capacity is the

distinct ability of individuals to adapt and respond to challenging situations and circumstances in order to effectively carry out their roles. This ability is not to be seen as a fixed, innate, single-faceted trait or quality but as a multifaceted capability comprised of a dynamic combination of non-discrete components. These components are underpinned by key qualities and characteristics, namely, moral imperative, resilience, self-belief and self-efficacy, confidence, emotional intelligence, and empowerment and identity, and are driven by a growth mindset. Thus, this attempt at a more comprehensive definition addresses the gap in knowledge, hereby making a small but new contribution to knowledge.

In the conceptualisation of personal capacity, it is its adaptability that enables headteachers to undergo necessary processes of growth and development to enable them to respond to changes or challenges encountered in their roles or in their contexts. Such a phenomenon would not be expected if personal capacity was a fixed, rigid or single-faceted innate trait, quality or characteristic, unresponsive to changes and challenges. What this means is that personal capacity is not rigidly fixed to or dependent upon, a particular context. As the findings have shown, regardless of the context, that is, whether the headteacher is from a school geographically located in 'leafy' Hertfordshire or from a school in the inner-city of South London, neither determines the ability of headteachers to cope. Rather, it is their personal capacity. The implication therefore, is that focus needs to be placed on the training of current and aspiring school leaders to develop their personal capacity, thus enabling them to respond to challenges they may encounter within rapidly changing contexts. This is an issue that deserves greater attention.

Recognition of the multifaceted nature of personal capacity (see 2.2.3) takes into account the multidimensionality of human nature and serves to deliver the concept from a previously fixed, slavish and mechanistic conceptualization in which people's ability to perform is secured through extrinsically motivational tools of coercion or manipulation such as threats, punishments and rewards (Kohn, 1999; Reiss, 2004). This contrasts with the ability to perform through intrinsic motivation, a characteristic that would be expected of leaders, in general, and especially school leaders (Hogue, 2013). This study has identified a combination of personal qualities or characteristics that comprise the ability of school leaders who have proven to be effective in their roles. Seven of these have been highlighted as key components underpinning personal capacity. For example, moral purpose operates as an intrinsic motivation for the headteachers, the *raison d'être* for the teaching profession, from start to finish. This suggests that personal capacity, on a whole, can be addressed by targeting these components in training and development programmes.

The observation that all the components are non-discrete components, is testimony to the complexity of the human nature and hence of the concept itself. Nevertheless, they allow for the flexibility, versatility and adaptability that typifies personal capacity and its responsiveness to changes and concomitant challenges in the education sector. Finally, while all the key components are unique in their own right, growth mindset is singled out for its role as the driving force behind the others.

Secondly, the focus of this study on personal capacity can be seen as another contribution to knowledge in the debate between the single leader in the 'heroics of leadership' genre of



literature and distributed leadership. Gronn (2008; 2009) had argued for the hybridisation of leadership. I have argued (see section 5.2.2) that rather than misconstruing this emphasis on personal capacity as acquiescence to or endorsing the 'heroics of leadership' genre, this study should be seen as a recognition of the importance of and need for individual leaders in distributed leadership teams, operating at their optimum. It simply recognises that the individuals in each team are indispensable to the success of the team. In other words, it reinforces the proverbial saying, 'the chain is as strong as the weakest link'.

Thirdly, this study further contributes to knowledge by locating personal capacity at the core of the existing National Professional Qualifications for Headteachers (NPQH) competency framework. This is portrayed in Figure 17 in which personal capacity is superimposed on the framework. The resulting picture is that of the personal characteristics of school leaders, leadership beliefs and leadership competences forming the 'wheel' and the 'spokes' of the framework, with the core components of personal capacity lying at the hub. This is consistent with the earlier discussion (see Section 2.4) that when the personal characteristics of effective school leaders are taken into consideration, a picture of personal capacity emerges which attests to the fact that it is a significant and central factor accounting for their effectiveness, that is, for their ability to cope with the challenges they encounter in their role and varying contexts. The

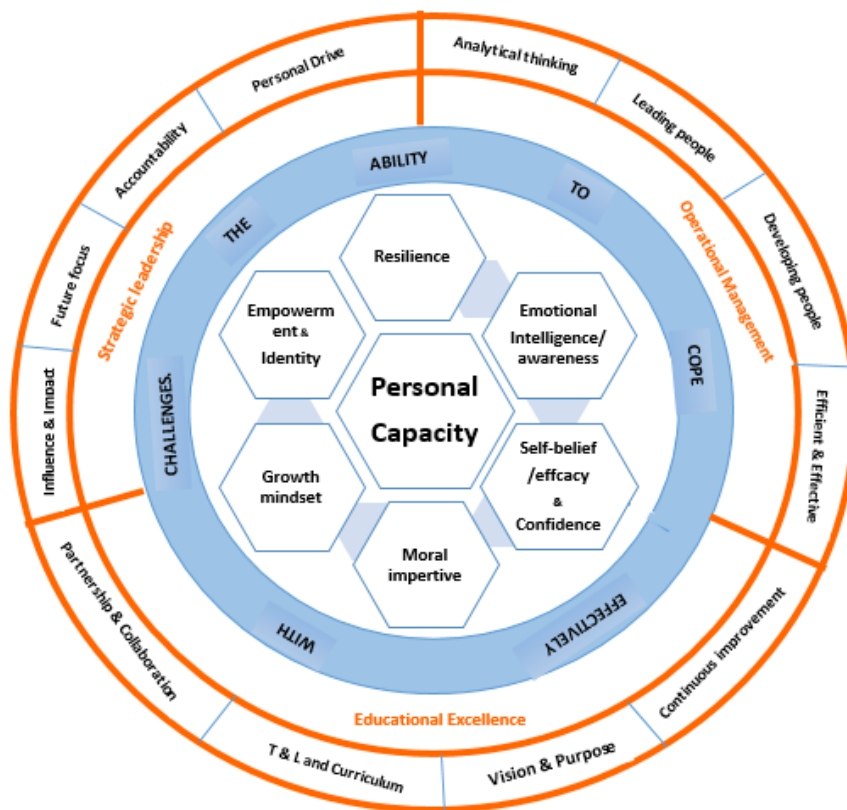


Figure 17. Superimposition of personal capacity on the NPQH competency framework

two outer bands represent the NPQH leadership competences and personal characteristics. The ability of school leaders to cope is illustrated by the blue band at the core of which is their personal capacity with its seven main components being represented by the hexagons.

Fourthly, as a contribution to knowledge, the study provides a tool that could aid in identifying aspiring and incumbent headteachers who would most likely be able to succeed in headship without retiring prematurely or being deterred by the challenges of the rapidly changing educational climate. The tool, which is the graph discussed earlier (Figure 13, section 4.4.3) and presented in Figure 18, depicts the position of each school leader in terms of their personal capacity and their ability to cope. It is presented here, on the left. The graph on the right shows how it is to be interpreted.

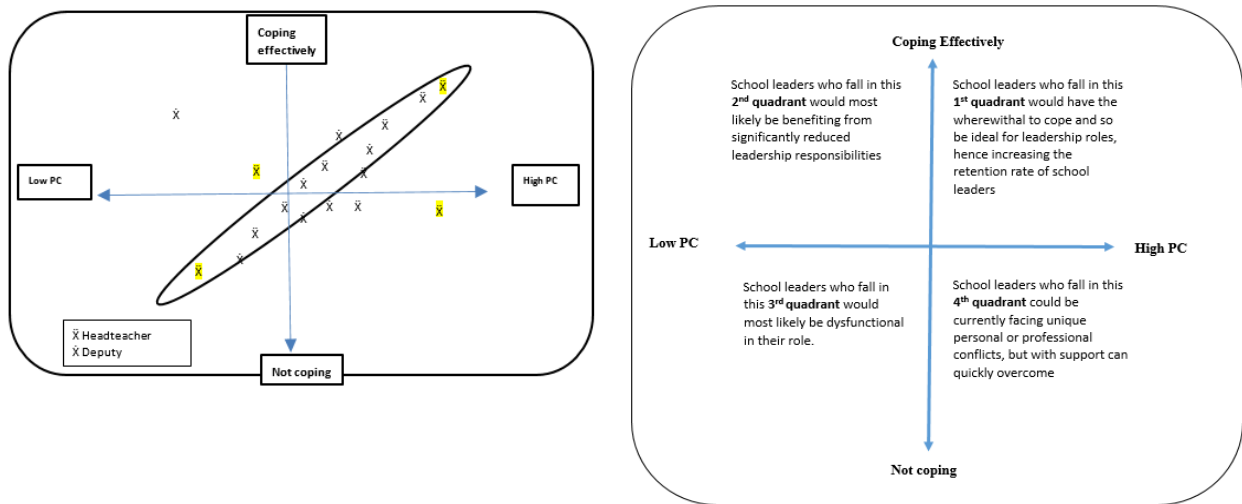


Figure 18. Personal capacity and coping assessment tool

As shown:

- School leaders who fall in the **1<sup>st</sup> quadrant** would have the wherewithal to cope and so be ideal for leadership roles, hence increasing the retention rate of school leaders.
- School leaders who fall in the **2<sup>nd</sup> quadrant** would most likely be benefiting from significantly reduced leadership responsibilities and would, therefore, not be likely candidates for headship or whole school strategic priorities.
- School leaders who fall in the **3<sup>rd</sup> quadrant** would most likely be dysfunctional in their role and so least likely to continue in their roles.
- School leaders who fall in the **4<sup>th</sup> quadrant** could be currently facing unique personal or professional conflicts, but with support can be expected to soon overcome their temporary incapacitation.

This means, therefore, that there needs to be a focus on potential and aspiring school leaders with high personal capacity, that is, those who particularly demonstrate a growth mindset and resilience, the aptitude to grow and develop, the ability to rebound and remain undaunted in the

face of challenges and adversities they encounter on a daily basis, not being afraid to be held accountable or to hold others accountable.

Thus, the identification of potential leaders facilitated by this tool, would provide the scope for proactivity in talent management and succession planning, which were among the top two significant challenges that the majority of the respondents envisioned for the future and which has been expressed in the literature as the notion of 'growing one's own leader'. Information concerning leadership succession and the practice of talent management in the education sector has been notably limited (Rhodes *et al.*, 2008; Rushton, 2015; Tyagi, 2017). This is in contrast to the experience in the commercial sector where talent identification and succession planning are well managed in order to offset leadership crises (Rhodes *et al.*, 2008), such as that which has been threatening the educational arena. This tool would be useful to different stakeholders in how they engage in leadership identification and recruitment, and leadership training and development, in determining where each school leader falls with respect to their ability to lead effectively in the face of the constant changes and challenges characteristic of this era.

