

Issues for Early Headship – Problems and Support Strategies

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A review of literature carried out for
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National College for School Leadership

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Executive summary

Introduction

For many years, the induction of new headteachers has been a matter of considerable comment and debate. In 2001, HMI inspected headteacher induction in 43 LEAs. They found that:

The quality of induction support was judged to be good in ten LEAs, satisfactory in 14, unsatisfactory in 14 and poor in five. (Her Majesty's Inspectorate, Ofsted, 2002)

The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) asked the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to review the research evidence concerning new headteachers in order to inform their work. The review set out to investigate:

1. What is known about the problems of new headteachers in their first headship, where 'new headteacher' refers to the period between appointment and the end of the second year in post?
2. What support strategies have been employed to assist the development of new heads, both in the UK and internationally?
3. What does the evidence tell us about the effectiveness of different strategies that have been used to support new headteachers/principals?

Key findings

What are the main problems of early headship?

The literature suggests that whilst headteachers differ in terms of their background, the schools they work in and their experience as a new headteacher, the problems they encounter are largely the same.

The main problems experienced by new headteachers were identified as:

- feelings of professional isolation and loneliness
- dealing with the legacy, practice and style of the previous headteacher
- dealing with multiple tasks, managing time and priorities
- managing the school budget
- dealing with (e.g. supporting, warning, dismissing) ineffective staff
- implementing new government initiatives, notably new curricula or school improvement projects
- problems with school buildings and site management.

Despite the fact that new headteachers in the UK and elsewhere have tended to face many of the same problems, some studies have suggested that there are differences relating to the school phase. For example, it has been reported that primary headteachers encounter more problems with managing time and priorities; improving consultation and communication; getting staff to work as a team; implementing teacher appraisal; and deciding whether or not to teach (Bolam *et al.*, 1993; Dunning, 2000). Dealing with the existing staffing structure was seen as more problematic by secondary heads (Bolam *et al.*, 1993, 1995). Other differences in the problems experienced by new heads were

related the size of the school, prior experience and geographical location. Nevertheless, the evidence is not clear-cut on this issue and further research is needed.

The various problems experienced by new headteachers have been attributed to three main factors (e.g. Bolam *et al.*, 2000):

- the complexity of the headteacher's role and its tasks
- external pressures and demands
- poor access to training and support, both before and after appointment.

What are the support strategies for new heads?

Research suggests that LEA provision for new headteachers varies widely, with some headteachers reporting only minimal support from their LEAs.

Some of the recommended methods of providing support for new heads in England and Wales have included:

- detailed documentation for the appointee prior to them taking up the headship
- preparatory visits to their new schools prior to the new heads' start date
- bringing local headteachers together to provide peer support
- mentoring by more experienced headteachers
- training in specific skill areas, such as finance and personnel issues
- a needs assessment process that is acted upon.

Support strategies reported outside of the UK have included:

- summer induction conferences prior to the first year
- 'principal support networks', involving regular meetings at locations away from the principals' schools
- programmes that were closely related to the context in which headteachers work
- instruction and curriculum development activities.

The research literature provides very little evidence on the effectiveness of such support strategies. Perhaps the most recommended forms of support for new headteachers are peer support networks or mutual support groups (Weindling and Earley, 1987). Mentoring for new heads is also highly recommended, whereby experienced practitioners provide advice and support to new heads including providing feedback on performance. Such strategies could potentially reduce the likelihood of new heads experiencing some of the problems highlighted and may assist in addressing issues relating to headteachers' personal needs (e.g. dealing with isolation and new relationships with staff) as well as their technical needs (e.g. dealing with finance and legal questions).

Gaps in the evidence

Further research is needed to investigate the potential differences in training and support needs of heads in relation to their previous experience, gender and cultural background and the characteristics and geographical location of the school. More research is also needed to establish the impact and effectiveness of different support strategies.

Conclusions/recommendations

Headteachers tend to go through a similar socialisation process. The main difference between the findings of individual studies tended to be related to the time at which the studies were conducted or the new heads were in post. For example, following the introduction of the Educational Reform Act and Local Management of Schools (LMS), headteachers in England and Wales reported more difficulties relating to budgetary issues (Dunning, 2000).

Whilst research has shown that new headteachers tend to experience similar kinds of problems, it is important to recognise that individual headteachers will also have varying needs and be at different stages of development. Thus, recommended support strategies are not necessarily equally applicable or effective for all new heads. It would seem to be important to ensure that support provision is flexible, individualised and negotiable.

About the study

The review entailed a systematic search of databases of literature (including books, published articles, reports and conference papers) published in the UK and other English speaking countries since 1982. Eleven educational/social science databases were searched for relevant studies, along with selective internet and hand searches. All retrieved texts were subject to a preliminary review, in order to establish more fully their degree of relevance to the aims of the study. Studies of the highest quality were then subjected to a full critical review. In total, 35 full reviews were undertaken, and critical summaries produced. All data from the critical summaries were analysed and the findings synthesised to address the questions identified at the outset of the review.

1. Support for new headteachers: the English context

The role of the headteacher is said to be pivotal to raising educational standards and to school improvement (Hart and Weindling, 1996; Ofsted, 2002). It follows that if first time headteachers experience problems and do not receive effective support which will enable them to deal with, minimise and overcome those problems, then their ability to facilitate school improvement and to contribute to raising standards will be impaired.

Since the introduction of the Headteachers' Leadership and Management Programme (HEADLAMP) in 1995, new headteachers in England and Wales have been provided with funds (currently £2,500 per annum) to spend on leadership and management programmes of their choice. Various programmes of induction and support are provided by Local Education Authorities (LEAs), by some universities and by private consultancies, who are effectively bidding for a share of headteachers' HEADLAMP allocation, although some LEAs have provided programmes or courses for new heads which do not require a financial contribution from their schools.

Recent research reported by Earley *et al.* (2002) found that only 17 per cent of new headteachers thought that they were 'very prepared' for headship, with nearly one-in-ten indicating that they were 'not prepared at all'. On the basis of inspections of the arrangements for the induction of new headteachers in 43 LEAs and visits to 165 headteachers during the academic year 2000–01, Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) stated that:

The quality of induction support was judged to be good in ten LEAs, satisfactory in 14, unsatisfactory in 14 and poor in five. (OFSTED, 2002)

The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) was launched in November 2000, charged with the task of ensuring that 'our current and future school leaders develop the skills, the capability and capacity to lead and transform the school education system into the best in the world' (NCSL, 2001a). A key priority of the College is the provision of its *New Visions Programme for Early Headship*, which has been set up to:

- (1) support the development of new headteachers
- (2) research aspects of the best development and support available for new headteachers.

In relation to the first aim, the NCSL has (amongst other things) introduced the New Visions Programme for Early Headship, which runs for four terms, and which started in March 2002. This particular programme actively involves new headteachers from across the country, who participate through regional networks which combine study, problem-solving and peer support groups, and who are aided by experienced consultant school leaders.

In relation to the second aim, the College is conducting and commissioning a wide range of literature reviews and research studies in order to provide an audit of, and to contribute to, the evidence base. Knowledge gleaned from the evidence base will then be utilised to inform course provision and contribute to improved training and support for school leaders.

The review of literature reported here aimed to address three main questions:

- (1) what is known about the problems of new heads in their first headship, where ‘new head’ refers to the period between appointment and the end of the second year in post?
- (2) what support strategies are/have been employed to assist the development of new heads, both in the UK and internationally?
- (3) what does the evidence tell us about the effectiveness of different strategies that have been used to support new headteachers/principals?¹

The following section outlines the review process.

¹ The terms headteachers, heads, principals and administrators are used interchangeably throughout the report.

2. Research design: the review process

The review entailed a systematic search of databases of literature (including books, published articles, reports and conference papers) published in the UK and other English speaking countries since 1982. Eleven educational/social science databases were searched, using a combination of key word and free-text searching.² Selective internet searches were also conducted, notably of the CERUK (Current Educational Research in the UK) web site. Further details of the search parameters and search strategies, including brief descriptions of each database searched, are provided in the Appendix to this report.

The database and internet searches resulted in approximately 880 references or 'hits'. All references and (where available) abstracts were examined and the full texts of those deemed potentially relevant were requested. Many 'hits' were discarded at this stage because they did not meet the selection criteria. For example, many references referred to headteachers or principals but not in relation to *problems* of a first headship or to *support strategies* for new heads/principals.

