

Research Into The Impact Of School Leadership On Pupil Outcomes: Policy And Research Contexts

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Abstract

This paper extends the introduction to our study of successful school leadership and how it influences pupil outcomes begun in our Editorial introduction. Critical to an appreciation especially of the external validity of our results is an understanding of the policy context in which the English leaders in our study found themselves; this is a policy context dominated by concerns for external accountability and increases in the academic performance of pupils. In addition to describing this context, the paper summarizes the framework which guided the early stage of our research and outlines our mixed-methods research design.

Introduction

This research project should be seen in the context of the English government's sustained and persistent initiatives to raise school standards through a range of interventionist measures. Not least among these has been a focus upon improving understandings of school leadership in all its forms and, based upon these, the development of a range of strategies for leadership recruitment, selection, training and development. All of these strategies have implicitly assumed a link between school leadership and student learning and achievement since this has consistently been reinforced, within the literature, as significant. The research base about the impact of leadership in schools is particularly robust. Some of this evidence is reviewed later in this paper as we describe the initial framework for our study. More of this research is highlighted in the next paper in this special issue (Leithwood et al, 2006b, p3). One of the claims in that paper is that 'School leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning'. It is from this perspective that we briefly review the current policy context of school leadership in England.

A useful starting point in understanding how school leadership and its relationship to student learning is conceptualized from a policy perspective (in England) is

provided by the following extract from the OfSTED Framework (NCSL, 2001, p1), which emphasises the vital connection between what leaders do and what happens in the classroom:

'Effective headteachers provide a clear vision and sense of direction for the school. They prioritise. They focus the attention of staff on what is important and do not let them get diverted and sidetracked with initiatives that will have little impact on the work of the pupils. They know what is going on in their classrooms. They have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of their staff. They know how to build on the strengths and reduce the weaknesses. They can focus their programme of staff development on the real needs of their staff and school. They gain this view through a systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation. Their clarity of thought, sense of purpose and knowledge of what is going on mean that effective headteachers can get the best out of their staff, which is the key to influencing work in the classroom and to raising the standards achieved by pupils.'

Building on this definition of the role of school leader, in this introductory paper we will:

- Describe the regulatory framework and distribution of responsibilities of school leaders in England;
- Outline the accountability framework within which they work;
- Enumerate the challenges facing school leaders;
- Describe the research purposes, design and organization.

Regulatory Framework And Responsibilities

The regulatory framework and distribution of responsibilities of school leaders in England are described in several key documents.

First, the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (DfES, 2006) sets out a range of responsibilities for school leaders including: formulating the school's aims; the appointment and management of staff; liaison with staff unions and associations; the determination, organisation and management of the curriculum; appraising, training and inducting staff; responsibility for standards in teaching and learning; developing effective relationships with the governing body, Local Authority (LA) and other organisations.

Second, with regards specifically to the role of the headteacher, the National Standards for Headteachers (DfES, 2004) identify core professional leadership

and management practices in six key areas. These apply to all phases and types of schools and are in turn subdivided into the knowledge, professional qualities (skills, dispositions and personal capabilities) and actions needed to achieve them (DfES, 2004, p4). These include:

- *Shaping the Future*: creating a shared vision and strategic plan for the school (in collaboration with governing body) that motivates staff and others in the community;
- *Leading Learning and Teaching*: raising the quality of teaching and learning and for pupils' achievement. This implies setting high expectations and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of learning outcomes. A successful learning culture will enable pupils to become effective, enthusiastic, independent learners, committed to life-long learning;
- *Developing Self and Working with Others*: building effective relationships and building a professional learning community through performance management and effective professional development for staff;
- *Managing the Organisation*: improving organizational structures through self evaluation, organization and management of people and resources in order to build capacity across the workforce and deploy cost effective resources;
- *Securing Accountability*: headteachers are accountable to pupils, parents, carers, governors, the LA and the whole community to provide a high quality of education for promoting collective responsibility within the whole school community and for contributing to the education service more widely;
- *Strengthening Community*: creating links and collaborating with other schools, parents, carers and other agencies to share expertise and ensure children's well being.

Third, whilst not regulatory, the most recent guidance for primary headteachers and senior leaders from the Primary National Strategy (DfES, 2007) reinforces the use now being made at national level of syntheses of a range of evidence about effective leadership, stating unequivocally that:

'We know from a wealth of research that headteachers play a key role in effective schools. In the DfES publication, 'Making great progress', the following leadership characteristics have been identified following visits to primary schools where all children have consistently made higher than expected progress' (p. 6).