## **5.4 IMPLICATIONS**

There are a number of potential implications following the conclusion of this research that may help to avert or address the leadership crisis. Firstly, the implication for policy: the importance of a focus on personal capacity as a leadership policy to support the growth of effective school

leaders. Secondly there are implications for leadership identification, training and recruitment. Thirdly there are implications for further research as discussed in Section 5.7.

In the identification of leaders, it is necessary to look, not only at the three areas of competencies in the NPQH competency framework, namely, strategic leadership, educational excellence and operational management (Table 2). Neither should support for the recruitment and appointment of headteachers or provision of a framework for training of middle leaders be limited to the new National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers (Department for Education, 2015). There is a need to include personal capacity as part of the identification and development process, with particular emphasis on components such as adaptation and flexibility, resourcefulness, and a growth mindset, that is, the ability to capitalise on and learn from failure to ensure future success.

Traditionally, when recruiting headteachers, the focus is on the attributes that are easier to identify, measure, and articulate. These include qualifications, job-specific competencies, knowledge, and skills. The findings show that the focus should now incorporate personal capacity as recruiters need to focus on prospective candidates for leadership development. The preceding therefore necessitates a rethink of the current practice and policy regarding talent management, retention and training of school leaders.

Persistent low self-efficacy may lead to the avoidance or withdrawal from a leadership journey; alternatively, deputies have developed the confidence to make the transition to leadership upon the enhancement of their self-efficacy through continuing professional development. Given that the development of personal capacity can lead to a greater sense of self-efficacy (Mitchell and Sackney, 2011), this also has implications for the role that personal capacity can play in talent

management. There is also the need for proactivity in talent identification and succession planning, as expressed in the notion, ‘growing your own leader’.

The findings seem to suggest that early exposure to the more challenging aspects of leadership can reduce disenchantment at the point of transition. There is, therefore, the need for a shift from the traditional perspectives and training focus. Stakeholders must give more attention to personal capacity and its components such as identity, adaptability and resilience. Headteachers and governors need to become more astute in identifying and supporting the development of personal capacity in aspiring senior leaders and headteachers to enable them to cope with the various challenges that come with the role of headteachers. Early identification of any deficiency in personal capacity at each phase of Gronn’s (1999) career model should now be the focus of mentoring, coaching and formal leadership programmes. In addition, school leaders with high personal capacity can share expertise through networking and system leadership and demonstrate adaptability in different contexts.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS**

The importance of personal capacity to the ability of headteachers to cope with challenges should be recognised by policy-makers, governors and headteachers. It is also important that greater consideration be given to how potential leaders are identified and developed. I am, therefore recommending that:

- DfE publications on leadership training, such as the National Standard of Excellence for Headteachers, reflect personal capacity by listing its components individually as leadership competency;
- The providers of leadership training adopt and utilise the ‘superimposition of personal capacity on the NPQH competency framework’, as the new competency framework;
- Personal capacity be the main focus of and incorporated in, formal leadership training such as the National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), for all levels of leadership.
- The ‘personal capacity and coping assessment tool’ be used as part of the assessment and identification process for school leaders, as it enables stakeholders to identify where the potential school leader is situated and if they have the capacity to cope.
- Personal capacity be the focus of coaching and shadowing schedules in new recruitment projects, such as Getting Ahead London;
- Recruiting agencies and governors need to be aware of and update their recruitment policies and practice to reflect consideration for personal capacity;
- School leadership promote the development of the personal capacity of potential leaders during the accession phase of their career, by affording them opportunities to shadow senior leaders and act in various leadership roles.
- A focus on enhancing the personal capacity of incumbent headteachers especially those within the first three years of headship.

## 5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has shown that despite the elusive nature and complexity of defining personal capacity, it is both necessary and possible to articulate a clear understanding of the concept as it relates to school leaders, in particular. As long as the crisis of headteacher shortage remains an issue, the findings of this study, that there is a positive relationship between personal capacity and the ability of school leaders to cope, will be significant.

The size of the study, as discussed previously, limits its potential for generalisation. This means that any findings and conclusions should be approached, articulated and applied judiciously. However, similar studies on a much larger scale and engaging more school leaders, would enhance the potential for generalisation. The focus of this study has primarily been on defining and identifying personal capacity in school leaders. To date, there is little research that exists, so there is a lot of potential and opportunity for further work. Further studies could be done regarding:

- Talent identification and development of aspiring headteachers through apprenticeship-type programmes, and its impact on recruitment and retention.
- Psychological distress and mental ill-health among headteachers in England
- The concept of co-headship in sustaining school improvement.
- Exploration of the factors underlying the reluctance of middle and senior leaders to progress to headship. Much could be learned from this category of school leaders.
- What are the implications for homogenous leadership development training programmes.



- Exploration of the relationship between personal capacity and the progression of minority groups to headship.
- Incorporation of middle leaders and classroom teachers in exploring the role that personal capacity occupies in the response of school leaders to challenges that occur in education. The fruit of such a study could go a long way in responding to the notion of 'growing your own leaders' (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009).

There is room for more work to be done in developing the concept of personal capacity as defined in this study and its contribution to sustaining school improvement. There is also scope to investigate how social media can impact the personal capacity of school leaders. These suggestions are not meant to be exhaustive but ideas for colleagues and fellow researchers to consider for future research.

## **5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Research studies are inevitably beset with limitations, and this study is no exception. As a result, I have sought to address the inherent limitations at each stage throughout the paper. It is important, however, to highlight the following:

- The study focussed only on the personal capacity of senior leaders and headteachers to the exclusion of middle leaders and classroom teachers, who themselves are school leaders. Their inclusion would have afforded a broader appreciation of the impact of the policy changes and reforms in educational.

- This research study has adopted the case study as its research strategy. I carried it out being aware of the criticism that the case study is limited by its inability to yield credible generalisations from its findings and by the reliance on qualitative data and interpretive methods. I have robustly addressed this criticism in chapter three (3.5). The case study was effective in capturing the complexity of the personal capacity of school leaders, enabling valid conclusions and recommendations.

## **5.8 SUMMARY**

In exploring the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders influences their response to the challenges brought about by changes in education, it is leaders high in personal capacity who can be expected to demonstrate the ability to navigate the torrents of reforms. They are characteristically resourceful, prompt in their response, adaptable to change, and have a mindset that sees failures and challenges as opportunities to learn, grow and develop. As the policy changes and reforms continue, the decreasing rate at which deputies are transitioning to headship is likely to intensify. More effort must be made by stakeholders and policy-makers, therefore, to develop the personal capacity of aspiring and prospective school leaders to ensure there is a pool of new leaders equipped to respond to the challenges that school leaders face both now and in the future.

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## APPENDICES

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### App.1: Pilot Self-Completion Questionnaire

#### Section 1: Role and responsibilities

Please tick the categories that best describe you.

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Tick the grid to indicate your age

Age range	Early 0-3	Mid 4-6	Late 7-11
Twenties (20)			
Thirties (30)			
Forties (40)			
Fifties (50)			
Sixties (60)			

What type of school do you lead?

State comprehensive <input type="checkbox"/>	Academy sponsored <input type="checkbox"/>	Grammar <input type="checkbox"/>
Community <input type="checkbox"/>	Converted <input type="checkbox"/>	Independent <input type="checkbox"/>

Number of students on role: less than 1000 ☐ 1000 -1200 ☐ more than 1200 ☐

How long have you been in this role? \_\_\_\_\_ years

How would you describe the leadership model of your leadership team?

---

<p><b>Section 2:</b> On a scale of 1 to 5, indicate how do feel about the statements below? (Please <b>circle</b> the most appropriate response).</p> <p>1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=Neither 4=disagree 5=strongly disagree</p>		
<b>COMPETENCIES</b>		<b>Scale</b>
1	I believe school autonomy makes headship more attractive	1 2 3 4 5
2	I am an active member of a leadership network work group (eg ASCL, NCSL)	1 2 3 4 5
3	I always try to find more efficient ways to do things	1 2 3 4 5
4	I enjoy working collaboratively	1 2 3 4 5
5	I believe the new OFSTED framework creates more competition than collaboration between school	1 2 3 4 5
5	I lead by micro managing my staff	1 2 3 4 5
6	One of my most important tasks is to develop leadership in others	1 2 3 4 5
7	I am sceptical about government changes	1 2 3 4 5
8	I have a balance work and social life	1 2 3 4 5
9	I think the pace of the curriculum reform is too fast.	1 2 3 4 5
10	I would work more for higher salary	1 2 3 4 5

## Section 1: Role and responsibilities

Please tick the categories that best describe you.

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Tick the grid to indicate your age

Age range	Early 0-3	Mid 4-6	Late 7-9	Ethnicity:
Twenties (20)				
Thirties (30)				
Forties (40)				
Fifties (50)				NPQH: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Sixties (60)				

What type of school do you lead?

State comprehensive <input type="checkbox"/>	Academy sponsored <input type="checkbox"/>	Grammar <input type="checkbox"/>
Community <input type="checkbox"/>	Converted <input type="checkbox"/>	Independent <input type="checkbox"/>

Number of students on role: less than 1000 ☐ 1000 -1200 ☐ more than 1200 ☐

How long have you been in this role? \_\_\_\_\_ years

How would you describe the leadership model of your leadership team?

---

What is your main area of responsibility?

**Section 2:** On a scale of 1 to 5, indicate how do feel about the statements below? (Please **circle** the most appropriate response).

1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=Neither 4=disagree 5=strongly disagree

COMPETENCIES		Scale
1	I believe school autonomy makes headship more attractive	1 2 3 4 5
2	I am an active member of a leadership network work group (eg ASCL, NCSL)	1 2 3 4 5
3	I always try to find more efficient ways to do things	1 2 3 4 5
4	I enjoy working collaboratively	1 2 3 4 5
5	I believe the new OFSTED framework creates more competition than collaboration between school	1 2 3 4 5
5	I lead by micro managing my staff	1 2 3 4 5
6	One of my most important tasks is to develop leadership in others	1 2 3 4 5
7	I am sceptical about government changes	1 2 3 4 5
8	I have a balance work and social life	1 2 3 4 5
9	I think the pace of the curriculum reform is too fast.	1 2 3 4 5
10	I would work more for higher salary	1 2 3 4 5

### Section 3

The list below constitutes components of Personal Capacity of an effective headteacher.