In addition to the database and internet searches referred to above, hand searches were also conducted of books and journals held in the NFER library and in the private collection of Dick Weindling. Further, once documents had been retrieved, their reference sections were scanned for relevant material which did not emerge from the initial searches.

As a result of the electronic and manual searches outlined above, a total of 351 documents was requested.³ Many of these documents were held by the NFER library, some could be downloaded from the internet, whilst 74 documents deemed to be relevant to the present study were retrieved via inter-library loan. Of the 351 documents requested, 345 were successfully retrieved.

All retrieved texts were subject to a preliminary review or initial reading, in order to establish more fully the degree of relevance to the aims of the study. At this stage, a large proportion of the literature was discarded on the basis that it was less relevant than the original references suggested that it might be. For example, some material was not relevant to the present study because it dealt with problems and/or support strategies for experienced (and not new/first time) headteachers/principals.

Studies which were deemed to be of sufficient quality and relevance to either the present study and/or the review of literature on 'Coaching and Mentoring for New Headteachers' were next subjected to a full critical review. For this purpose, a template was designed to ensure that key data were extracted from each piece of literature. Each study was thus summarised under the following headings:

² Free-text searching involved searching for words or phrases in titles, abstracts and other fields, whereas key word searches involved searches of subject heading fields alone.

³ This figure includes material potentially relevant to both this study and the related NFER review of literature on 'Mentoring and Coaching for New Leaders' (Hobson, 2002). Since there is overlap between the subject content of the two studies, notably between support strategies and mentoring/coaching, it was decided to undertake this phase of the two literature reviews in tandem.

- Purpose of study/article
- Research design
- Country/area
- Date(s) data collected
- Sample characteristics
- Research method(s) employed
- Programme description (where appropriate)
- Key findings
- Authors' conclusions and recommendations
- Reviewer's comments.

A 'standardisation' exercise was conducted to ensure that the five members of the research team who were reviewing literature for the present study were adopting a consistent approach.⁴

In total, 67 full reviews were undertaken, and critical summaries produced, for studies relevant to the present study and/or the review on 'Mentoring and Coaching for New Leaders'. The 'best evidence' relating to problems and support strategies for new heads/principals was drawn from 35 academic articles, books, reports and conference papers, and is presented in Sections 3–4 below.

⁴ The literature cited in this report was reviewed by Pat Ashby, Wendy Keys, Andy Hobson, Ekua Brown and Caroline Sharp.

3. Problems experienced by new heads

3.1 Problems experienced by new headteachers in the UK

England and Wales

Large scale but now somewhat dated studies of the problems experienced by new headteachers in England and Wales are reported by Weindling and Earley (1987) and Bolam *et al.* (1993, 1995). The first major study of newly appointed secondary heads in England and Wales was conducted by Weindling and Earley (1987). The research aimed to document the demands made on new secondary heads, to identify the skills and knowledge they needed, and to offer guidelines for in-service Senior Management Team (SMT) training. Data were collected from a range of sources, including:

- questionnaire responses from 188 headteachers, constituting 81 per cent of all new secondary heads appointed in the academic year 1982–83
- interviews with 47 of the 100 headteachers new in post in September 1982
- longitudinal case studies in a stratified sample of 16 schools, involving follow-up interviews with headteachers, and interviews with other senior managers, heads of department, teachers, the chairperson of governors and an appropriate senior officer in the LEA.

It was found that 15 per cent of the new heads responding to the questionnaire survey rated themselves as well prepared for headship⁵, whilst 16 per cent rated themselves as poorly or less than adequately prepared. Areas of particular difficulty encountered by new heads included:

- a wide range of staff-related issues, including persuading members of staff to accept new ideas, and dealing with incompetent staff, especially with weak members of the SMT
- dealing with the legacy of the previous headteacher, including problems arising from the previous head's allocation of responsibility points
- managing the introduction and pace of change
- the need to create a better public image for the school.

The Weindling and Earley research showed that most heads experienced professional isolation and loneliness, and reported a lack of feedback on their progress. A follow-up study by Earley *et al.* (1990) sought to examine both the extent to which the headteacher role had changed and the headteachers' retrospective evaluations of their preparation for headship. The study involved interviews with all 16 of the original case study headteachers and gained questionnaire responses from 65 per cent of the 188 heads who had contributed to the earlier research and who had been in post for five years. Over 80 per cent of questionnaire respondents maintained that their role had changed greatly in both emphasis and intensity since they took up post five years earlier, particularly in terms of:

⁵ This is similar to the 17 per cent figure reported in the more recent study by Early *et al.* (2002), which was mentioned in Section 1.

- responding to LEA and Government initiatives
- becoming managers/executives/administrators
- dealing with public relations and promoting the school's image
- supporting and 'protecting' staff.

Repeated industrial action, combined with the management of enforced change, had led to stress, frustration, exhaustion and isolation, and many heads were concerned that they did not possess the skills they would need to implement Local Management of Schools (LMS). Asked to comment retrospectively on their preparation and training for headship, most interviewees emphasised the value of experience as a deputy or acting head, whilst some heads highlighted problems resulting from inadequate preparation for dealing with governors. Many of the heads saw encounters with colleagues facing similar problems, and the mutual support this offered, as increasingly central to their own professional development; but there were also calls for more and improved training in school management, especially in areas related to personnel, finance, and educational legislation and reform.

Reflecting on both studies referred to above, Weindling (1990) notes that, with the introduction of a national curriculum and standard testing, the role of the headteacher had changed considerably in the intervening years, and that there was now a far greater need to respond to or implement external initiatives, with a resulting increase in the pressure on new postholders. Clearly the role of the head has continued to change since this time.

In the National Evaluation of the Headteacher Mentoring Pilot Scheme introduced in England and Wales in January 1991, Bolam *et al.* (1993, 1995) provide a valuable update which includes both primary and secondary heads. The authors investigated the problems experienced by new headteachers participating in the pilot scheme by inviting them to rate the seriousness of a set of difficulties drawn from the findings of Weindling and Earley's (1987) study of new secondary headteachers, with the addition of several new items in the wake of the Education Reform Act (1988). Sixty-four per cent of the 238 new headteachers responding to the questionnaire reported difficulties relating to the practice and style of the previous head. Whilst dealing with the school budget, time management and the school's public image were all seen as problematic by over 60 per cent of respondents. Some statistically significant differences were observed between responses from primary and secondary heads. Notably, dealing with the existing staffing structure was seen as more problematic by secondary heads, while the following five items posed more difficulty for primary headteachers:

- managing time and priorities
- improving consultation and communication
- getting staff to work as a team
- implementing teacher appraisal
- deciding whether or not to teach.

The sense of isolation and vulnerability expressed by participants in the Weindling and Earley (1987) study was also amply evidenced by the many direct quotations cited in the report (Bolam *et al.*, 1993).

More recent but smaller scale studies into the problems experienced by new heads in England are reported by Daresh and Male (2000)⁶, Male (2001a and b) and Jones (2001). Daresh and Male (2000) present the findings of face-to-face or telephone interviews with eight headteachers (three primary, three secondary and two special school heads) from four different Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in or near London. Although all of the heads had gained extensive prior experience at senior management level, all were reported to have experienced a short 'honeymoon period' followed by an intense culture shock related to their change of status. This was said to have been especially intense and painful for some of those who had been promoted to the headship within a school where they had previously served. All new heads reported high levels of stress and the need for a high level of technical, and especially financial, skills. However, the prime issue for these new headteachers was the need to come to terms with their new sense of isolation, as first reported by Weindling and Earley (1987).

Male (2001a and b) reports findings from the English component of an international study, The International Beginning Principals Study (IBPS), which aims to investigate and report on the experiences of beginning headteachers during their first two years in post. Fifty questionnaires were administered (in 2001) to new headteachers in four LEAs in one region of England. Completed questionnaires were returned by 27 heads. All respondents were employed in maintained schools (eight of religious denomination); seven were secondary heads (five male, two female) and 20 were primary heads (16 female, four male). Sixteen of the respondents had gained the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).

The most common urgent problem encountered by new heads during their first five months in post was the recruitment of teaching staff, followed by problems regarding buildings and accommodation. Headteacher respondents were also asked to grade the degree of external pressure they experienced from various sources, and the level of support they received from different groups. The activities of central government, including legislation, new curricula and improvement projects, were found to be the highest source of pressure, followed by central LEA administration and contact with parents. Some heads also identified governing bodies as a source of pressure. Respondents identified a wide range of skills and/or knowledge as necessary for effective leadership. Those most commonly mentioned were budgetary skills, decision-making skills, and the ability to prioritise.