The ten characteristics identified are: i) Heads see themselves as the headteacher; ii) Senior leaders are close to the learning; iii) Headteachers retain

their energy and enthusiasm; iv) An absolute and sustained focus on improving standards; v) Established systems allow time to think and act strategically and innovatively; vi) A confident and assured style of leadership; vii) Passion for order and thoroughness; viii) Organising a team around functions rather than status; ix) The forging of strong, professional relationships; x) Doing jobs that need to be done (p. 7).

Fourth, it is clear that England has a relatively decentralised education system with many leadership and management decisions taken at a school level. This is a direct consequence of the introduction of Local Management of Schools (LMS) in the Education Reform Act (1988) that allowed all schools to be taken out of the direct financial control of Local Authorities by devolving autonomy on resource allocation and priorities from Local Authorities to governors. It is significant that the majority of statutory responsibilities reside with the governing body. Indeed it is a distinctive feature of the English system that governing bodies, as opposed to local government (school district) and headteachers are invested through legislation with wide ranging powers and responsibilities. The DfES's Education Regulations (School Government, 2000) sets out the regulatory framework of roles and responsibilities for headteachers and governing bodies. These include specific duties in relation to Budget, Staffing, Curriculum, Performance management, Target setting, Exclusions, Admissions, Religious Education, Collective Worship, Premises, School Organisation, Information for Parents and Governing Body procedures.

Finally, it is worth noting that a recent research study (PwC, 2007, p10) outlined six main areas of responsibility for headteachers identified by themselves: Accountability (time spent fulfilling the legal and other responsibilities of heads); strategy (setting the strategic ethos of the school and improvement planning); managing teaching and learning; staffing issues (including recruitment and staff's professional development); networking (with other schools and other appropriate organisations); and operations (the day to day management of the school).

Accountability Framework

However, whilst funding, leadership and management control were flowing to schools, this new autonomy coincided with a significant centralisation of decision making over curriculum, assessment and accountability. Through the Education Reform Act (1988), the Government introduced:

- The National Curriculum, which made it compulsory for schools to teach certain subjects and syllabuses. Previously the choice of subjects had been up to the school;
- National curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stages 1 to 4 (ages 7, 11, 14 and 16 respectively) At Key Stage 4 (age 16), the assessments were made from the GCSE exam. A direct consequence has been the publication in newspapers of League tables showing performance statistics for each school;
- And then later, in 1992, the creation of Ofsted and a comprehensive programme for the inspection of all schools in England.

Schools leaders are, therefore, held accountable for school performance through a highly developed national accountability framework. This framework includes individual target setting for each school, the publication of exam results and a national inspection regime where reports on the performance of individual schools are publicly available and parents are encouraged to examine these reports when choosing a school for their child. The considerable autonomy and control that school leaders have in some areas is thus linked to high levels of accountability and areas of national prescription.

More recently, the Government has committed to a New Relationship with Schools (NRWS) to reduce bureaucracy and data collection demands, and pave the way for; on the one hand, new flexibilities and “inspection holidays” for schools deemed to be outstanding whilst, on the other hand, for sharper intervention in schools judged to be unsatisfactory. However, whilst welcoming aspects of the NRWS, Head Associations, have called for more intelligent accountability, more flexibility on staff pay and conditions and, in particular, ‘more support and less pressure’ for school leaders from national agencies, Ofsted and central Government (SHA, 2004).

The Challenges Facing School Leaders

In view of the breadth and depth of roles and responsibilities, there are a set of key contemporary challenges at the heart of school leadership. These include: ensuring consistently good teaching and learning; integrating a sound grasp of basics knowledge and skills within a broad and balanced curriculum; managing behaviour and attendance; strategically managing resources and the environment; building the school as a professional learning community; and

developing partnerships beyond the school to encourage parental support for learning and new learning opportunities.

Within this context, there is also a set of specific contemporary challenges that stem in particular from the scale and complexity of agendas as more specifically from 'the changes associated with the juxtaposition between the Every Child Matters policy agenda, of the learning and standards agendas on the one hand, and the social and inclusion agendas on the other' (PwC, 2007, p161). These include:

- *The synergy between standards and welfare:* the ECM agenda. School leaders are now asked to retain a rigorous focus on raising pupil attainment whilst at the same time leading improvements in provision that enables children to be safe, healthy, enjoy and achieve and make a positive contribution to society. The latter 'Welfare agenda' includes the development of extended provision (including before and after school clubs) as well as the co-organization of multi-agency children's services. This stems not only from concerns for child safety and protection, but also as an important strand in national approaches to tackle the pervasive impact of social, class on educational achievement. The creation of a new Department for Children, Schools and Families gives an increased emphasis on and voice to the every child matters agenda. Indeed, the new Secretary of State for DCSF has referred to his Department several times as "the Department for Every Child Matters". Enhancing learning and teaching is a key priority for school leadership. Trends towards personalizing education to individual student needs and interests, coupled with a greater responsibility for student welfare as part of the ECM agenda, represent real challenges for school leaders as they attempt to continue to raise school standards and offer a broad and balanced education. To meet these challenges, leaders will increasingly be expected to:
 - Build professional learning communities within and beyond schools that develop and widen learning and teaching strategies to respond to a range of student learning needs;
 - Use the full innovative potential of workforce reform to deploy teachers, higher learning teaching assistants and other support staff to extend curricular and learning pathways (especially in 14-19 phase) and extend services before and after the school day;

- Consider new models of leadership and governance to appropriately distribute an increasing range of responsibilities to a wider and differentiated pool of leadership expertise.
- *The drive to increasingly personalize the learning experience of students.* This demands, amongst other things, that leaders embed assessment for learning and the use of data on pupil achievement as whole school professional practices in the design of learning experiences that really stretch individual pupils;
- *The implementation of workforce reform.* From September 2005, under the national workforce agreement, schools were legally bound to introduce for the first time guaranteed professional (preparation) time for teachers at 10% of their teaching time. This is part of a broader reform to devolve administrative tasks from teachers to support staff, limit requirements on teachers to cover absent colleagues and achieve an overall reduction in workload and a reasonable work-life balance. The challenge for school leaders is to ensure that this supports broader school improvement or, at the very least, does not undermine stability;
- *The impetus for school diversity and parental choice.* Particularly in the secondary phase, the current Government has encouraged schools to diversify away from a common comprehensive school model towards a wide range of school types in terms of both curriculum (Specialist status) and governance (Trusts and Federations). This has been coupled with an explicit move to provide parents with greater choice in the school(s) they send their children to in terms of both admissions procedures and the construction of new schools (Academies). Both the diversity and choice agendas are seen by Government as drivers of improvement. The challenge for school leaders is to make sense of these initiatives at their local level, engaging with the broader system in a meaningful way whilst protecting their students, staff and school ethos from uncoordinated or even unnecessary change;
- *The progression of particular groups of students.* These include specific minority ethnic and social economic groups (including black boys and white students on free school meals); students with English as an additional Language (EAL) particularly in urban areas; students with the potential for high attainment so as to ensure there are really stretched and engaged; children with Special Educational Needs, particularly where they are moved from special schools into mainstream schools (as part of the Governments Inclusion agenda). Progression pilots have just been launched in selected LAs;

- *The leadership of professional learning.* The leadership of professional learning will also include the development, management and strategic alignment to school priorities of networking and collaboration with other schools. There will also be a wider range of professionalisms in schools as part of both the ongoing workforce reform, ECM and 14-19 agendas. For instance, extended schooling, multi-agency co-sited approaches to welfare and inclusion, financial management across federations, and widening 14-19 pathways will all bring new leadership challenges.

In addition to these specific challenges, school leaders are also faced with a range of other issues including: planning their own succession in the face of a potential shortage in the supply of leaders; staying abreast of and implementing curriculum and assessment changes across the Key Stages and 14-19; managing potential falls in student numbers in particular local areas; and also leading schools in challenging circumstances.

It will be clear from this brief synthesis of the English schools' policy context that the work of headteachers – and, therefore, their staff – is subject to a range of policy imperatives which, depending upon perspective, act as 'drivers', encouraging schools to improve through the challenges they offer or, for some, as 'hindrances', holding schools back from improvement because of the distractions which they are perceived to represent from schools' internally identified improvement agendas.

The Research

The main aims of the research as defined in the project specification are:

'To establish how much variation in pupil outcomes (as measured by, for example, achievement, engagement, involvement, motivation) is accounted for by variation in the types, qualities, strategies and skills of school leaderships, in particular those of headteachers as 'leaders of leaders'.

'To measure both the direct and indirect impact of school leadership upon pupil and teacher outcomes plus school-based and organizational factors. For example, it is anticipated that in addition to pupil outcomes, this may include possible wider perspectives, such as the relationship with the wider community'.

'To provide robust, reliable data which will inform the work of the Department for Children's Services and Families (DCSF), the

National College for School Leadership (NCSL), local authorities (LAs), and schools'.

Contract Ref No: EOR/SBU/2003/080).