On a scale of 1 to 5. How would you assess yourself?

1(least competent) 5 (most competent)

Any other					
Emotional intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
Time management	1	2	3	4	5
Communicating with stakeholders	1	2	3	4	5
Determination & Motivation	1	2	3	4	5
Resilience	1	2	3	4	5
Good listener	1	2	3	4	5
Open minded	1	2	3	4	5
Empathetic	1	2	3	4	5
Experience in various leadership role	1	2	3	4	5
Support network	1	2	3	4	5
Vision & purpose	1	2	3	4	5
Relationship management	1	2	3	4	5
Self-awareness and self-management	1	2	3	4	5

Rational for the questionnaire

Questionnaire sections	Expansion of the research questions
<b>Section 1: Role and responsibilities</b>  Questions regarding:  gender, age range, type of school,  school population, length tenure and	To explore the relationship between personal capacity and:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Age and gender</li> <li>○ self-efficacy, self –belief,</li> <li>○ confidence</li> </ul>

leadership model, job role and main area of responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Experience</li> </ul> <p>Leadership style and accountability</p>
<p><b>Section 2: Leadership competencies</b></p> <p>Questions on leadership competencies on a Likert scale indicating strongly agree/disagree</p>	<p>To explore the relationship between personal capacity and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work life balance</li> <li>○ positive response to changes</li> <li>○ adaptability</li> <li>○ Talent management and retention</li> <li>○ Succession planning</li> <li>○ impact of changes education</li> </ul>
<p><b>Section 3: Components of Personal Capacity</b></p> <p>A list of components to be ranked on a Likert scale from greatest to least importance of an effective headteacher.</p>	<p>To test the components of personal capacity as described in the schematic model of personal capacity in chapter 2 and it's importance to effective headship</p>

### **App. 3: Interview Schedule**

#### **Part A preambles**

- Courtesies
- Outlining of the protocols regarding confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of the treatment of data in accordance with British Ethics Research Association (BERA, 2004) principles and University guidelines
- Take any questions about this process before we start.

#### **Part B identification**

1. Could you please describe your responsibilities?
2. Do you consider yourself an educational leader? Why?
3. What beliefs and experiences do you think prepared you for the role of leader? Draw on all spheres throughout your life including personal, social, educational and professional.

#### **Part C Personal capacity**

4. How aware are you of your own emotional intelligence?
5. What is your understanding of the phrase 'personal capacity (PC)'?
  - a. What does it look like?
  - b. How would you describe this feeling of personal strength and ability?
6. How would you describe your ability to cope with your present role?
  - a. Have you considered early retirement? Why? (HT)

**Or** (for deputies)

- b. Have you considered become a HT? Why? (HT)

**Or** (for retirees)

- c. Why did you retire? and what are you doing now?

#### **Part D Retention**

7. What is the impact of the job on your personal well-being, that is, physical, mental and social?
8. Have the recent changes in government policies impacted your work life balance? How and why?
9. Tell me about a time when you found it most difficult to respond to a government initiative.

#### **Part E Transition**

10. Do you think the recent changes in the educational policies are a deterrent to middle leaders moving into headship? If so, how and why?
11. When was the last time you implemented a change that was not a government initiative? What was it?
12. What are the three most significant challenges you are anticipating over the next 12 months?

#### **App.4: Transcript as Recorded by Audio**



## App. 5: Contact Summary Sheet

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**Title of thesis:** AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PERSONAL CAPACITY OF SCHOOL LEADERS INFLUENCES THEIR RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES THAT OCCUR IN THE CHANGING EDUCATIONAL ARENA

**Name of contact:**

**Email of contact:**

**Date/time of interview:**

**Context of interview:** Self-completed questionnaire completed prior to interview. Face -to-face, semi-structure interview following the schedule below.

- Venue:

**Main issues or themes that emerged during the interview:**

- Identity
- Personal capacity
- Retention
- Transition

**Summary of information on key areas:**

**Additional thoughts:**

**App. 6: Coding**

## Pre-determined Codes Based on Allen framework

Personal capacity		
Main components	Themes and sub-themes	Codes
PERSONAL COMPETENCIES		
P1: Are attuned to their own moral purpose	<p><b>They have a strong sense of <u>own moral purpose</u>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aware of their inner signals and guiding values and use to make correct decisions</li><li>• Communicate their vision with conviction</li><li>• Passionate about their values.</li><li>• Act and communicate integrity and an authentic openness to others about feelings, beliefs and actions.</li></ul> <p><b>They are able to <u>manage conflict</u>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• understand the differing perspectives</li><li>• acknowledge the feelings and views of all sides, and then redirect the energy towards a shared ideal</li><li>• offset conflicts with staff and staff unions</li></ul>	MP
P2: Are emotionally self-aware and able	<p><b>They are <u>emotionally self-aware</u>:</b></p>	EI

<p>to self-manage emotions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recognise how their feelings affect them and their job performance.</li> <li>● Exhibit a sense of humour about themselves.</li> <li>● See the big picture in a complex situation.</li> </ul> <p><b>They are able to <u>accurately self-assess</u>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Know and play to their strengths, whilst understanding their limitations, and know where to focus in developing new leadership strengths.</li> <li>● Welcome constructive criticism and feedback and know when and how to ask for help.</li> </ul> <p><b>They have <u>self-control</u>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Find ways to manage their disturbing emotions and impulses and channel them in useful ways for the common good of the group.</li> <li>● Stay calm and clear-headed under high stress or during crisis and remains unflappable even when confronted by a trying situation.</li> </ul>	
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P3: Are assured of their skills and ability.	<p>They are <u>self-confident</u>:</p> <p>Have a sense of presence and self-assurance</p> <p>Welcome difficult challenges</p> <p>They <u>develop others</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are adept at cultivating people's abilities and show a genuine interest in those they are helping along, understanding their goals, strengths, and weaknesses.</li> <li>• Give timely and constructive feedback and are natural mentors or coaches.</li> </ul>	CON
P4: They are efficacious. They have high self-esteem	<p><b>They are <u>intuitive</u>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a sense of efficacy and have what it takes to control their own destiny.</li> <li>• Seize opportunities or create them rather than simply waiting.</li> <li>• Do not hesitate to cut through red tape, or even bend the rules, when necessary to create better possibilities for the future.</li> </ul>	SE
P5: They have a mindset and a belief that they can grow and develop. They	<p><b>They are <u>transparent</u>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Openly admit mistakes or faults.</li> <li>• Seeks solutions</li> <li>• Learn from mistakes</li> </ul>	GM

<p>regard them selves as learners, and seek out opportunities to develop themselves, staff and students</p>	<p><b>They are committed to <u>achievement</u>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have high personal standards that drive them constantly to improve, raise attainment and performance for themselves and others.</li> <li>• Are rational when setting measurable but challenging goals.</li> <li>• Are able to calculate risks so that goals are worthy but attainable.</li> <li>• Are continually learning and teaching ways to be better.</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p><b>They are <u>change catalysts</u>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can recognise the need for the change, challenge the status quo, and champion the new order.</li> <li>• Are strong advocates for the change even in the face of opposition, making the arguments for it compelling.</li> <li>• Find practical ways to overcome barriers to change.</li> </ul>	
<p>P6. Resilience: They are robust and bounced back from failure or set back</p>	<p><b>They are <u>adaptable</u>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can individually and collectively juggle multiple demands without losing their focus or energy.</li> </ul>	<p>RES</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are comfortable with inevitable ambiguities of organisational life.</li> <li>• Can be flexible in adapting to new challenges, nimble in adjusting to fluid change, and limber in their thinking in the face of new data or realities.</li> </ul> <p><b>They are <u>optimistic</u>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can individually and collectively roll with the punches.</li> <li>• See individually and collectively opportunity rather than threat in a setback.</li> <li>• See others positively, expecting the best of them.</li> </ul>	
P7: They are aware of the impact of their background on their leadership effectiveness	<p><b>They are <u>Empowered</u>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek out opportunity to develop self and others</li> <li>• Aware of the opportunities and hinderance afforded them and others based on their identity</li> <li>• Support others to overcome adversities</li> </ul>	IDE
P8: They have or desire autonomy	<p><b>They are <u>autonomous</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can lead independently</li> <li>• Can be self-directing</li> </ul> <p><b>They are <u>adaptable</u>:</b></p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can juggle multiple demands without losing their focus or energy.</li> <li>• Are comfortable with inevitable ambiguities of organisational life.</li> <li>• Can be flexible in adapting to new challenges, nimble in adjusting to fluid change, and limber in their thinking in the face of new data or realities.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>The definitions are adopted from (Allen, W. (2011 p. 414).</b></p>		

## Coding Summary Sheet

### Interview Schedule

Headteacher/RHT/DHT/AHT

Date/ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Venue: \_\_\_\_\_

	Themes/Questions	Code	Summary of main points/ issues
1	<b>Autonomy: Leadership style, experience and context:</b>  Could you please describe your responsibilities	AUT	
2	<b>Moral purpose, confidence, autonomy</b>  Do you consider yourself an educational leader?  Why?	MP  CON  AUT	
3	<b>Influences, Vision and Values:</b>  What beliefs and experiences do you think prepared you for the role of leader? Draw on all spheres throughout your life including personal, social, educational and professional?	MP  AUT  IDE	
4	<b>Self-awareness, adaptability, networking, leadership style:</b>	SE  AUT	



	How aware are you of your own emotional intelligence?	IDE	
5	<p><b>Strengths and limitations, personal characteristic and capacity:</b></p> <p>What is your understanding of the phrase 'personal capacity?</p> <p>a. What does it look like?</p> <p>b. How would you describe this feeling of personal strength and ability?</p>	<p>PC</p> <p>IDE</p>	
6	<p><b>Resilience, stressors and inhibitors, succession planning, knowledge and skills:</b></p> <p>How would you describe your ability to cope with your present role?</p> <p>a. Have you considered early retirement? Why? (HT)</p> <p>b. Have you considered become a HT? Why? (HT)</p> <p>c. Why did you retire? and what are you doing now? (RHT)</p>	<p>RES</p> <p>IDE</p>	