In a small scale, cross-sectional study, Jones (2001) sought to investigate whether both NPQH and induction programmes for new headteachers were providing the kinds of training and support appropriate for the problems, issues and challenges experienced by new primary school heads. An interview sample of 12 included seven new headteachers, one acting headteacher, one long-serving headteacher, two LEA Advisers in headteacher support and appointment, and one LEA Adviser who was an NPQH course leader. A number of issues or problems associated with new headship were identified. One of these was what is termed 'culture expectation', notably the esteem in which the previous postholder was held and the pressure felt by the new head to make immediate

⁶ This article reports parallel studies in England and the United States. Findings relating to the English heads are presented here and those relating to US principals are presented in Section 3.2 below.

improvements. Contrary to the findings reported by Daresh and Male (2000), some heads reported that there was no ‘honeymoon period’ with the role, emphasising that they were expected to go in and make strategic decisions from Day One. ‘Acceptance anxiety’ (“the need to be respected immediately whilst establishing a friendly relationship with members of staff”) was reported to be an issue for some new heads, though this was found to be less of an issue where the new head had been promoted (e.g. from the position of Deputy Head) within the school.

Problems experienced by new headteachers in Wales

Dunning (1996) sought to identify the problems faced by a sample of newly appointed primary school heads in Wales, together with their associated professional development needs and the training and support opportunities available to them. Data were collected by means of a cross-sectional survey, which replicated elements of Weindling and Earley’s (1987) survey of new secondary heads. The questionnaire survey was administered during the summer of 1994. The achieved sample consisted of 50 primary heads, comprising 15 per cent of new appointees in Wales for the period September 1989 to April 1993. The authors state that the research sample was broadly representative of the Welsh primary head population in terms of school size and type of catchment area, and the sample was almost evenly divided in terms of gender.

Heads were asked questions regarding three categories of potential problems: internal; external; and staff and staffing issues. *Internal issues* were found to be the most pressing, with nine of the ‘top-ten’ problems (those identified as serious by 15 or more headteachers) falling into this category. The management of headteachers’ own time was the most serious problem, cited by 30 respondents. Time management was particularly problematic for heads of small schools with class-teaching responsibilities. Issues relating to coping with a wide range of tasks and dealing with a large number of decisions were also cited by 15 or more respondents, whilst other internal problems included:

- finding time for observing work in classrooms (cited as a serious problem by over half of respondents)
- school building and site management (just under half)
- financial resourcing (over a third)
- improving curriculum provision and resources (just under a third).

Other internal issues cited by 15 or more respondents included managing the school office/secretaries/administration, and difficulties related to the practice/style of their predecessor. Heads’ comments suggested that administrative commitments were often seen as unwelcome distractions from curriculum and pupil focused concerns.

Only one *external* problem featured in the ‘top ten’ problems reported by headteacher respondents. This was ‘issues arising from national policy’, which nearly two-thirds of respondents cited as a serious problem. Fewer than five respondents cited as problems issues relating to contacts with LEAs, inspectors, school governors, parents and other schools.

No *staff-related problem* featured in the heads’ ‘top ten’ problems. However several were cited as serious problems by ten to 15 respondents. These included motivational difficulties such as dealing with poor morale, supporting ineffective teachers, and

warning, dismissal or redeployment of ineffective staff. Few identified teacher disaffection and conflict with staff as serious problems.

Dunning (2000) reports the findings of an extended study investigating the problems and training needs of new secondary as well as primary headteachers in Wales.⁷ The additional data appear to have been collected in 1995–96. Again, data were collected by means of a cross-sectional survey. The total achieved sample thus comprised headteachers from 50 secondary heads in addition to 50 primary heads.

Half of all secondary headteacher respondents (compared with two thirds of primary respondents) identified national government policy as a major source of serious difficulties. The internal problems causing most concern were time management (especially among primary heads), coping with a wide range of tasks, classroom observation, and the style and practice of predecessors. Professional isolation was regarded as a very serious problem by no secondary, and only a few primary, heads, though it was said to be a moderate problem by a third of primary and a quarter of secondary respondents.

Reflecting on his findings, the author suggests that the high proportion of headteacher respondents identifying national government policy as a major source of serious difficulties, may be partly explained by the fact that they had taken up their posts in the four or five years following the introduction of the Education Reform Act. He suggests (with the corroboration of open-ended comments) that new primary heads in particular found implementing the required changes difficult, notably because as deputies they had had less experience of devolved financial management, and less contact with subject specialists (Dunning, 2000).

Problems experienced by new headteachers in Scotland

Draper and McMichael (1998) report the findings of a cross-sectional survey of new headteachers in Scotland. The purpose of the research was to explore heads' pre-appointment expectations and the reality as they found it. Data were collected in Spring 1997. The desired sample consisted of all primary heads in six unitary authorities that had been appointed in the three years immediately preceding the study (N=45). The achieved sample consisted of 37 of these heads – a response rate of 82 per cent.

Heads were asked whether/how much a list of negative factors applied to them. They were asked to respond on a three point scale: *strongly*; *a little*; *not at all*. Results were reported in terms of the percentage selecting '*strongly*' for each factor. Seven factors were thus selected by at least a quarter of respondents. These were (in order of frequency of selection):

⁷ The findings contribute to a wider survey of headship in post-1989 Europe (Bolam *et al.*, 2000), reported in Section 3.2 below.

- Amount of paperwork
- Lack of time for the heads' own professional growth
- Being overburdened and stressed
- The amount of bureaucracy
- Small increase in salary compared to that of their deputy headship
- Lack of time for self and family
- Lack/loss of closeness with staff.

The article also identified a number of issues, associated with new headship, some of which were reported by new heads to have been expected, and some of which were said to have taken the headteachers by surprise. Factors which heads were said to have expected included (in order of frequency):

- The need to fill in for others
- The fragmented day
- Problems of prioritising
- Need to monitor speech to avoid misinterpretation.

Factors that were said to have surprised the new heads were (in order of frequency):

- The lack of time for monitoring classroom practice
- Their own forgetfulness
- The respect given to them as a head
- A reported absence of local authority interest
- The amount of paperwork.

Draper and McMichael (2000) report the findings of a small scale study which sought to explore some of the ways in which a group of recently appointed heads had been affected by the context of their schools. Data were collected via interviews with ten secondary heads who had been appointed, in the previous three years, to schools within four unitary authorities in Scotland. The total number of heads appointed during this period is not stated, and specific information on the date at which the data were collected is not provided. However, the contextual information provided suggests that the research was carried out in the late 1990s and was an extension of the survey work reported by the same authors (Draper and McMichael, 1998) above. Eight of the heads were male and two were female. Most schools drew on mixed catchment areas, although only one was an inner city school.

Several new heads indicated that loneliness was a problem. Some new heads were surprised that they had to spend so much time on administrative matters, which they felt prevented them from undertaking educational activities such as monitoring classrooms. At the same time, heads moving to middle class areas from more deprived areas were surprised at the amount of pressure from parents. Other interviewees were surprised by: the rush of work; the high level of accountability; the amount of respect and deference they received; the danger of making unguarded statements. Seven of those interviewed reported that they faced issues brought about by the previous head's style of management, although in some cases (for example, where the previous head had been autocratic or remote) this could work in the new head's favour. Half of the new heads

interviewed mentioned problems presented by incompetent teachers. Some interviewees reported problems in working with a deputy who had also applied for the headship, whilst the deputy was cited by others as a key factor in easing the new head into the job.

3.2 Problems experienced by new heads outside the UK

Problems experienced by new heads in Europe

Bolam *et al.* (2000) describe and compare the problems, training needs and support available to new heads in five different countries (Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Wales).⁸ Data were collected in 1995–96, by means of questionnaire survey. Questionnaires were administered to a sample of approximately 700 new headteachers (defined as being in post for up to three years) in 50 primary and 50 secondary schools in each of the five countries. No information is provided on how these sample components were selected.