The research thus seeks to test and refine existing models of school leadership as far as they can demonstrate an impact on pupil outcomes. Such models are common across contexts in their general form but likely to be highly adaptable and contingent in their specific enactment. As Ray, Clegg and Gordon (2004) explain, leadership is a “reflexively automatic” activity and such activity is never unaffected by context. The study seeks to:

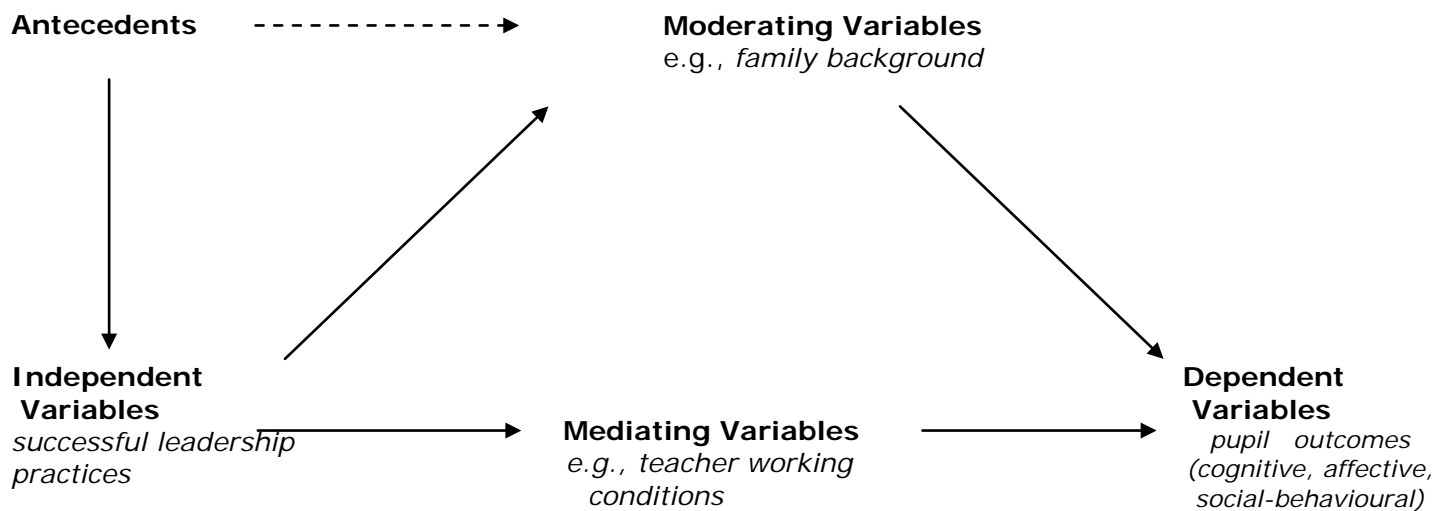
- i) Collect evidence to identify and describe variations in effective leadership practice (types, qualities, strategies and skills) with a view to relating these changes to variations in conditions for pupil, teacher and organisational learning and outcomes;
- ii) Explore to what extent variations in pupil outcomes is accounted for by variations in types, qualities, strategies, skills and contexts of leadership;
- iii) Identify which influences significantly moderate the effects of leadership practice (e.g. trust, leadership, continuity) on both short and long term pupil outcomes;
- iv) Identify which influences (e.g. professional community, school improvement planning) significantly mediate the effects of leadership practice on a range of both short and long term pupil outcomes;
- v) Identify empirically-grounded direct and indirect causal and associative relationships between effective leadership and pupil outcomes;
- vi) Provide robust, reliable data on i) to ii) which will inform the work of the Department for Education and Skills (DCSF), the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), local authorities (LAs), and schools.

Initial Framework Guiding The Research

Figure 1.1, adapted from Leithwood and Levin (2005), is the framework which provided an initial tool for thinking about the different variables or influences on and by headteachers. It suggests that, successful leadership practices, the

independent variables in the framework, develop and emerge through the influence of antecedent variables. Those leadership behaviours or practices, in turn, have direct effects potentially on a wide range of other variables. Some of those variables moderate (enhance or mute) leadership effects, others 'link" or mediate leadership practices to pupils and their learning, the dependent variables in the study.

Figure 1.1: A framework to guide research on leadership effects



The roots or antecedents of successful school leadership could include, for example, on-the-job learning, professional development experiences, socialization processes and individual traits. These are variables which are both internal to leaders, and are features of their external environments.