7	<b>Workload and well-being:</b>  What is the impact of the job on your personal well-being, that is, physical, mental and social?	RSE  IDE  SE	
8	<b>Value, leadership style, identity:</b>  Have the recent changes in government policies impacted your work life balance? How and why?	IDE  MP  GM	
9	<b>Adaptability, resilience, confidence, self-efficacy, responsive:</b>  Tell me about a time when you found it most difficult to respond to a government initiative?	RES  CON  SE	
10	<b>Resilience, growth mindset:</b>  Do you think the recent changes in the educational policies are a deterrent to middle leaders moving into headship? If so, how and why?	RSE  GM	
11	<b>Leadership strengths, limitations, risk takers, game changers and intuition:</b>  When was the last time you implemented a change that was not a government initiative?  What was it?	GM  RES	
12	<b>Challenges, vision, motivation and hope:</b>	MP  RES	

	What are the three most significant challenges you are anticipating over the next 12 months?		
<b>Summary of emerging themes</b>		Key code s	<b>Additional themes</b>

### Coding schema used to analyse the transcripts

Codes	Meanings
MP	Moral purpose
CON	Confidence in their ability to lead
SE	Self-efficacy and/or self-esteem in self or acknowledge it's importance
IE	Awareness of the role knowledge of ones and that other impact on their job
RES	Resilience
IDE	Identity and empowerment; culture, context and experience
GM	Learn from mistakes, networking,
OTH	Other, that is of significance

## App. 7: Findings from Leximancer

### Interconnectivity

The third section of the presentation of the findings is based on the analysis based on the Leximancer. Interview questions one, three, six, seven eight and nine were analysed using this software as these more the most worded of responses in the interview.

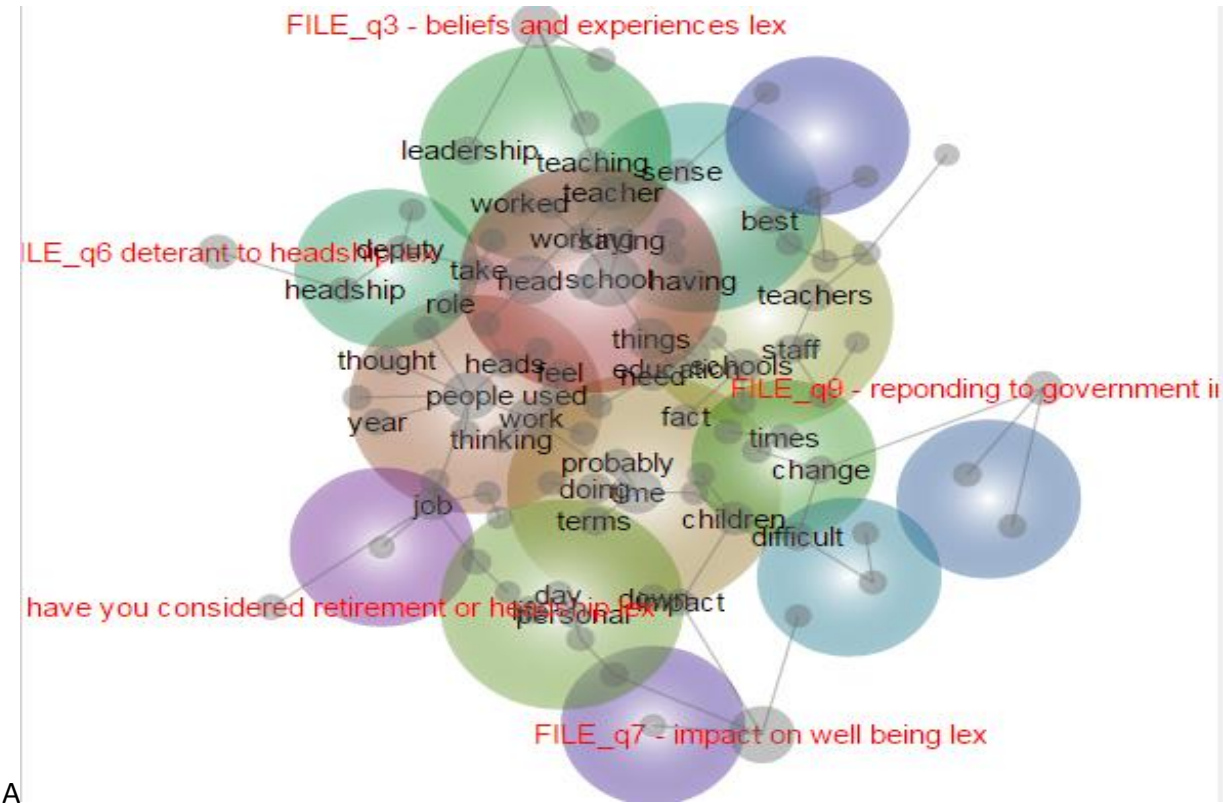
### The relationship between the key words and the interview questions

Professional narrative	Personal Capacity & change	Self – efficacy and Self belief
1. Are there any questions about this process you would like to ask before we start?	5. What is your understanding of the phrase 'personal capacity (PC)'?	9. Tell me about a time when you found it most difficult to respond to a government initiative.
2. Could you please describe your current position, roles and responsibilities? (questionnaire)	6. How would you describe your ability to cope with your present role?  a. Would you consider becoming a headteacher?(ML)  b. Have you consider early retirement? Why?(HT)	10. Do you think the recent changes in the educational policies are a deterrent to middle leaders moving into
3. Do you consider yourself an		










<p>educational leader? Why?</p> <p>4. What beliefs and experiences do you think prepared you for the role of leader? Draw on all spheres throughout your life including personal, social, educational and professional.</p>	<p>7. What is the impact of the job on your personal well-being, that is, physical, mental and social?</p> <p>8. Have the recent changes in government policies impacted your work life balance? How and why?</p>	<p>headship? If so, how and why?</p> <p>11. When was the last time you implemented a change that was not government initiative? What was it?</p>
---	---	--



Leximancer Coding



Theme	Connectivity	Relevance
<u>school</u>	100%	
<u>people</u>	97%	
<u>time</u>	64%	
<u>schools</u>	53%	
<u>life</u>	30%	

<u>difficult</u>	25%	
<u>leadership</u>	24%	
<u>deputy</u>	12%	
<u>sense</u>	11%	
<u>changes</u>	06%	
<u>example</u>	06%	
<u>important</u>	03%	
<u>everything</u>	01%	
<u>somebody</u>	01%	

---



## **App. 8: Contact with Participants**

### Introductory letter

*[address]*

Dear Headteacher,

I am a registered Doctoral student at the University of Birmingham. As part of my EdD project I intend to explore the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders influences their response to changes that occur in the educational arena. In particular, the project will attempt to examine views regarding what constitutes the personal capacity of educational leaders and how this correlates with transition to headship.

In order to achieve a wider understanding of how well school leaders are coping with the current series of educational changes, I will need access to local schools to conduct some interviews. At present interviews would ideally need to be conducted with:

- The Headteacher;
- The Deputy and Assistant Head;

A written consent form and a questionnaire will be provided prior to all interviews. Upon receiving the consent form, a copy of the interview outline will be available to all participants involved. It is anticipated that each interview will last between 45-60 minutes. The questionnaires will be collected at the end of each interview.

The research will ensure confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of the treatment of data in accordance with British Ethics Research Association (BERA, 2011) principles and University guidelines. Research data and evidence will be stored, retained and made accessible in confidence to authorised researchers for verification purposes for a period of ten years. The

analysis of the data from the interviews and documents will be anonymous to others. Data will be identified using coding, with your name and any identifying characteristics from both sources removed. Your name will not be stored by any electronic means. You will also have the right to withdraw up to two weeks after the interview – please contact me at the above address or [rli@northumberlandpark.haringey.sch.uk](mailto:rli@northumberlandpark.haringey.sch.uk).

If you are interested in participating in my research or have any additional queries, please email me at the above address or my supervisor Dr Christopher Rhodes ([c.p.rhodes@bham.ac.uk](mailto:c.p.rhodes@bham.ac.uk)) as soon as possible. I can then forward further particulars regarding the project in due course.

Thank you for very much for taking the time to consider my request during this very busy term.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Roseilee Linton

-----\*\*\*\*\*-----

## Thesis proposal for participants and consent form

### Thesis Summary for Participants

The purpose of this proposed project is to explore the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders influences their response to changes that occur in the educational arena. The overall concern is whether or not school leaders in general, and headteachers in particular, have the ability or rather, the personal capacity, to cope with and respond to such changes without crumbling under the accompanying pressures.

The concern stems from recent observations of an impending crisis in the retention and recruitment of headteachers, with headteachers claiming that they were leaving the profession out of frustration and virtually unanimous that the issue hinged on their ability to cope with the changes in the education system. Coupled with this was a reduction in the post of deputy headteacher, with little turnover, and a dwindling pool of middle leaders, disenchanted with headship due to workload and accountability pressures and doubting their capacity to cope with the changes confronting them.

Such disillusionment on the part of middle leaders poses real challenges for succession planning, as it renders the task of identification and development of headteachers with the capacity to cope with educational changes, even more arduous. Attempts to fill the gap in the literature on a systematic understanding of how leaders are made have drawn upon the trajectories of school

leaders. This study will seek to explore the place of personal capacity in the trajectory of the school leader, thereby contributing to the existing body of literature.

Against this background therefore, the research questions that will be guiding this study are:-

- What constitutes the personal capacity of educational leaders and to what extent is it a factor in their ability to effectively cope with changes.
- How does the personal capacity of educational leaders correlate with their self-efficacy and self-belief?
- What role does personal capacity play in the transition of senior leaders to headteachers?
- What are the implications of personal capacity for the ability to cope, talent management, retention, continued enchantment and development of leaders?

The expected outcome of this project is that it will afford a broader understanding of how personal capacity influences educational leadership. It is also hoped that the findings will add to the repertoire of knowledge on personal capacity as it relates to the future of educational leadership. A further expectation is that this should inform leadership training and development.

The project intends to focus on the views of headteachers and senior leaders (heads, deputies and assistant heads) and their understanding of how their personal capacity impact their ability to cope with the changing educational landscape. Following the project an anonymous 50,000 word thesis (submitted to Birmingham University as part of my study for an Educational Doctoral Award) will be available to other educators and research to reflect on.