Heads were invited to indicate, against a list of 18 *internal problems*, how serious they perceived each to be during their early years in post. Over a third of respondents (across all five countries) rated three problems as either *serious* or *very serious*, whilst a quarter of respondents thought that nine of the 18 issues were serious or very serious, and one in ten thought this of 17 of the 18 problems. ‘Dealing with problems relating to school buildings’ was the most commonly mentioned (by 41 per cent of respondents), followed by ‘managing own time’ (34 per cent) and ‘coping with a wide range of tasks’ (33 per cent). There were few significant differences overall between primary and secondary headteachers or between heads in rural and urban areas.

The proportion of headteacher respondents identifying *serious* or *very serious* problems *external* to the school, from a possible list of nine, was in general much lower than for internal difficulties, with the exception of ‘issues arising from education policy of national government’ (40 per cent). The highest-ranked problems related to *staffing issues* were the ‘warning/dismissal/redeployment of ineffective teachers’, and ‘dealing with poor teacher morale and commitment’ (40 per cent and 38 per cent respectively). The survey also explored the perceived impact on respondents of professional isolation. Although 30 per cent of heads indicated that this was *not a problem*, it was reported to be *moderately serious* for 27 per cent, and *very serious* for three per cent.

Research into the problems of new headteachers/principals has also been conducted in a number of countries outside of Europe. For example, in what is now a somewhat dated study, Wadsworth (1988) reported the findings of research which sought to determine the problems experienced by, and the unmet professional development needs of, first year secondary school heads in New Zealand. Bowman (1996) reports a small-scale study which examined (amongst other things) issues that had been a cause of concern to eight beginning principals in primary, secondary and special schools in Queensland, Australia. And Dunshea (1998) presents the findings of another small scale Australian study which was concerned with the experiences and perceptions of five newly appointed female principals in rural New South Wales, where the main focus of the article is on the principals’ experiences of sexism. Aside from the UK, however, the best evidence

⁸ Some of the findings relating to Wales are reported in Section 3.1 above (Dunning, 2000).

regarding the problems experienced by new heads/principals relates to the United States of America, where a number of research studies have addressed this issue.

Problems experienced by new principals in the United States

In what is now a rather dated US study, Daresh (1986) set out to identify the problems experienced by newly appointed principals and to recommend ways of addressing them. Data appear to have been gathered during the year preceding publication, via case study interviews with a sample of 12 first and second year principals. No information is given on how the principals were selected or on the geographical locations of their schools, although the study was conducted at the Ohio State University.

The principals interviewed reported concerns about role clarification, limitations to their technical expertise, and difficulties relating to their socialisation. They felt ill-prepared to deal with many mechanical or procedural issues, including legal questions, budgeting, industrial relations and policy implementation. They also needed help with interpersonal skills such as conflict management, and suffered from a general lack of feedback (cf. Weindling and Earley, 1987). This made it difficult for them to assess their own progress, and increased the anxieties felt by those principals who were uncertain how they were expected to act, especially those new to an area who did not 'know the ropes'.

Webster (1989) outlines the findings of a small scale study which aimed to assess some of the problems and frustrations faced by nine beginning administrators in San Francisco. Data were collected, in 1988–89, via a longitudinal programme of part-structured interviews with two middle school principals and seven elementary school principals. The sample included six females and three males; six had completed their first year as principal and three had just completed their second year. The schools in which they worked ranged in population from 200–730 pupils. Seven of the schools were in suburban settings, one was urban and one was located in a rural setting.

The study found that, whilst the principals differed in terms of their background, the schools they worked in and their experience as a beginning administrator, the problems they encountered were largely the same. These fell into two broad categories: the validation of themselves as principals and interpersonal conflict resolution. Firstly, the principals found it difficult to establish credibility as a school leader and to gain the trust of the staff, and in some cases this was reported to have been hindered by the legacy left by their predecessors. For example, some principals indicated that they had found it difficult to inherit the management style and procedures of the previous system. Those principals with no prior experience as a vice-principal stated that although they were respected as teachers, the staff questioned their capability to perform the job adequately, whilst three principals raised concerns over their lack of time to serve as instructional leaders.

The beginning principals also mentioned problems relating to basic management skills and interpersonal relations/conflict management skills. Each principal stated that (s)he had experienced at least one difficult interpersonal conflict during the year, which they regretted had not been handled more effectively. Time management and establishing priorities were also reported to have been problematic for some of the principals, whilst two principals mentioned that they had experienced problems with budget procedures. Finally, the principals interviewed as part of this study were, like those involved in many

others, reported to have referred to the loneliness of the position, although most were participating in a support system provided by their school district.

In 1987–88 data collection was carried out for the relatively large-scale ‘Beginning Principal Study’ (BPS), reported in Parkay and Hall (1992). The study focused on the experiences, challenges and keys to success common to first-time principals, with the aim of supporting the many new principals due to be employed during the 1990s. The research combined case studies with a national survey, and the design drew on Weindling and Earley’s (1987) research on new headteachers in England and Wales, reported above. The case studies involved 12 first time principals across five states. Data were gathered, mainly via semi-structured interviews with the principals, during at least three two-day visits throughout the school year. For the survey component, which drew on preliminary findings from the case studies, a total of 450 questionnaires was sent out to a sample of beginning principals in 16 states, and 138 were returned, though only 113 of these proved eligible (a response rate of 25 per cent).

In the questionnaire survey, respondents were asked (amongst other things) to identify the most difficult challenges or tasks confronting them in their first year, and to indicate the degree of seriousness for themselves of each of a list of 13 internal and 13 external issues. Parkay *et al.* (1992b) report that the most problematic in-school concerns for the principals related to dealing with multiple tasks and decisions, and communicating effectively with various audiences. No external issues were judged ‘serious’ or ‘very serious’ overall, but those reported to have caused most difficulties were improving the school’s public image, and working with parents.

Analysis of the data revealed that some significant differences were obtained, relating to principals’ survey responses, in respect of school size, prior experience and rural/non-rural setting. For example, principals with prior experience at assistant principal level tended to be more concerned with issues related to finance and buildings, and with community relations.⁹ Principals of non-rural schools tended to be more concerned with public image and community relations, whilst rural principals were more concerned with building the administrative team. Parkay *et al.* (1992b) conclude from the survey findings that the greatest difficulty confronting beginning principals was realising their educational goals, and that principals of larger schools recognise that their success as leaders depends on their ability to influence the actions of others, whereas principals of small schools have to ‘go it alone’.

Parkay and Currie (1992) add that all 12 of the case study principals saw themselves as inhibited, in their perceived new role as curricular and instructional leaders, by the constant need to respond to disconnected immediate demands, or by what is referred to as ‘fire-fighting’.

Parkay and Rhodes (1992), also drawing on the case study data, identified six major sources of stress for first time principals (cf. Earley *et al.*, 1990; Daresh and Male, 2000; Draper and McMichael, 1998). These related to the following areas:

⁹ The authors suggest that the greater emphasis placed on buildings and budgets by former assistant principals, and their focus on public relations, may be explained by a greater likelihood that this group has the experience to know where problems are likely to occur.

- professional inadequacies
- management tasks
- the faculty, staff and administrative team
- politics
- students
- parents.

Professional inadequacies included role demands (and their effect on the individual's personal life), concerns about professional effectiveness, and job uncertainty. *Management tasks* covered both lack of skills or expertise, and task overload. *Faculty, staff and administrative team* issues related to communicating negative performance to groups or individuals, and establishing rapport or trust. Stressful *politics* could be internal or external; *students* could give rise to stress through negative behaviour or their inability or unwillingness to learn, and *parents* could be demanding or aggressive.

Respondents differed greatly in the number of stress-related statements made. For the group as a whole, the average rank order for sources of stress indicated that the most frequent category was *professional inadequacies*, followed by *management tasks* and then *staff* issues.

The researchers also investigated the principals' strategies for coping with stress, identifying these as either functional (actions generally recognised as appropriate for reducing stress), or non-functional. Functional strategies were again divided into either actual or intended strategies. Only seven of the 12 principals reported the actual use of functional coping strategies, of which the most often noted were management skills. On the other hand, six of the 12 principals reported non-functional behaviours such as sleeplessness, irritability and over-eating, indicating a degree of psychological or physical strain that the subject may have been incapable of reducing.

The eight American principals who were interviewed as part of the relatively recent comparative study reported by Daresh and Male (2000), referred to in Section 3.1, comprised five elementary and three secondary school principals, located throughout three different states. All eight principals had completed their respective states' mandated requirements for principal licensure. Their schools ranged in size from 350 to nearly 3000 students, and all but two had an urban setting.