Internal antecedents

Teacher working conditions, their effects on teachers' internal states which are fundamental to sustaining good teaching (e.g., efficacy, commitment, identity, resilience, agency, trust, pedagogical content knowledge) and the consequences of such states for teachers' classroom performance are among the most promising mediators for inclusion in leadership effects research because they are so powerfully and closely related to pupil learning (e.g. Day et al, 2004; Leithwood, 2005; Bryk and Schneider, 2003; Day et al, 2007).

School leadership research has yet to devote much energy to the study of leaders' internal lives, with the exception of their values (e.g., Begley & Johansson, 2003; Sugrue et al, 2004), and cognitive processes (e.g. Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995). Evidence gathered in non-school contexts suggests the need to remedy this oversight and points to the importance of leaders' motivations, self-efficacy beliefs, capacities and such personality characteristics as optimism and openness (Popper & Mayseless, 2002); this evidence also points to the value of greater attention to leaders' emotional sensitivity (Beatty, 2004; Day, 2004; Wong & Law, 2002; Day & Leithwood, 2007). The recent development of a typology of attributes of successful headteachers for urban leadership, derived

from the study, classifies attributes of successful heads of urban schools which includes the affective domain (NCSL, 2004).

External antecedents

Among the most influential external antecedents of successful headteacher practices are the policy and professional contexts in which they work. For many years, school leaders in England and Wales have worked in a 'results-driven' policy context which holds schools more publicly accountable for their performance. Some evidence internationally suggests that successful leaders in such policy contexts are now less consumed with worries over the sometimes negative steering effects of these and other accountability initiatives - reduced autonomy and public naming through publication of league tables, for example - and are more intent on harnessing government accountability initiatives to their own school's priorities and broader educational values (Day and Leithwood, 2007). A large proportion of the successful leaders in two recent small scale studies, for example, used external demands for greater accountability as a tool for overcoming longstanding resistance to change on the part of small numbers of their teachers (Giles et al, 2007; Belchetz & Leithwood, 2007).

School phase (e.g., primary, secondary), school size, location (e.g., urban, rural), status of school (e.g., specialist school), type (government vs. catholic) are all plausible influences on the emergence of successful school leadership but have not been the subject of significant inquiry. Evidence about other antecedents of school leadership is modest, at best. A very restricted range of variables has been explored and there is little accumulation of evidence about any of those variables that have been studied. This neglect of attention to external antecedents is surprising since a great deal of the educational leadership literature claims that the context in which leaders work is of enormous importance in determining what they do. But such claims typically have prompted research about leadership in one context at a time - for example, whole school reform (e.g., Brooks, Scribner, & Eferakorho, 2004), technology (Anderson & Dexter, 2005), minority pupil populations (e.g., Riehl, 2002), and social justice (Shields, 2004).

These "one-context-at-a-time" studies tell us little about how variations in context are related to variations in leadership practices, the kind of evidence that is needed if we are to become clearer about the antecedents of school leadership and the importance of their broader influence across different kinds of schools.

Variables mediating successful leadership effects

The indirect nature of a high proportion of school leadership effects on pupils has prompted research about those variables or conditions in classrooms and schools that (a) are open to significant influence by those in leadership roles and (b) produce demonstrable improvements in pupil learning. Evidence has identified both school and classroom variables that fit this description. Some of these classroom variables include: time on task (Smyth, 1987); quality of instruction/instructional climate (Biddle & Dunkin, 1987); a curriculum rich in ideas and engaging for pupils (Brophy, n.d.); safe and orderly climate (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993); staff participation in school-wide decision making (e.g., Conley, 1991); school culture (Deal, 2005); teacher commitment: (Dannetta, 2002; Day et al, 2007); collective teacher efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000); sense of professional community (Louis & Kruse, 1995); organizational learning processes (Silins & Mulford, 2004); school goals (Hallinger & Heck, 1996); teacher capacity and experience (Glass, 2002) and; procedures for monitoring pupil progress (Walberg, 1984). The DfES funded four year longitudinal VITAE research also identified the positive effects of school leadership, colleagues and culture on teachers' long-term commitment and effectiveness (Day et al, 2006b).

Moderators of successful leadership

Moderating variables are features of the organizational or wider social context in which leaders' work; they interact with the dependent and/or mediating variables potentially changing the strength or nature of relationships (depress, neutralize, or enhance) between, for example, the independent and mediating variables or the mediating and dependent variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The same leadership behaviours may have quite different effects on teachers, for example, depending upon an individual teacher's gender, age, amount of experience or levels of stress; so these become promising moderators.