-----\*\*\*\*\*-----

**App. 9: Consent form**

Please tick where appropriate:

I agree to be interviewed for the research on the personal capacity of school leader and their  
response change ☐

I agree to complete the questionnaire on leadership traits ☐

I request a copy of my transcript of my interview: ☐

I request a headline copy of the thesis ☐

I request an executive summary of the thesis ☐

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## App. 10: Ethics Application and Approval

**UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM**

**APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW**

Who should use this form:

This form is to be completed by PIs or supervisors (for PGR student research) who have completed the University of Birmingham's Ethical Review of Research Self Assessment Form (SAF) and have decided that further ethical review and approval is required before the commencement of a given Research Project.

**Please be aware that all new research projects undertaken by postgraduate research (PGR) students first registered as from 1st September 2008 will be subject to the University's Ethical Review Process. PGR students first registered before 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 should refer to their Department/School/College for further advice.**

**Researchers in the following categories are to use this form:**

1. The project is to be conducted by:
  - staff of the University of Birmingham; or
  - a research postgraduate student enrolled at the University of Birmingham (to be completed by the student's supervisor);
2. The project is to be conducted at the University of Birmingham by visiting researchers.

**Students undertaking undergraduate projects and taught postgraduates should refer to their Department/School for advice.**

**NOTES:**

- Answers to questions must be entered in the space provided.
- An electronic version of the completed form should be submitted to the Research Ethics Officer, at the following email address: [aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk). Please **do not** submit paper copies.
- If, in any section, you find that you have insufficient space, or you wish to supply additional material not specifically requested by the form, please it in a separate file, clearly marked and attached to the submission email.
- If you have any queries about the form, please address them to the [Research Ethics Team](#).

☐

**Before submitting, please tick this box to confirm that you have consulted and understood the following information and guidance and that you have taken it into account when completing your application:**

- The information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages

(<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-of-Research.aspx>)

- The University's Code of Practice for Research  
([http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP\\_Research.pdf](http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf))

<b>UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM</b>  <b>APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW</b>	<i>OFFICE USE ONLY:</i>  Application No:  Date Received:
--	--

**1. TITLE OF PROJECT**

An exploration of the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders influence their response to changes that occur in the educational arena.

**2. THIS PROJECT IS:**

University of Birmingham Staff Research project ☐

University of Birmingham Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student project ☐ ✓

Other ☐ (Please specify):



### 3. INVESTIGATORS

**a) PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS OR SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)**

Name: Title / first name / family name	Dr Christopher Rhodes (Supervisor)
Highest qualification & position held:	PhD Senior Lecturer in Educational leadership
School/Department	Education
Telephone:	0121 414 3805
Email address:	c.p.rhodes@bham.ac.uk

Name: Title / first name / family name	
Highest qualification & position held:	
School/Department	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

**b) PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF ANY CO-INVESTIGATORS OR CO-SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)**

Name: Title / first name / family name	Dr Tom Bisschoff
Highest qualification & position held:	EdD Senior Lecturer
School/Department	Education
Telephone:	0121 414 4804
Email address:	t.c.bisschoff@bham.ac.uk

**c) In the case of PGR student projects, please give details of the student**

Name of student:	Roseilee Linton	Student No:	1216988
Course of study:	EdD in Leaders and Leadership	Email address:	RSL188@student.bham.ac.uk
Principal supervisor:	Christopher Rhodes		

Name of student:		Student No:	
Course of study:		Email address:	

Principal supervisor:

--

Date:

April 2014

**4. ESTIMATED START OF PROJECT**

Date:

August 2016

**ESTIMATED END OF PROJECT**

## 5. FUNDING

List the funding sources (including internal sources) and give the status of each source.

<b>Funding Body</b>	<b><i>Approved/Pending /To be submitted</i></b>
N/A	

If applicable, please identify date within which the funding body requires acceptance of award:

Date:

If the funding body requires ethical review of the research proposal at application for funding please provide date of deadline for funding application:

Date:

## 6. SUMMARY OF PROJECT

Describe the purpose, background rationale for the proposed project, as well as the hypotheses/research questions to be examined and expected outcomes. This description

should be in everyday language that is free from jargon. Please explain any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases.

The purpose of this proposed project is to explore the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders influences their response to changes that occur in the educational arena. The overall concern is whether or not school leaders in general, and headteachers in particular, have the ability or rather, the personal capacity, to cope with and respond to such changes without crumbling under the accompanying pressures. It is hoped that the findings will add to the repertoire of knowledge on personal capacity as it relates to the future of educational leadership.

The concern stems from recent observations of an impending crisis in the retention and recruitment of head teachers, with head teachers claiming that they were leaving the profession out of frustration and virtually unanimous that the issue hinged on their ability to cope with the changes in the education system. Coupled with this was a reduction in the post of deputy headteacher, with little turnover, and a dwindling pool of middle leaders disenchanted with headship due to workload and accountability pressures and doubting their capacity to cope with the changes confronting them.

Such disillusionment on the part of middle leaders poses real challenges for succession planning, as it renders the task of identification and development of head teachers with the capacity to cope with educational changes, even more arduous. Attempts to fill the gap in the literature on a systematic understanding of how leaders are made have drawn upon the

trajectories of school leaders. This study will seek to explore the place of personal capacity in the trajectory of the school leader, thereby contributing to the existing body of literature.

Against this background therefore, the research questions that will be guiding this study are:-

- What constitutes the personal capacity of educational leaders and to what extent is it a factor in their ability to effectively cope with changes.
- How does the personal capacity of educational leaders correlate with their self-efficacy and self-belief?
- What role does personal capacity play in the transition of senior leaders to head teachers?
- What are the implications of personal capacity in the talent management, retention, continued enchantment and development of leaders?

The expected outcome of this project is that it will afford a broader understanding of how personal capacity influences educational leadership. It is also hoped that the findings will add to the repertoire of knowledge on personal capacity as it relates to the future of educational leadership. A further expectation is that this should inform leadership training and development.

The project intends to focus on the views of head teachers and senior leaders (heads, deputies and assistant heads) and their understanding of how their personal capacity impact their ability to cope with the changing educational landscape. Following the project, an

anonymous 50,000 word thesis (submitted to Birmingham University as part of my study for an Educational Doctoral Award) will be available to other educators and researchers to reflect on.



## 7. CONDUCT OF PROJECT

**Please give a description of the research methodology that will be used**

The research methodology to be adopted is the case study. It is qualitative in nature in keeping with a subjectivist, interpretive and relativistic paradigm and is used here as it affords the opportunity for focus and preoccupation with the actual people involved, gathering and theorising from their complex experiences as leaders.

Semi-structured interviews along with questionnaires will be used to collect the data for analysis. The semi-structured interview was chosen because the main aim is to unearth the feelings, perceptions and experiences of senior leaders regarding their understanding of personal capacity and the ability to respond to the recent changes in the present educational landscape. The questionnaires were used to gather demographic and leadership behaviour data which will be used as a complement to the interviews.

The data will be drawn from 20 secondary school leaders comprising 10 head teachers and 10 senior leaders. The senior leaders will include 5 aspiring head teachers who are either participants or graduates of the new NPQH programme and/or are ardently pursuing their first headship. Data from the senior leaders will be useful in providing the answer to the second

research question regarding the role that personal capacity plays in the transition of senior leaders to head teachers.

The interviewees will be individually approached with a predefined set of questions accommodating open-ended answers and with room for each to elaborate on issues raised. The validity of this method is underscored by the need to obtain information on opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences. The questionnaires will be administered ahead of the interviews and collected from each participant at the end of each interview. All interviews will be conducted within the same school term to reduce any discrepancy of term time pressures.

Consent will be sought at each stage. Please see appendices 1, 2, 3a – letters of consent to participants.

**8. DOES THE PROJECT INVOLVE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE OTHER THAN THE  
RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS?**

Yes ☒ No ☐

Note: "Participation" includes both active participation (such as when participants take part in an interview) and cases where participants take part in the study without their knowledge

and consent at the time (for example, in crowd behaviour research).

**If you have answered NO please go to Section 18 . If you have answered YES to this question please complete all the following sections.**

## **9. PARTICIPANTS AS THE SUBJECTS OF THE RESEARCH**

Describe the number of participants and important characteristics (such as age, gender, location, affiliation, level of fitness, intellectual ability etc.). Specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used.

The intention is to select participants from mainly secondary schools within London Local Authorities. There will be a maximum of two participants from the same school, that is the head teacher/principal and a senior leader (vice principal or deputy/assistant head teacher) will be selected.

To ensure a range of views a diversity of participants is targeted. A deliberate attempt to get a proportional sample has been considered. Therefore, the sample will reflect a proportional representation of the leadership demography of age, gender and ethnicity.

## **10. RECRUITMENT**

Please state clearly how the participants will be identified, approached and recruited. Include any relationship between the investigator(s) and participant(s) (e.g. instructor-student).

*Note: Attach a copy of any poster(s), advertisement(s) or letter(s) to be used for recruitment.*

The method of selecting schools will be to initially go to the local authority's (LA) school directory, on their website. The LA directory website includes an up-to date list of all schools – independent, free, grammar, comprehensive, faith, infant, juniors and primary schools. For the purpose of this study, I will narrow the search to secondary schools and select mainly inner city London schools with similarities in student intake and Ofsted criteria grades for leadership and management (judged as 'good' or 'outstanding').

From the criteria I aim to initially approach and recruit school leaders by informal letters (sealed – see Appendix 1). The informal letter will merely seek to gain the initial interest of the participants in the research. It will briefly explain the proposed project, individuals to be interviewed, possible documents to be analysed, issues of anonymity and confidentiality and importance of their contribution. It also outlines that official letters would be presented in due course if they were initially interested in taking part.

Apart from one case, I do not know the head teachers/staff of the schools to be involved, in a professional or personal capacity. This is, therefore, not a consideration in the selection process.

## **11. CONSENT**

**a)** Describe the process that the investigator(s) will be using to obtain valid consent. If consent is not to be obtained explain why. If the participants are minors or for other reasons are not competent to consent, describe the proposed alternate source of consent, including any permission / information letter to be provided to the person(s) providing the consent.