As was the case for the headteachers of English schools, the prime issue for the new US principals was the need to come to terms with their new sense of isolation. A short 'honeymoon period' tended to be followed by an intense culture shock related to their change of status. The US principals also highlighted the need to attempt to balance competing priorities. As previously reported by Parkay and Rhodes (1992), the principals reported high levels of stress and the need to develop reserves of personal resilience and coping strategies. Almost all respondents emphasised the need for individuals to actively seek support, notably from their peers in other schools.

3.3 Common problems experienced by new heads/principals

The literature summarised above suggests that, whilst some problems appear to be more prevalent at particular points in time (e.g. the increase in reports of financial/budgetary concerns following the introduction of Local Management of Schools in England and Wales), the kinds of problems experienced by new headteachers/principals are broadly similar across different countries. The problems which the research evidence suggests have been experienced most, by new headteachers in England and Wales and elsewhere, are as follows:

- feelings of professional isolation and loneliness (Weindling and Earley, 1987; Bolam *et al.*, 1993; Daresh and Male, 2000; Draper and McMichael, 2000; Bolam *et al.*, 2000)
- dealing with the legacy, practice and style of the previous headteacher (e.g. Weindling and Earley, 1987; Bolam *et al.*, 1993; Dunning, 2000; Draper and McMichael, 2000; Webster, 1989)
- dealing with multiple tasks, managing time and priorities (Bolam *et al.*, 1993; Dunning, 1996; Draper and McMichael, 1998; Bolam *et al.*, 2000; Webster, 1989; Parkay *et al.*, 1992b; Daresh and Male, 2000)
- dealing with the school budget (Daresh, 1986; Bolam *et al.*, 1993; Dunning, 1996; Male, 2001b)
- dealing with (e.g. supporting, warning, dismissing) ineffective staff (Weindling and Earley, 1987; Dunning 1996; Bolam *et al.*, 2000)
- implementing new government initiatives, notably new curricula or school improvement projects (Dunning, 1996; Bolam *et al.*, 2000; Male, 2001a)
- problems with school buildings and site management (Dunning, 1996; Bolam *et al.*, 2000; Male, 2001b).

Whilst there is a lack of evidence on the differences between the problems experienced by primary and secondary heads, at least two studies suggest that time management and coping with a wide range of tasks is particularly problematic for primary heads (Bolam *et al.*, 1993; Dunning, 2000).¹⁰

To some extent, the fact that headteachers tend to experience the kinds of problems outlined above may be attributed to the inherent complexity and problematic nature of headship, as suggested by some of the heads in Dunning's (2000) study. On the other hand, some headteachers' have put this down to 'insufficient preparation for the job' (Dunning, 2000).

Bolam *et al.* (2000) attribute most difficulties experienced by headteachers to three factors:

¹⁰ Dunning suggested that time management posed particular problems for those heads of small primary schools (in Wales) who had teaching responsibilities in addition to their administrative role (Dunning, 1996). Many such heads were required to teach for 70 per cent of a full timetable. It is also suggested that some new primary heads may have more difficulties with budgetary issues because, as deputy heads, they tend to have less experience of devolved financial management (Dunning, 2000; cf. Parkay *et al.*, 1992a).

- the complexity of the headteacher's role and its tasks
- external pressures and demands
- poor access to training and support, both before and after appointment.

The type of support provided to new headteachers in post may have an important influence both on the problems experienced by new heads and on the new heads' ability to deal with those problems. It is to the issue of support that we now turn.

4. Support strategies for new heads

This section is divided into two parts. Section 4.1 deals with actual support strategies which have been employed with new headteachers or principals, in the UK and internationally, and reports evidence relating to the effectiveness of such strategies.¹¹ Section 4.2 then goes on to outline a number of recommendations which have been made for effective induction and support strategies for new heads.

4.1 Actual support strategies employed with new heads

Support strategies for new headteachers in the UK

Baker (1992) surveyed 25 LEAs which were understood to be operating headteacher induction programmes. Of these some two thirds indicated that they were providing induction for primary (or primary and middle school) headteachers, whilst a quarter were said to be offering provision for secondary (or secondary and middle school) heads. A quarter of the LEAs operated cross-phase courses, whilst a small number made separate provision for special school headteachers. It was found that LEA provision for new headteachers varied from the *ad hoc* (particularly for newly appointed secondary heads) to highly structured two-year programmes. The level of adviser support was also said to vary. The types of provision offered by different LEAs included:

- preparation and support to new heads before they took up their posts, including visits to the school
- formal introductions to the education office and personnel
- the production of headteachers' handbooks or information packs
- residential courses (more common for primary heads)
- the use of carousel programmes to avoid new heads facing an unwanted wait before training could begin.

Baker's research also highlighted a number of problems associated with attempts to prepare for headship prior to taking up the post. Notably, in some cases it could be difficult for appointees to obtain release from their existing positions in order to visit their new school, whilst some outgoing headteachers were reluctant to release information or even to allow a visit.

Baker's findings, which related predominantly to LEA provision for the induction of new headteachers in England¹², were supported by Dunning's (1996) study of the management problems of new primary headteachers in Wales. The Welsh heads indicated that they had limited opportunities for management training – both before and after taking up their posts (Dunning, 1996).

¹¹ It is important to stress that this section does not present an exhaustive account of support strategies that are being/have been employed – it discusses only those strategies which are reported in the literature that has been reviewed.

¹² Data were collected from 20 LEAs in England and one in Wales.

One form of support for new heads, introduced in 1991 in eleven regional consortia of LEAs and the Grant Maintained (GM) Schools Centre, came via the Headteacher Mentoring Pilot Scheme in England and Wales. As part of the scheme, new headteachers were matched with experienced heads who had volunteered to act as mentors and who had received preparatory training to undertake the role. The mentoring process could vary, but typically consisted of a formal linkage lasting for about a year, which aimed to address a jointly agreed agenda through meetings, telephone conversations and occasional school visits (Bolam *et al.*, 1993). The scheme ran for 18 months, after which the provision of mentoring was constrained by changes in the method of funding professional development in schools (Daresh and Male, 2000).¹³

Research conducted *after* the introduction of the Headteachers' Leadership and Management Programme (HEADLAMP), in 1995, shows that LEA provision of support for new headteachers has continued to vary widely (Rutherford and Gunraj, 1997; Blandford and Squire, 2000; Newton, 2001), with some headteachers reporting only minimal support from their LEAs during the induction period (Daresh and Male, 2000; Blandford and Squire, 2000).

In their evaluation of the provision and management of HEADLAMP, Blandford and Squire (2000) found that, on the evidence of a postal questionnaire to a representative sample of 20 LEAs, nearly all new headteachers in those areas were participating in LEA induction schemes, whilst the majority were also involved in other forms of LEA provision relating to management development.¹⁴ Interviews with 16 newly appointed headteachers revealed that LEA opportunities for needs analysis were limited.

Whilst the provision of support for new headteachers in England and Wales appears to have been patchy, research suggests that a number of the methods which have been employed have been effective. Some of the more effective methods of providing support for new heads have included:

- the provision of detailed documentation for the appointee prior to them taking up the headship (Newton, 2001)¹⁵
- post appointment preparatory visits to their new schools prior to the new heads' start date (Dunning, 2000)
- effective introductory meetings and regular meetings throughout the year (Newton, 2001)
- a needs assessment process that was acted upon (Newton, 2001)
- methods of bringing local headteachers together to provide peer support (Baker, 1992; Rutherford and Gunraj, 1997)
- mentoring by a more experienced headteacher (Bolam *et al.*, 1993; Bush and Coleman, 1995; Draper and McMichael, 2000; Male and Male, 2001)¹⁶

¹³ Research into mentoring and coaching is the subject of another review carried out by the NFER (see Hobson, 2002).

¹⁴ It is not stated how many headteachers this involved.

¹⁵ Newton's findings were based on data gathered via: (1) nearly 15000 evaluation forms completed by participants after individual training events; (2) a (1998) review by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA); and (3) comments made by members of the 'Talking Heads' online confidential discussion community (NCSL, 2001b).

- training in specific skill areas, such as finance and personnel issues (Male and Male, 2001)
- a formative evaluation of the training/induction/support process (Newton, 2001).