Examples of research identifying moderators of school leadership effects include (Hallinger, Bickman and Davis, 2000) on pupil background factors; (Louis and Miles, 1990) on school location; (Howley, 2002) on school size; (Tyler and DeGoey, 1996) on levels of trust; and (Bryk et al, 1984) on public vs. private schools. In their review, Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) found a consistent pattern of results suggesting that leadership effects can be enhanced or augmented by higher levels of prior pupil achievement, family educational culture, organizational culture, shared school goals, and coherent plans and policies.

The majority of school leadership studies, however, do not provide a theoretical rationale for their choice of moderators. Nor do they examine the extent to which variation in a selected moderator enhances or mutes leadership effects. Rather, evidence about these variables is treated more as background, as a means of ensuring similarity of schools on a key variable or as a means of ensuring that the schools included in the research represent the full range of states on each variable. Recent exceptions to this are research in England which evaluated the effects of a government project in England designed to assist the improvement of eight secondary schools who were previously unsuccessful (MacBeath et al, 2007; Harris et al, 2006) and a longitudinal eight country project on successful school principalship (Day and Leithwood, 2007). Understandings of school leadership effects would be much improved by further research inquiring about the consequences of variation in the status of theoretically defensible sets of moderators.

Independent variables: pupil outcomes

A significant proportion of research about leadership effects on students is limited to measures of student numeracy and literacy outcomes. A small number of additional studies (e.g., Silins & Mulford, 2002; Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999) also have examined the effects of school leadership on student participation and identification with school. Other useful indicators of student outcomes include attendance rates, retention rates, successful entry into tertiary education and productive employment. Because so much of the leadership effects literature has focused narrowly on a small but critical set of academic outcomes, it is important for future research to include but extend its measures of pupil outcomes to other indicators of this sort, as we do in this project.

The Organisation Of The Research

The research is divided into three related but overlapping phases. These three phases illustrate the mixed methods approach to the research design where both the qualitative and quantitative components are given equal weight. In addition, the findings from different phases contribute to the development of the research instruments through an iterative process of analysis, hypothesis generation, testing and, ultimately, the synthesis of findings.

Phase One (January 2006 – August 2007):

Building on previous and current research – An international review of literature

relevant to the aims and objectives of the research was conducted involving clear parameters for the selection of material along with criteria that sought to ensure that only the most robust findings were included. Two versions of this were published by DCSF and NCSL. The review is ongoing and will be updated as the project progresses to take account of new work in the field. The review findings informed the design of a 'first wave' survey of a nationally representative sample of improving schools and the development of the theoretical and conceptual framework for the research.

Data collection, analysis and reporting – this involved the design, administration and analysis of a questionnaire survey and the analysis of data from case study visits in each of twenty primary and secondary schools. In total, three in-depth interviews were conducted with headteachers, key staff, colleagues and Governors. The results of Phase One are presented in this Report. (Interviews with staff take place at times suitable to the school in order to minimise any additional burdens on them).

Phase Two (September 2007 – August 2008):

During this period, further visits to schools will be conducted with the interview and data collection designed to probe further the results of Phase One. Additionally, a second wave questionnaire and a researcher-administered pupil attitudinal survey will be implemented.

Phase Three (September 2008 – January 2009):

This phase will comprise of the integration of different forms of data, structural equation modelling (SEM), and the development of new theoretical models of relationships between leadership and pupil outcomes.

Methods Of Data Collection

The complexity of the area of study warranted a mixed method approach involving a range of research techniques, including approaches traditionally associated with both 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' paradigms. Mixed methods designs (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Cresswell, 2003) offer significant advantages through the conceptual and methodological synergy of case studies and qualitative data gathering and analysis with quantitative (affective, social behavioural and cognitive) measures (e.g. Sammons et al, 2005; Day et al, 2006a). A key feature of the research strategy is a series of extended research

team meetings to facilitate the analyses of different data sets and the integration of data and development of emerging hypotheses.

Collection and analysis of attainment, attendance and behaviour data at national level

The availability of national datasets from SSAT, FFT, DfES and Ofsted provide a vital resource to the study of leadership effects and enhances the cost effectiveness of the research. The SSAT, FFT and Ofsted have provided data to support this aspect of the research. The team has accessed national databases (particularly FFT and DfES value added and attainment indicators, PLASC data about pupil intakes and Ofsted inspection data on leadership of headteachers and other staff) to explore the patterns between measures of effectiveness and leadership and management. These data have been used to ensure that the sample of 1500+ survey schools covered a range of effectiveness features and leadership.

Sampling

Questionnaires to headteachers and key staff

Questionnaires were sent to the headteachers of 752¹ primary and 839² secondary schools, and distributed to a maximum of five key staff in each of the secondary schools (N=7000+). The key staff were Key Stage 1 and 2 managers in primary schools and the Heads of five departments (maths, English, science, arts and humanities) in secondary schools.