Once participants have understood the nature of the project and their place in it and have verbally agreed to participate, they will then all be provided with validated letters (Appendices (2, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 4a, 4b 4c) explaining the project. The letters will be individually designed and sealed for participants – head teachers and senior leaders. These letters will provide:

- a formal explanation of the study – its aims (Appendix 3b)
- a sample interview schedule (Appendices, 3c, 4b)
- a request for agreement to complete the questionnaire (Appendix 3d)
- a valid consent letter (Appendix 3a and 4a)
- thesis summary for participants (Appendix 3b)
- explanation of how they will be analysed, used, stored and kept anonymous (Appendices 2 and 3a).

It will also include a statement thanking them for their participation in the project and assuring them of the privacy of names and confidentiality of documents which will be maintained using coding, as emphasised in the letters (Appendices 1, 2, 3a, 3b and 4a).

If the participants agree to be interviewed they will be asked to sign the letters, for the records.

The 20 participants to be interviewed will be non-vulnerable adults.

*Note: Attach a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (if applicable), the Consent Form*

*(if applicable), the content of any telephone script (if applicable) and any other material that will be used in the consent process.*

**b) Will the participants be deceived in any way about the purpose of the study? Yes ☐**

**No ☒**

If yes, please describe the nature and extent of the deception involved. Include how and when the deception will be revealed, and who will administer this feedback.

## 12. PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Explain what feedback/ information will be provided to the participants after participation in the research. (For example, a more complete description of the purpose of the research, or access to the results of the research).

Interview transcripts will be available upon request to each participant (Appendices 2a, 3a, 4a). In addition, once the study is completed, a 'headline only' copy of the research will be provided to each participant upon request. The headline copy will present no risk or threat to the practitioner/ respondents as participants will remain anonymous and will not being traceable to any institution.

### **13. PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL**

**a)** Describe how the participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project.

The right to withdraw will be addressed in two ways. The first will be written using consent forms which state that each participant has the right to withdraw two weeks after the interview takes place. Two weeks for withdrawal was considered reasonable to avoid other issues that could arise for me as a doctoral student if participants decide to withdraw just before my thesis submission (see Appendices 1, 2, 3a, 4a).

The second will be verbal. I will again explain, during the beginning of the interviews, that they have the right to withdraw from the project without any explanation to the researcher. It will

also take into account the suggestions from the Ethical Review Committee: to extend the right to withdraw to participants.

**b)** Explain any consequences for the participant of withdrawing from the study and indicate what will be done with the participant's data if they withdraw.

There are no consequences for a participant who decides to withdraw. Additional participants can be engaged as required. For those who do withdraw all data will be stored appropriately and any paper or electronic records will be destroyed. See also Section 16 below.

#### 14. COMPENSATION

Will participants receive compensation for participation?

i) Financial ☐ ☐ Yes ☐

No ☒

ii) Non-financial ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒

If **Yes** to **either** i) or ii) above, please provide details.

N/A



If participants choose to withdraw, how will you deal with compensation?

N/A

## 15. CONFIDENTIALITY

a) Will all participants be anonymous? Yes ☒ No ☐

b) Will all data be treated as confidential? Yes ☒ No ☐

*Note: Participants' identity/data will be confidential if an assigned ID code or number is used, but it will not be anonymous. Anonymous data cannot be traced back to an individual participant.*

Describe the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of participants and/or confidentiality of data both during the conduct of the research and in the release of its findings.

If participant anonymity or confidentiality is not appropriate to this research project, explain, providing details of how all participants will be advised of the fact that data will not be anonymous or confidential.

‘Headline only’ reports are envisaged (see above). With respect to the subsequent thesis, the University of Birmingham and the BERA codes of ethical practice will be complied with at all times. As stated above prior to all interviews, it will be specified that participants can ask the interviewer to stop the recording if they wish to provide non-recorded statements.

Since two types of participants will be interviewed: head teachers and senior leaders – deputy/ assistant head teachers – I will assign a number or code to identify the type of participant interviewed. To further comply with the Ethical Review Committee of the University of Birmingham in relation to anonymity and confidential data not being able to be traced back to the individual, the report will seek to code schools, interviewees and questionnaires. As such reader(s) will not be able to identify those involved as the data and evidence will be linked (identified) by my eyes only. This is because all unnecessary identified detail will be removed from the research report.

## 16. STORAGE, ACCESS AND DISPOSAL OF DATA

Describe what research data will be stored, where, for what period of time, the measures that will be put in place to ensure security of the data, who will have access to the data, and the method and timing of disposal of the data.

The data storage and retention will be dealt with according to University’s new Code of Practice for Research (see [http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP\\_Research.pdf](http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf)). Recorded interviews

will be coded and stored safely, as will transcriptions and document analysis. Electronic records will have password entry only and accessed only by myself. Data will be stored securely in a locked container, preserved and made accessible in confidence to only other authorised researchers for verification purposes for a period of ten years.

**17. OTHER APPROVALS REQUIRED?** e.g. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks

☐ YES      ☒ NO ✓      ☐ NOT APPLICABLE

If yes, please specify.

As the research will be conducted at individual schools, a CRB check is essential. Being a school professional, I am already in possession of one.

**18. SIGNIFICANCE/BENEFITS**

Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research

This seems to be the first study on analysing the influence of personal capacity on educational leadership in secondary schools. It is also hoped that the findings will add to the repertoire of knowledge on personal capacity as it relates to the future of educational leadership. A further expectation is that this should inform leadership training and development

The confidential contents of the thesis will enable others to reflect on their practice into long term secured investment in leadership.

## 19. RISKS

- a) Outline any potential risks to **INDIVIDUALS**, including research staff, research participants, other individuals not involved in the research and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap

There is no possibility of any risk to the researcher or participants as the data will be coded and confidentiality maintained. Electronic data will be password protected and any data will be locked in a secured storage container as stated above. No headline report will identify any institution or individual.

**b)** Outline any potential risks to **THE ENVIRONMENT and/or SOCIETY** and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap.

There will be no risk to the environment or society.

**20. ARE THERE ANY OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES RAISED BY THE RESEARCH?**

Yes ☐ No ☒✓

If yes, please specify

**21. CHECKLIST**

Please mark if the study involves any of the following:

- Vulnerable groups, such as children and young people aged under 18 years, those with learning disability, or cognitive impairments ☐

- Research that induces or results in or causes anxiety, stress, pain or physical discomfort, or poses a risk of harm to participants (which is more than is expected from everyday life)

☐

- Risk to the personal safety of the researcher ☐

- Deception or research that is conducted without full and informed consent of the participants at time study is carried out ☐

- Administration of a chemical agent or vaccines or other substances (including vitamins or food substances) to human participants. ☐

- Production and/or use of genetically modified plants or microbes ☐

- Results that may have an adverse impact on the environment or food safety ☐

- Results that may be used to develop chemical or biological weapons ☐

Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.

		ATTACHED	NOT APPLICABLE
Recruitment advertisement	Appendix 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant information sheet	Appendix 3b	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consent form	Appendix 2, 3a,	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4a			
Questionnaire	Appendix 3d,	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4c			
Interview Schedule	Appendix 3c,	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4b			

## 22. DECLARATION BY APPLICANTS

I submit this application on the basis that the information it contains is confidential and will be used by the University of Birmingham for the purposes of ethical review and monitoring of the research project described herein, and to satisfy reporting requirements to regulatory bodies. The information will not be used for any other purpose without my prior consent.

I declare that:

- The information in this form together with any accompanying information is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I undertake to abide by University Code of Practice for Research ([http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP\\_Research.pdf](http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf)) alongside any other relevant professional bodies' codes of conduct and/or ethical guidelines.
- I will report any changes affecting the ethical aspects of the project to the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.
- I will report any adverse or unforeseen events which occur to the relevant Ethics Committee via the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.

**Name of Principal investigator/project supervisor:**

Roseilee Linton/Dr Christopher Rhodes

**Date:**

25/04/14

Please now save your completed form, print a copy for your records, and then email a copy to the Research Ethics Officer, at [aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk). As noted above, please do not submit a paper copy.

Ethics Approval Granted

**From:** Gemma Williams (Research Support Group) [mailto:[g.c.williams@bham.ac.uk](mailto:g.c.williams@bham.ac.uk)]

**Sent:** 03 June 2014 14:22

**To:** 'Christopher Rhodes'

**Subject:** RE: Ethical Approval EdD - Rosliee Linton ERN\_14-0562



Dear Dr Rhodes

**Re: “An exploration of the extent to which the personal capacity of school leaders influence their response to changes that occur in the educational arena”**

**Application for Ethical Review ERN\_14-0562**

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project, which was reviewed by the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee.

**On behalf of the Committee, I can confirm the conditions of approval for the study have now been met and this study now has full ethical approval.**

I would like to remind you that any substantive changes to the nature of the study as described in the Application for Ethical Review, and/or any adverse events occurring during the study should be promptly brought to the Committee’s attention by the Principal Investigator and may necessitate further ethical review.

Please also ensure that the relevant requirements within the University’s Code of Practice for Research and the information and guidance provided on the University’s ethics webpages (available at <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Links-and-Resources.aspx> ) are adhered to and referred to in any future applications for ethical review. It is now a requirement on the revised application form (<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-Forms.aspx> ) to confirm that this guidance has been consulted and is understood, and that it has been taken into account when completing your application for ethical review.

Please be aware that whilst Health and Safety (H&S) issues may be considered during the ethical review process, you are still required to follow the University’s guidance on H&S and to ensure

that H&S risk assessments have been carried out as appropriate. For further information about this, please contact your School H&S representative or the University's H&S Unit at [healthandsafety@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@contacts.bham.ac.uk).

If you require a hard copy of this correspondence, please let me know.