Weaker aspects of the support provided to headteachers are said to include:

- schemes which are tied to the academic year and which require all headteachers to follow the same programme (Newton, 2001)
- programmes that do not differentiate between the needs of headteachers in primary and secondary schools (Baker, 1992; Newton, 2001).¹⁷

In addition, Rutherford and Gunraj (1997) found that initial needs analyses were sometimes considered to be of limited value by new heads, notably because headteachers' needs were constantly changing as they responded to new challenges. The same authors found that those who had previously served as acting heads saw less value in a needs analysis (Rutherford and Gunraj, 1997). However, it should be borne in mind that these findings were based on interviews with just 15 new headteachers who had participated in a particular (NAHT HEADLAMP) programme.

Support strategies for new heads/principals in other countries

Different forms of support may be available to new headteachers in other countries. Bolam *et al.* (2000) surveyed new headteachers in five countries (Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Wales). They found that only 35 per cent of respondents had taken part in preparatory training in school management, most of which had been voluntary. Post-appointment professional development was reported by 50 per cent, and was generally better received than pre-appointment preparation. As many as 50 per cent of respondents were reported to have received no training for headship at all.

Some of the more effective methods of training and support for new headteachers/principals, which have been reported in research outside of the UK, include the following:

- summer induction conferences prior to the first year (Elsberry and Bishop, 1993)
- informal support from local headteachers (Bolam *et al.*, 2000)
- 'principal support networks', involving regular (e.g. monthly) meetings at locations away from the principals' schools to discuss issues such as: dealing with resistant teachers; total quality management; and creating a climate for change (Krovetz, 1993)
- mentoring by veteran principals from within principals' own school system (Elsberry and Bishop, 1993)

¹⁶ Further details are provided in the NFER review of Mentoring and Coaching for New Leaders (Hobson, 2002).

¹⁷ It needs to be borne in mind, however, that some of the smaller LEAs find it difficult to provide separate, specialist support for secondary heads, since there is often only a small number of secondary headteachers taking up posts in any one year. This was also one of the explanations offered for Newton's finding that support for primary heads was judged to be frequently better than that for secondary heads (Newton, 2001).

- programmes that were closely related to the context in which headteachers work (Draper and McMichael, 2000)
- strategies for goal setting and planning (Elsberry and Bishop, 1993)
- instruction and curriculum development activities (Elsberry and Bishop, 1993).

A weakness identified in programmes for new heads/principals in other countries, is that support is sometimes provided by senior administrators who are deemed to be out of touch with the needs of the new heads (Daresh and Male, 2000).

4.2 Recommended support strategies for new heads

This section outlines a number of recommendations which have been made for effective induction and support strategies for new heads. Some such recommendations are based on the direct viewpoints of research participants (mostly headteachers and principals), whilst some are based on the researchers'/authors' conclusions, which tend to be informed both by their research findings and by their broader knowledge and understanding of the field of study. The section deals, in turn, with research and recommendations relating to:

- (1) new headteachers' needs
- (2) methods of providing support for new headteachers
- (3) the specific content of training and support programmes for new heads.

New headteachers' needs

The following types of need were identified in a study designed to identify the objectives and desired outcomes of induction and orientation courses for new principals in Queensland, Australia (Shields (1997):

- to feel welcome
- to become familiar with regional, district and school operations and culture
- to be able to identify personal needs and plan individual development
- to possess technical, socialisation and self-awareness skills
- to be able to assess their own leadership/management practices.

Similarly, Parkay *et al.* (1992b) and Daresh and Male (2000) agreed that new principals are in need of a high level of technical skills, whilst Draper and McMichael (2000) stressed that it is essential for new heads to feel confident about dealing with the multiplicity and context-specificity of demands made upon them in individual schools. Daresh and Male (2000) also maintained that, given the complex and sometimes overwhelming nature of the demands placed on the new headteachers/principals, it is important for new heads and principals to spend some time reflecting on their personal values.

Methods of providing support for new heads

A number of studies have suggested that it would be beneficial for new heads to be provided with certain kinds of information and support prior to them taking up their posts. Baker (1992) argued that the new head would benefit from a comprehensive audit

of the school's situation at the time of take-over, and that new heads should be provided with checklists for actions that can be carried out before and after taking up post. Draper and McMichael (1998) suggest that out-going heads and existing staff might put together a support package listing internal systems for the new head. Jones (2001) felt that there should be opportunities for newly appointed headteachers to work alongside the outgoing head, either for a period of time between their appointment and start date or when first taking up their post. Earley *et al.* (1990) also recommended that new appointees might take an advanced appointment to allow for a term as head-designate to allow for familiarisation with the new school. Finally, Elsberry and Bishop (1993) argued that new appointees should be provided with opportunities to participate in summer induction conferences prior to their first year.

Whilst various researchers argue for the kinds of early support structures for newly appointed principals referred to above, the 16 newly appointed headteachers who were interviewed by Blandford and Squire (2000) felt that new headteacher induction programmes should be introduced after an initial period of acclimatisation and induction, in order to give new heads time to get to know their school's needs before selecting an appropriate development programme.

Perhaps the most recommended form of support for newly principals relates to the facilitation of peer support networks or mutual support groups (Weindling and Earley, 1987; Webster, 1989; Earley *et al.*, 1990; Parkay and Currie, 1992; Blandford and Squire, 2000; Dempster, 2001; Newton, 2001). Newton (2001) also recommended that new heads have access to online learning and support networks such as the 'Talking Heads' confidential discussion community in the UK, which allows school leaders to participate in meaningful exchanges with other heads and professional facilitators at a time convenient to them (Newton, 2001; NCSL, 2001b).

A large number of researchers/authors also recommend mentoring arrangements whereby experienced practitioners provide advice and support to new heads/principals, including assisting new heads to learn to interpret situations as they arise and providing feedback on performance (Daresh, 1986; Earley *et al.*, 1990; Parkay and Currie, 1992; Beeson *et al.*, 1992; Male and Hvizdak, 2000).

Jones (2001) felt that mentoring for new heads should begin on appointment and not, as is usually the case, on (or subsequent to) taking up their post. He also suggested that mentors (or 'critical friends') to new headteachers needed to possess both expertise and the 'ability to communicate with empathy'. Bolam *et al.* (1993) maintained that mentors should receive preparatory training, whilst, in a US context, Parkay and Currie (1992) stated that all supervisory personnel in the district administration should be trained to support and encourage first-time principals. Bolam *et al.* (1993) maintained that mentors needed to be flexible – to be ready and willing to offer practical guidance to specific problems where this is needed but also to encourage their partner to make the actual decision. The same authors also warned that mentoring programmes must be sensitive to the possible implications of gender differences within mentoring/support relationships.

Other recommendations relating to methods of providing support for new heads include:

- the provision of LEA handbooks for new heads (Earley *et al.*, 1990)
- the provision of workshops to foster access to local technical expertise (Parkay and Currie, 1992)
- small-group training (Blandford and Squire, 2000)
- opportunities for new heads to shadow more experienced headteachers (Draper and McMichael, 1998)
- opportunities to attend residential courses (Baker, 1992).

Shields (1997) suggested that, whatever the precise mode of delivery, induction and support strategies for new heads/principals should:

- be anchored in contemporary research
- recognise participants' prior experience
- focus on continual development
- be available through flexible delivery modes
- emphasise reflection and critical thinking
- be timed to meet needs, school and personal commitments
- be individualised and negotiated
- take account of regional and geographical/cultural contexts.

Baker (1992) agreed that headteacher induction programmes should involve an element of negotiation: for example, that cross-phase courses should include a range of options specifically designed for secondary headteachers. A number of writers/researchers have suggested that new headteacher induction programmes should also offer flexibility in relation to their timing or duration. For example, Parkay and Currie (1992) stated that there should be the possibility of extension time beyond the first year and Blandford and Squire (2000) suggested that such support should, if necessary, extend beyond the second year and into the third. Blandford and Squire (2000) also suggested that induction programmes for new headteachers should usefully involve both higher education institutes and collaboration with professional agencies, whilst Newton (2001) suggested that there should be close links between new headteacher induction programmes and courses of pre-headship training such as the NPQH. Finally several writers (e.g. Bolam *et al.*, 1993; Blandford and Squire, 2000) have stressed that induction provision and providers should be subject to a process of monitoring and evaluation.