An analysis of national datasets from the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) DfES and Ofsted was conducted during Phase One of the study. This data informed the selection of schools to be surveyed. Three groups of schools were chosen on the basis of: (i) measured value-added sustained improvement in pupil outcomes over at least a three year period prior to the start of the project³ (i.e. ranging

¹ Original sample size was 752, but 6 schools were amalgamated.

² Original sample size was 839, but 1 school was amalgamated.

³ Effectiveness as measured by combined absolute improvement in pupil attainment levels across three years (2003-2005) in key indicators of attainment (%pupils 5A*-C at GCSE for secondary schools; % level 4+ in English and maths at KS2 for primary schools) and significant improvement in value added results for pupil progress using contextualised VA models and simple VA models identified by FFT analyses for three years (2003-2005) OR stable high effective schools in VA terms.

from low to medium, medium to high and sustained high improvement; and, (ii) presence of the same headteacher over the same period. Key staff were chosen on the basis of (i) their role in the management of measured improvement in pupil outcomes; and, (ii) presence in the school for at least a three year period. This enabled the tracking of improvement, as well as allowing a comparison to be made with the preceding state of the school. In addition, headteachers, key staff and schools represented a range of:

- Professional life phases, age groups and gender;
- Socio-economic contexts of schools (from high through to low quartiles based on free school meal indicators);
- School phase (primary and secondary);
- Types of school (rural, urban, etc);
- School size (small, average or large for sector).

A further 'wave 2' survey will be used in Phase Two as a means of testing hypotheses generated by the combined analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data in Phase One of the research.

Responses to the questionnaires were used:

1. To identify groups of headteachers within a range of schools who were prepared to take part in the main body of the research that would eventually involve a representative sample of 20 headteachers;
2. To establish, in conjunction with a review of relevant literature, key conditions and factors which headteachers perceive to currently affect their ability to impact upon pupil learning and achievement;
3. With the case study data to contribute to the development of an empirically based analytical framework for interpreting the effects of leadership on pupil outcomes.

Case Studies

A sample of 20 headteachers and key staff was recruited to the study with a range of experience and from a range of schools in different FSM groupings. Their

views and illustrations of their situations and practices are being collected, via visits to schools, across a two year-period. More improved schools from disadvantaged contexts were included in the case study phase to reflect the policy interest in raising standards in schools facing challenging circumstances.

In-depth interviews with case study headteachers, key staff and colleagues

Face-to-face interviews allow 'case study' participants to speak at greater length about those issues which are most significant to them in relation to the research aims and objectives. There are specific questions and prompts relating to issues of values, strategies and skills of leadership, moderating factors (e.g. pupil background, school location, school size, organisational culture, etc), and mediating factors (e.g. teaching and learning classroom climate, pupil engagement, staff participation in decision-making, teacher commitment.) Interviews with other colleagues in the school provide insights outside the formal school leadership into perceptions of the nature and impact of the practice and effectiveness of participating headteachers and key staff, and the role of school (and departmental) leadership, including the involvement of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and middle managers (e.g. Key Stage Leaders). In order to achieve this, a minimum of four to six colleagues are interviewed in addition to the participant key staff, once in each of the two years of data collection:

- A member of non-teaching staff;
- A member of teaching staff;
- A developing leader;
- A member of the SLT;
- A member of middle-management; and, the Chair of Governors or a parent governor.