Gemma Williams

Deputy                                      Research                                      Ethics                                      Officer

Research Support Group

Finance Office

Aston Webb, B Block, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT

Tel:                                      0121                                      414                                      8101

Email: [g.c.williams@bham.ac.uk](mailto:g.c.williams@bham.ac.uk) , Web: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/researchsupportgroup](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/researchsupportgroup)

#### **App.11: Self-completion questionnaire results from section 2**

Question 1 – 84% of the respondents (n=16) either agree or strongly agree that believe that school autonomy makes headship more attractive

Question 2 – 100% of the respondents (n=19) either agree or strongly agree that they are active members of a leadership network group

Question 3 – 100% of the respondents (n=19) either agree or strongly agree that they always try to find more efficient ways to do things

Question 4 – 79% of the respondents (n=15) either agree or strongly agree that they enjoy working collaboratively

Question 5 – 89% of the respondents (n=17) either agree or strongly agree believe the new OFSTED framework creates more competition than collaboration between school

Question 6 – 53% of the respondents (n=10) either agree or strongly agree that one of my most important tasks is to develop leadership in others

Question 7 – 100% of the respondents (n=19) either agree or strongly agree I am skeptical about government changes

Question 8 – 5% of the respondents (n=1) either agree or strongly agree that they have a balanced work and social life

Question 9 – 100% of the respondents (n=19) either agree or strongly agree that the pace of the curriculum reform is too fast

Question 10 – 63% of the respondents (n=1) either disagree or strongly disagree that they cope well in their role.

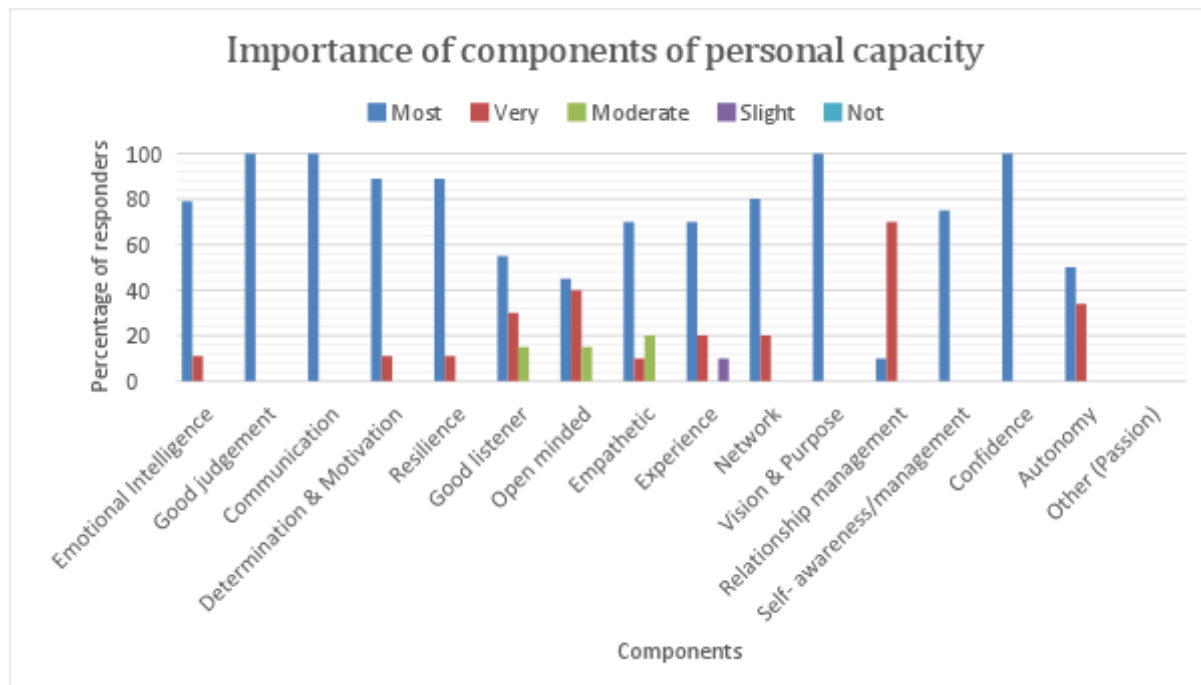
### Self-completion questionnaire results from section 3

The respondents' responses to the importance of each component of personal capacity of an effective headteacher.

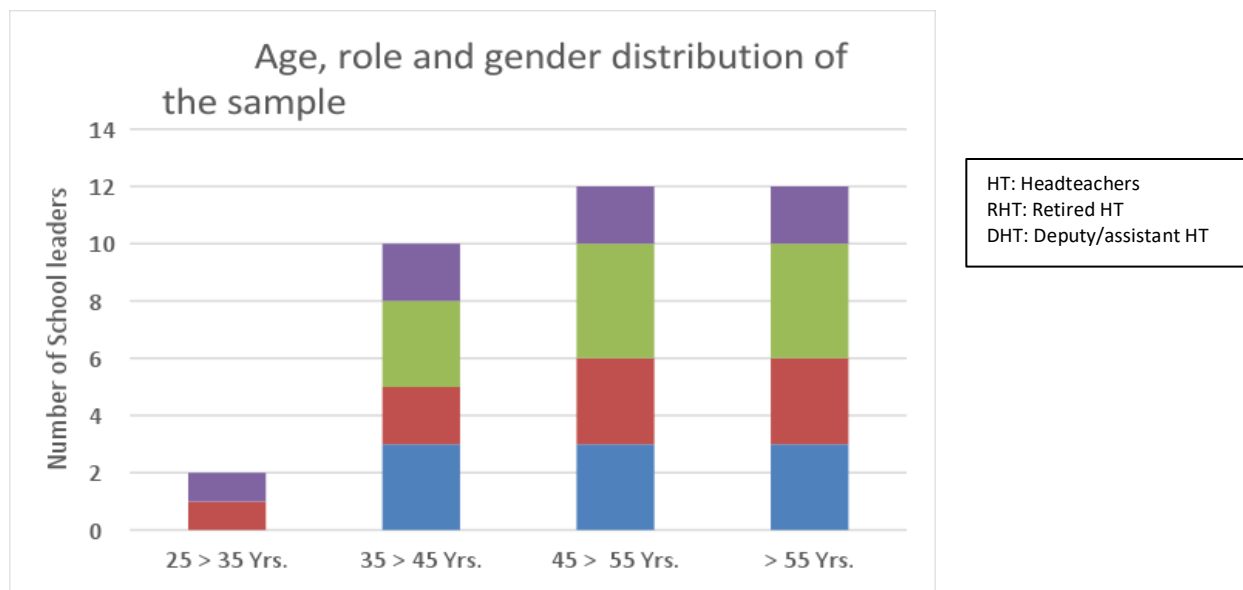


## App. 12: Diagrams Summarising the Findings

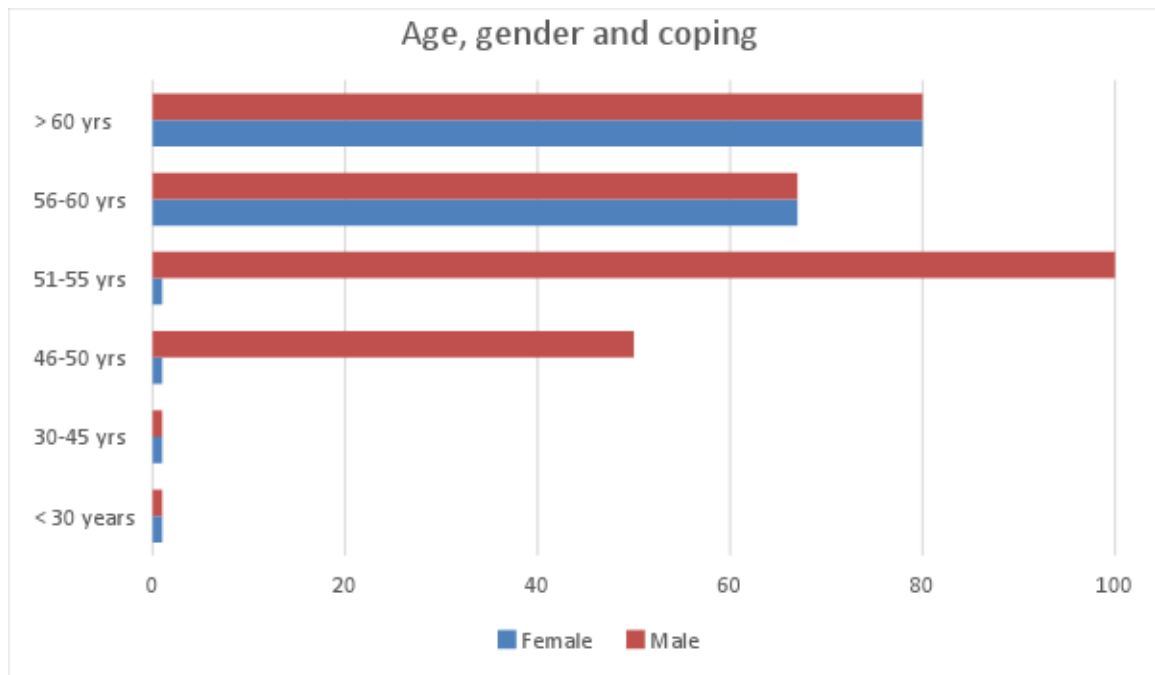
### Importance of the components of personal capacity



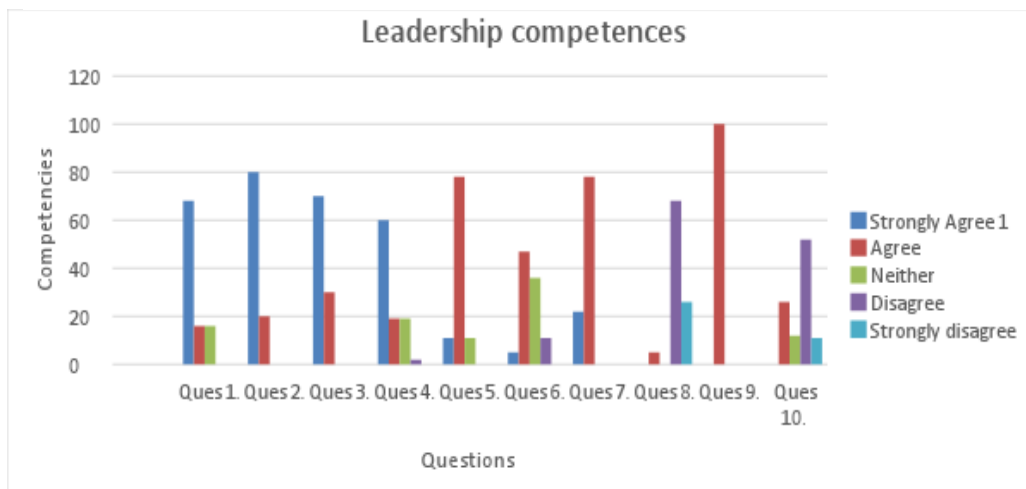
### Role, Age and Gender Distribution of the Sample