The specific content of training and support programmes for new heads

A number of authors/researchers have recommended that new heads be provided with programmes of training which target a wide range of skills (e.g. Parkay and Currie, 1992), and courses which are carefully tailored to the needs of participants (Weindling and Earley, 1987) and which involve exposure to real-life experiences and 'practical concerns' (Daresh, 1986; Webster, 1989). The types of issues which it is suggested that training courses should cover include the following:

- effective management techniques, including performance management, managing change and problem-solving (Earley *et al.*, 1990; Newton, 2001; Parkay and Currie, 1992)

- balancing and prioritising management and paperwork (Dunning, 1996; Draper and McMichael, 1998; Newton, 2001)
- courses on the details of administration (Draper and McMichael, 1998)
- inter-personal skills or ‘people-handling’ skills, human and public relations (Daresh, 1986; Webster, 1989)
- team building and motivating staff with diverse values and skill levels (Newton, 2001)
- teacher evaluation (Daresh, 1986)
- conflict resolution (Daresh, 1986; Webster, 1989)
- finance and budgeting issues (Daresh, 1986; Parkay *et al.*, 1992b; Newton, 2001)
- interpreting performance data and statistics (Newton, 2001)
- legal issues (Daresh, 1986; Parkay and Currie, 1992; Newton, 2001)
- working with children, parents and members of the community (Parkay *et al.*, 1992b; Newton, 2001)
- preparation for inspection (Newton, 2001)
- power, gender and equal opportunities (Newton, 2001)
- stress management programmes (Parkay and Rhodes, 1992).

As noted previously, it is recommended that course provision should be flexible and negotiated, and should allow for the differentiated needs of different heads who are leading different kinds of school in different contexts. Male and Male (2001) argue for a differentiated programme of training for heads of special schools, which, they claim, are becoming increasingly more ‘special’ because of the inclusion of more children with special needs in mainstream schools.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Problems experienced by new heads

In Section 3 we found that the problems experienced by new headteachers/principals in different countries and localities were largely similar. Some of the main problems were:

- feelings of professional isolation and loneliness
- dealing with the legacy, practice and style of the previous headteacher
- dealing with multiple tasks, managing time and priorities
- dealing with the school budget
- dealing with (e.g. supporting, warning, dismissing) ineffective staff
- implementing new government initiatives, notably new curricula or school improvement projects
- problems with school buildings and site management.

The main differences between the findings of different studies related to the points in time at which the studies were conducted or the new heads were in post. For example, research studies found that headteachers in England and Wales reported more difficulties relating to budgetary issues following the introduction of the Educational Reform Act and Local Management of Schools (LMS) (Dunning, 2000).

Given that there are differences between the educational systems of different countries, and given that headteachers in some countries but not others have been required to undertake pre-headship training courses, it is perhaps surprising that research findings suggest that the problems experienced by new headteachers/principals have been largely the same. On the other hand, the fact that new heads in different contexts have experienced similar problems may reflect the fact that, in many ways, the process of becoming a head of a school is broadly similar regardless of the type of school or its geographical location. That is, new headteachers tend to be subject to similar socialisation processes, associated with becoming new headteachers and leaders in established organisations (Parkay *et al.*, 1992a; Weindling, 1999).

In a small number of cases, different research studies did report contradictory findings. For example, Jones' (2001) small-scale study of headteachers in England reported that the culture shock of becoming a new head, and related problems of dealing with staff, was *less of an issue* where the new head had been promoted (e.g. from the position of deputy head) within the school, whilst Daresh and Male (2000) found that the culture shock was *especially intense and painful* for some of those who had been promoted to the headship within a school where they had previously served.

Differences in the problems reported to be experienced by different beginner heads/principals, may be explained by one or more of a variety of factors, including:

- differences in school type (e.g. primary/secondary/special schools), size and geographical location (e.g. urban/rural) (Parkay *et al.*, 1992b)
- cultural differences or differences in the educational systems of different countries (e.g. US principals tend to be relatively tightly controlled or influenced by their district offices, whereas UK heads have relatively more freedom of action)
- differences in individual headteachers' relationships with other staff in their schools

- the period of time at which data were collected
- differences relating to the research studies (e.g. some are based on larger and more representative samples of headteachers).

5.2 Support strategies for new heads

In Section 4.1 we identified a range of strategies which research has suggested may be effective methods of inducting and supporting new heads. These included the following points.

In England and Wales:

- the provision of detailed documentation for the appointee prior to them taking up the headship
- post appointment preparatory visits to their new schools prior to the new heads' start date
- methods of bringing local headteachers together to provide peer support
- mentoring by more experienced headteachers
- training in specific skill areas, such as finance and personnel issues.

In other countries:

- summer induction conferences prior to the first year
- 'principal support networks', involving regular (e.g. monthly) meetings at locations away from the principals' schools
- programmes that were closely related to the context in which headteachers work.

On the one hand, the use of such strategies can assist the new heads to deal with some of the problems that they experience. On the other hand, the use of some of these strategies might reduce the likelihood that new headteachers will experience some of the problems in the first place. For example, if new heads have access to peer support networks, feelings of isolation and loneliness are likely to be both less acute and more manageable.

It should be borne in mind, however, that not all support strategies will be equally applicable or effective for all new heads. Even if they have been in post for the same period of time, not all beginning headteachers will be at the same stage of development or will have the same balance of needs (Parkay *et al.*, 1992a; Weindling, 1999). This means that support provision should be flexible, individualised and negotiable (Baker, 1992; Shields, 1997).

Section 4.2 listed various recommendations of both researchers and research participants, regarding possible induction and support strategies. Again, these recommendations would appear to merit serious consideration as potential means of addressing issues relating to new principals' *personal needs*, such as dealing with isolation and new relationships with staff, and *technical needs*, such as how to deal with finance and legal questions. However, whilst some of the recommendations (e.g. the use of experienced headteachers as mentors to new heads) have been shown by research to have been successful; others (e.g. the possibility of the new appointee working alongside the outgoing head) lack evidence of effectiveness.

5.3 Gaps in the evidence base

The review of the literature discussed in this report presents a good deal of evidence relating to the issues of early headship, and suggests a number of profitable strategies which might be employed by policy-makers. The review has also highlighted a number of gaps in the evidence base. In particular, whilst the evidence suggested a great deal of commonality in terms of the issues and problems faced by new heads, further research is needed regarding potential differences in training and support needs relating to both characteristics of the head (e.g. prior experience, gender, cultural background) and characteristics and geographical location of the school (e.g. phase, type, size, social deprivation, urban/rural setting).

More research is also needed to establish the impact of different support strategies on the experience of headship and on the effectiveness of new heads (Blandford and Squire, 2000). Finally, Daresh and Male (2000) recommend further research on the impact of appointment to the headship/principalship on the personal lives and values of those concerned, and the potential effect of its negative aspects on future recruitment.

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Appendix: Search parameters and strategy

The following research questions and search parameters for the review were agreed between the NFER and NCSL.

Key research questions

The review aimed to investigate:

1. What is known about the problems of new heads in their first headship, where ‘new head’ refers to the period between appointment and the end of the second year in post?
2. What support strategies are/have been employed to assist the development of new heads, in the UK and internationally?
3. What does the evidence tell us about the effectiveness of different strategies that have been used to support new heads?

Search parameters

The following studies were included in the review:

1. Studies carried out in/including England, Wales and Northern Ireland between January 1982 and May 2002.
2. Studies carried out in other countries (especially the USA, Canada and Australia) since January 1982, providing that they were readily available and written in English.
3. Research studies (published articles, reports and conference papers).
4. Descriptive accounts and selected opinion pieces, if particularly relevant in contextualising the research evidence.

Decisions about whether to report the findings of particular studies would also take into account judgements about the quality of the research and its generalisability (e.g. relating to design, quality of information, sampling and sample size).

Search strategy

Search strategies for all databases were developed by using terms from the relevant thesauri (where these were available), in combination with free-text searching. The key words used in the searches, together with a brief description of each of the databases searched, are outlined below.

APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES INDEX AND ABSTRACTS (ASSIA)

ASSIA is an index of articles from over 600 international English language social science journals. The database provides unique coverage of special educational and developmental aspects of children.

- #1 Headteacher*
- #2 School Principal*
- #3 New Principal*
- #4 New Head*
- #5 Newly Qualified Headteacher*
- #6 Early Headship*
- #7 First Headship*
- #8 Beginning Head*

- #9 Beginning Principal*
- #10 HEADLAMP

* Denotes truncation of search of terms to account for plurals (e.g. principal, principals).