Attitudinal survey of a sample of pupils

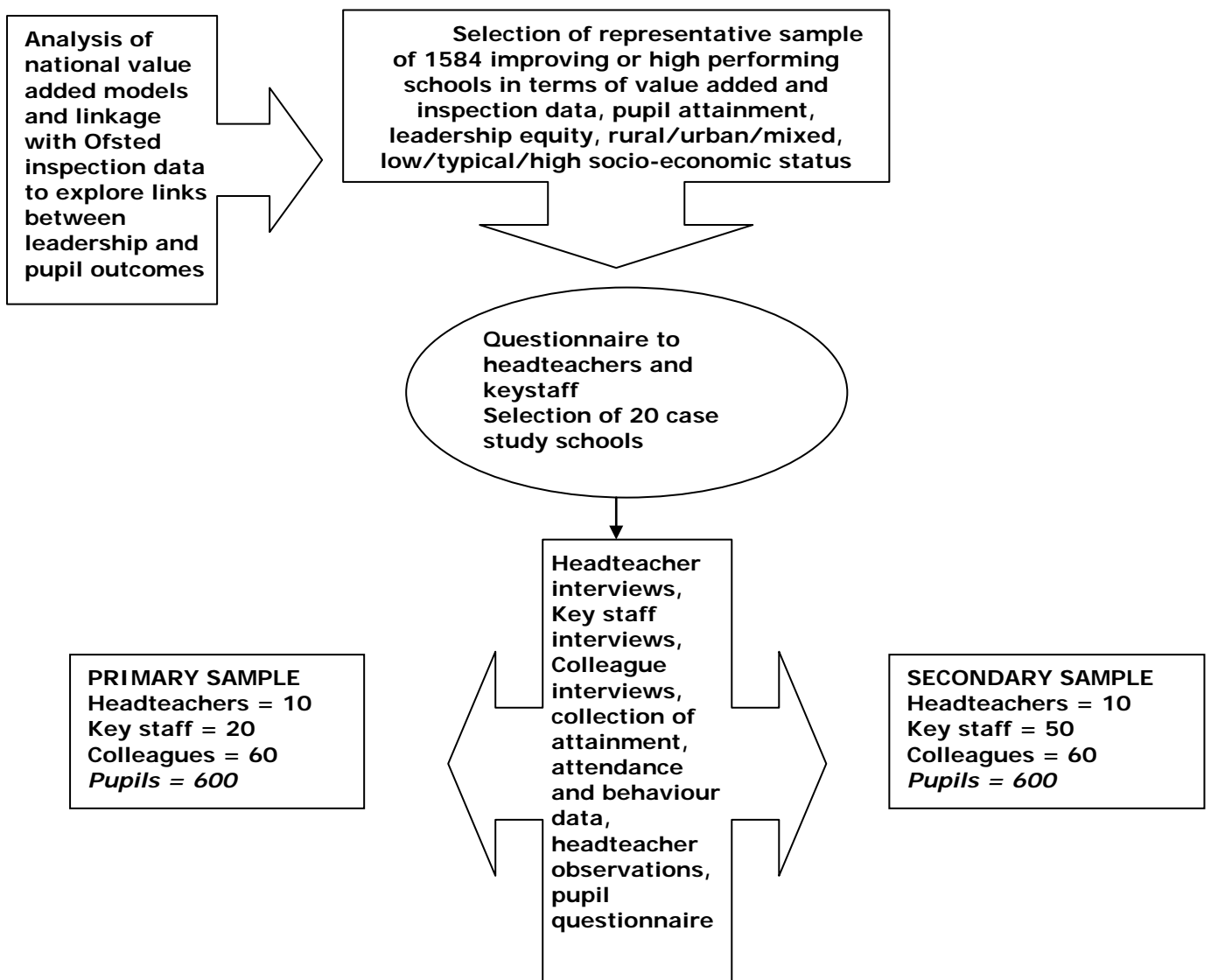
In addition to the collection and analysis of pupils' cognitive outcomes (from Key Stage tests) approximately 30 pupils in each of the schools participating in the case studies are selected in order to provide perspectives on the behaviour, relationships, and achievement culture of the school and/or department, and their perceptions of the headteacher/key staff role(s) in this.

The questionnaire was informed by the initial review of literature and reviews of previous pupil survey instruments e.g. PISA (OECD, 2005), RAPA (Levacic, 2002;

Malmberg, 2002) projects. The instrument provides:

- Examples of social and affective outcomes of pupil learning;
- Evidence of the relationships between leadership and pupils' perceptions of school and classroom climate;
- Evidence of the relationships between leadership and pupils' perceptions of school and classroom conditions;
- Evidence of student engagement and identification with school

Figure 1.2: Summary of sampling



The range of data types, their accumulation over a two year period and the sample sizes included in the project afford the possibility of a powerful variety of data analyses that can be applied progressively over the stages of the project to inform its goals of both description and explanation. The availability of various

forms of data reinforces reliability and validity within the study. The inclusion of the case study headteachers and key staff within the survey sample allows cross- or between-method triangulation techniques to ascertain (for example) the extent to which the case study headteachers were representative or typical of the larger group of survey respondents according to a range of potential indicators.

Conclusions

This paper has provided an overview of the leadership policy contexts in England, and the research, design and organization. It has outlined the way quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analyses are being used to identify associations between leadership, especially headteacher leadership, and pupil outcomes in effective and improving schools. This mixed methods approach was designed to enable a sufficient and appropriate range of data about leadership and leadership practices to be collected and analysed so that a single, coherent, empirically derived and theoretically robust model of direct and indirect causal and associative relationships between effective school leadership and pupil outcomes might be developed.

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