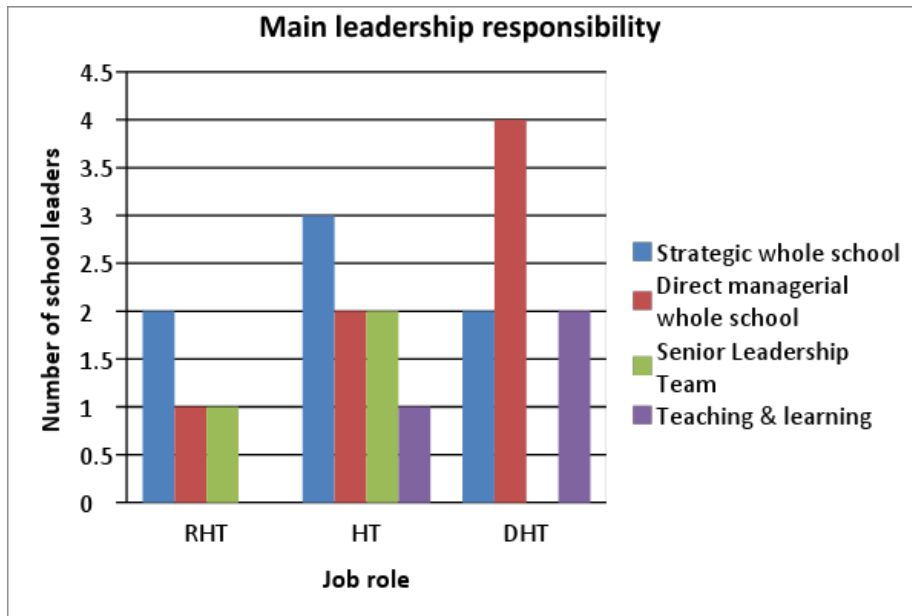
## Age, gender and coping distribution of the sample



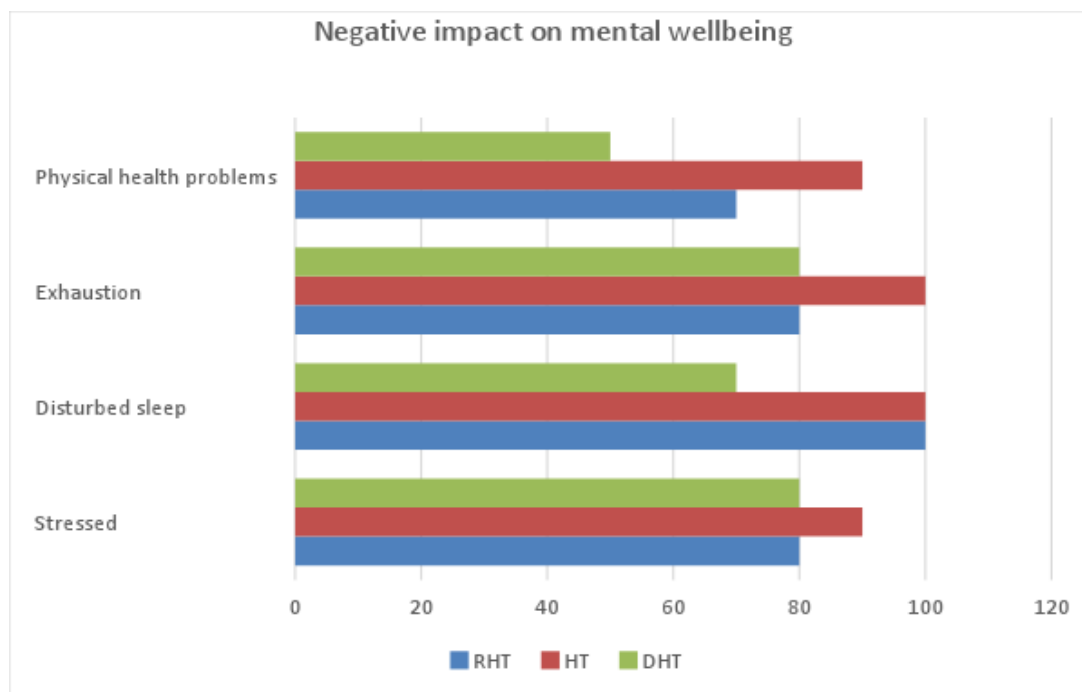
## A summary of the leadership competencies as indicated on the questionnaire



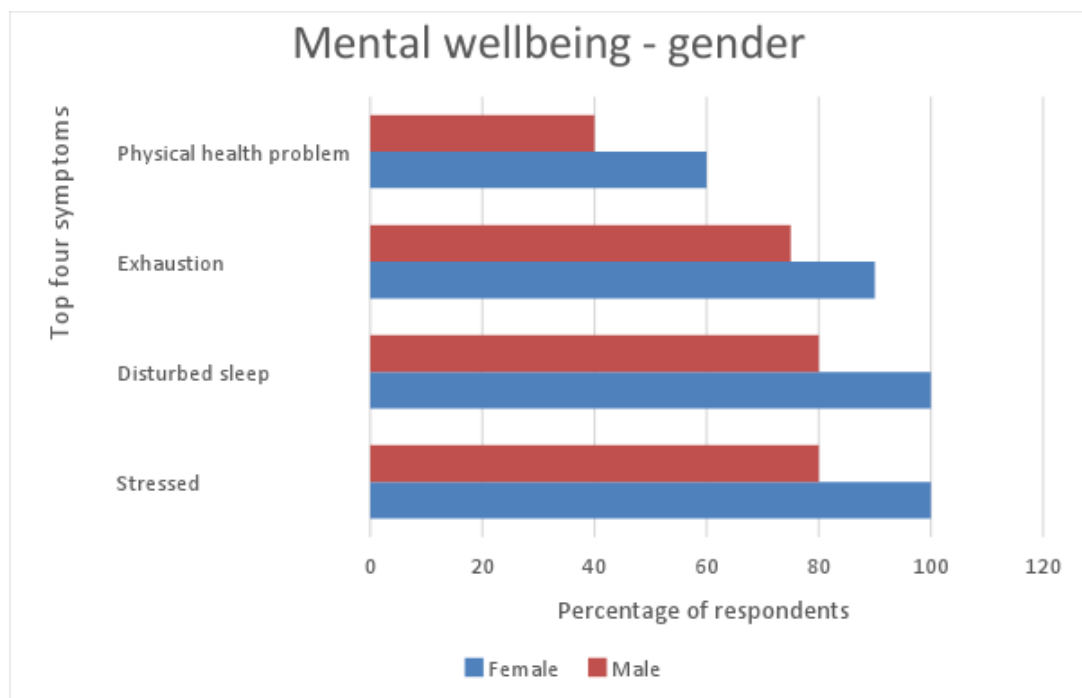
## A summary of the leadership competencies as indicated on the questionnaire



Negative impact on respondents' mental well-being – Role

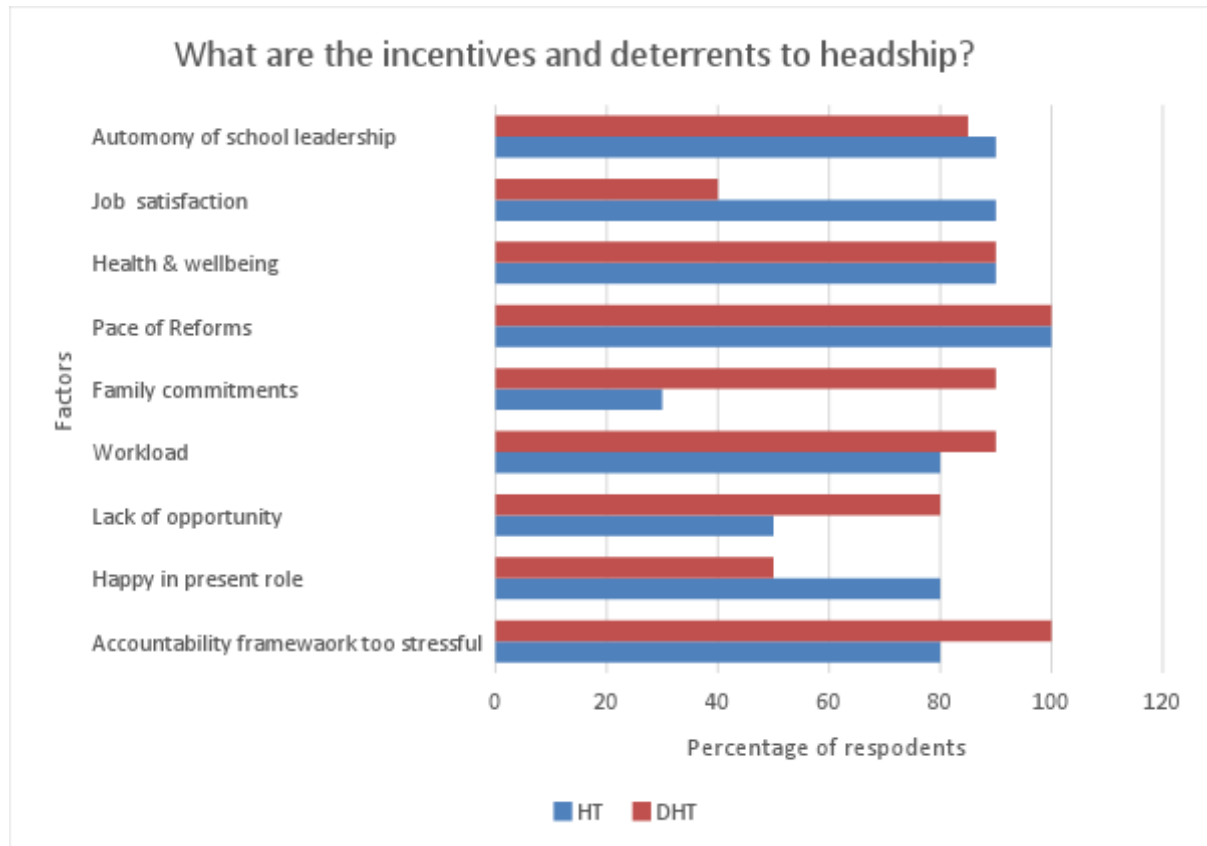


– Gender





## Incentives and deterrents to headship



## First model of personal capacity based on related literature