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION INDEX (AEI)

AEI is produced by the Australian Council for Educational Research. It is an index to materials at all levels of education and related fields. Source documents include journal articles, monographs, research reports, theses, conference papers, legislation, parliamentary debates and newspaper articles.

- #1 Head Teacher*
- #2 Headship
- #3 Principal* **OR** Principalship
- #4 Support Strategies (ft)
- #5 Induction
- #6 #3 **AND** #5
- #7 Professional Development
- #8 (#3 **AND** #7) **NOT** #5
- #9 Training
- #10 (#3 **AND** #9) **NOT** (#5 **OR** #7)
- #11 Administrator
- #12 #11 **AND** #5
- #13 #11 **AND** #7
- #14 #11 **AND** #9
- #15 New Head* (ft)
- #16 New Principal* (ft)
- #17 Newly Qualified Headteacher* (ft)
- #18 Early Headship*
- #19 First Headship*
- #20 Beginning Head* (ft)
- #21 Beginning Principal* (ft)
- #22 New School Administrator* (ft)
- #23 Beginning School Administrator* (ft)
- #24 HEADLAMP (ft)

ft Denotes free-text searching.

BRITISH EDUCATION INDEX (BEI)

BEI provides bibliographic references to 350 British and selected European English-language periodicals in the field of education and training, plus developing coverage of national report and conference literature.

- #1 Head Teachers
- #2 Principals
- #3 #1 **OR** #2
- #4 Support Strateg\$ (ft)
- #5 #3 **AND** #4
- #6 Professional Development
- #7 #3 **AND** #6
- #8 Induction
- #9 #3 **AND** #8
- #10 Training
- #11 #3 **AND** #10
- #12 School Administrator
- #13 #12 **AND** (#6 **OR** #8 **OR** #10)

- #14 New Head\$ (ft)
- #15 New Principal\$ (ft)
- #16 New School Administrator\$ (ft)
- #17 Newly Qualified Headteacher\$ (ft)
- #18 Early Headship\$ (ft)
- #19 First Headship\$ (ft)
- #20 Beginning Head\$ (ft)
- #21 Beginning Principal\$ (ft)
- #22 Beginning School Administrator\$ (ft)
- #23 HEADLAMP (ft)

\$ Denotes truncation of search terms to account for plurals (e.g.head, heads).

BRITISH OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS CURRENT AWARENESS SERVICE (BOPCAS)

BOPCAS contains details of 9,000 official government publications a year, with hypertext links to full text documents where available on the Internet. Access online is available using a password.

- #1 Headteacher **OR** Headteachers
- #2 Principal **OR** Principals
- #3 Administrator **OR** Administrators
- #4 Newly Qualified Headteachers
- #5 Early Headship
- #6 First Headship
- #7 New Heads
- #8 Beginning Heads

CANADIAN BUSINESS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS (CBCA)

CBCA provides indexing and fulltext access to the principal educational literature publications in Canada, covering all significant reports of government departments, faculties of education, teachers' associations, large school boards and educational organisations. Over 150 educational periodicals, plus educational articles in over 700 general journals and newspapers are indexed.

- #1 Headteacher* **OR** Headship*
- #2 Principal **OR** Principalship*
- #3 #1 **OR** #2
- #4 Support Strategies (ft)
- #5 #3 **AND** #4
- #6 Professional Development (ft)
- #7 #3 **AND** #6
- #8 Induction
- #9 #3 **AND** #8
- #10 Training
- #11 #3 **AND** #10
- #12 School Administrator* (ft)
- #13 #12 **AND** (#6 **OR** #8 **OR** #10)
- #14 New Head* (ft)
- #15 New Principal* (ft)
- #16 New School Administrator* (ft)
- #17 Newly Qualified Headteacher* (ft)
- #18 Early Headship* (ft)

- #19 First Headship* (ft)
- #20 Beginning Head* (ft)
- #21 Beginning Principal* (ft)
- #22 Beginning School Administrator* (ft)
- #23 HEADLAMP (ft)

COPAC

COPAC is a union catalogue which provides access to the merged online catalogues of 22 of the largest university research libraries in the UK and Ireland plus the British Library.

- #1 New Headteacher*
- #2 Beginning Headteacher*
- #3 New School Administrator*
- #4 Beginning School Administrator*
- #5 New Principal*
- #6 Beginning School Principal*
- #7 Early Headship*
- #8 First Headship*
- #9 Newly Qualified Headteacher*
- #10 HEADLAMP

THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

ERIC is sponsored by the United States Department of Education and is the largest education database in the world. It indexes over 725 periodicals and currently contains more than 7000,000 records. Coverage includes research documents, journal articles, technical reports, program descriptions and evaluations and curricula material.

- #1 Head Teacher\$ (ft)
- #2 Principals
- #3 Support Strateg\$ (ft)
- #4 #1 **AND** #3
- #5 #2 **AND** #3
- #6 Professional Development
- #7 #2 **AND** #6
- #8 Induction
- #9 #2 **AND** #8
- #10 Training
- #11 #2 **AND** #10
- #12 Administrators
- #13 #12 **AND** #6
- #14 #12 **AND** #8
- #15 #12 **AND** #10
- #16 New Head\$ (ft)
- #17 New Principal\$ (ft)
- #18 New Administrator\$ (ft)
- #19 Newly Qualified Headteacher\$ (ft)
- #20 Early Headship\$ (ft)
- #21 First Headship\$ (ft)
- #22 Beginning Head\$ (ft)
- #23 Beginning Principal\$ (ft)
- #24 Beginning Administrator\$ (ft)
- #25 HEADLAMP (ft)

INTERNATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES (IBSS)

IBSS is one of the largest and most comprehensive social science databases in the world with coverage dating from 1951 onwards. Current data is taken from over 2400 selected international social science journals and around 7000 books per annum.

- #1 Headteacher*
- #2 School Headship*
- #3 School Administrator*
- #4 School Principal*
- #5 New Head*
- #6 New Principal*
- #7 New School Administrator*
- #8 HEADLAMP

PSYCINFO

This is an international database containing citations and summaries of journal articles, book chapters, book and technical reports, as well as citations to dissertations in the field of psychology and psychological aspects of related disciplines, such as medicine, sociology and education.

- #1 Headteacher*(ft)
- #2 School Principals
- #3 #1 OR #2
- #4 Support Strategies (ft)
- #5 #3 AND #4
- #6 Professional Development
- #7 #3 AND #6
- #8 Induction
- #9 #3 AND #8
- #10 Personnel Training
- #11 #3 AND #10
- #12 School Administrators
- #13 #12 AND (#6 OR #8 OR #10)
- #14 New Head* (ft)
- #15 New School Principal* (ft)
- #16 New School Administrator* (ft)
- #17 Newly Qualified Headteacher* (ft)
- #18 Early Headship* (ft)
- #19 First Headship* (ft)
- #20 Beginning Head* (ft)
- #21 Beginning Principal* (ft)
- #22 Beginning School Principal* (ft)
- #23 Beginning School Administrator* (ft)
- #24 HEADLAMP (ft)

THE SOCIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, EDUCATIONAL AND CRIMINOLOGICAL TRIALS REGISTER (C2-SPECTR)

SPECTR is a registry of over 10,000 randomised and possibly randomised trials in education, social work and welfare, and criminal justice, hosted by the Campbell Collaboration.

- #1 Headteacher(s)
- #2 Principal(s)
- #3 Administrator(s)
- #4 HEADLAMP

SYSTEM FOR INFORMATION ON GREY LITERATURE IN EUROPE (SIGLE)

SIGLE is a bibliographic database covering European non-conventional (grey) literature in the fields of humanities, social sciences, pure and applied natural sciences and technology, and economics.

- #1 Headteacher* **OR** Headship
- #2 Principal* **OR** Principalship
- #3 Administrator*
- #4 #1 **OR** #2 **OR** #3
- #5 Induction
- #6 Training
- #7 Professional Development (ft)
- #8 #5 **OR** #6 **OR** #7
- #9 #4 **AND** #8
- #10 Newly Qualified Headteacher*
- #11 Early Headship*
- #12 First Headship*
- #13 Beginning Head*
- #14 Beginning Principal*
- #15 Beginning School Administrator*
- #16 HEADLAMP