

The Two Directions Formulating a Crisis in Primary Catholic School Leadership

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By

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ABSTRACT

Since the year 2000 there has been a statistically high proportion of head teachers leaving the profession. There have been studies conducted to predict when this exodus would conclude, but not the actual reasons for why senior people are leaving their positions. Schools have found replacing head teachers increasingly difficult and the inevitable leadership crisis has been well documented by authors, such as Dorman and D'Arbon (2003) and Harris (2007) alongside many articles in the media. The leadership crisis has been most noticeable within the Catholic Primary Catholic sector where statistics have consistently shown an issue with recruiting people to headship positions. This research has been conducted to consider the reasons for the crisis and to gain some answers as to how to solve the situation.

This research identifies what the leadership crisis encompasses from the negativity of the education system (through headship accountability, work life balance to salary) whilst also offsetting this with possible supporting solutions, such as the value of acting headship, succession planning and talent spotting from the beginning of a teacher's career.

This research journey has taken six years and started with a questionnaire with eighty senior leadership teams within Catholic Primary schools (English West Midlands) and then progressed to interviewing fifteen senior leaders to probe in more depth. The interviewees were pooled from five head teachers; four deputy heads, three assistant heads and three middle leaders. The research was conducted from September 2011 to June 2014.

This study captures the importance of succession planning and how expectations on faith school head teachers have many aspects that add to their working week that need to be addressed. Accountability and workload issues are adding increasing pressure on a heads' shoulders, and although many see Catholic education as a 'calling', the extra requirements of the job (such as the non-negotiables around being a practicing Catholic and following the church's rules) are putting many deputies and assistant heads off.

The research concluded that any future succession planning should include opportunities for acting headship. Both the questionnaire responses and interview findings highlighted this area as an important aspect for imminent development, and for solving recruitment issues. This would then allow schools to manage talent within the school with the ultimate purpose of securing the future of Catholic school leadership.

The other emerging theme was the impact of OFSTED, which needs to be further investigated, especially in relation to the workload levels and the accountability of senior leaders, alongside the negativity towards headship that is beginning to evolve. A longitudinal study on the impact of OFSTED on head teachers is an area of research that needs further investigation.

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The book is dedicated to Doug Gould who passed away in June 2017.

ABBREVIATIONS

AHT	Assistant Head Teacher
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCPP	Birmingham Catholic Primary Partnership
B Ed	Bachelor of Education
BRIN	British Religion in Numbers
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
Cert Ed	Certificate of Education
C of E	Church of England
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DES	Diocesan Schools Commission
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Schools
DHT	Deputy Head Teacher
DSC	Diocesan Schools Commission
ERA	Education Reform Act (1988)
GB	Governing Body
GTC	General Teaching Council in England
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
HT	Head Teacher
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
LLE	Local Leaders' of Education
LMS	Local Management of Schools
MD	Managing Director
NAHT	National Association for Head Teachers
NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
NCLSCS	National College for Leadership, Schools and Children's Services
NCSL	National College of School Leadership
NFER	National Federation for Educational Research
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
NPQML	National Professional Qualification for Middle Leaders
NPQSL	National Professional Qualification for Senior Leaders
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NUT	National Union of Teachers

OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PEH	Primary Executive Head teacher
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate of Education
PA	Planning, Preparation and Assessment
RE	Religious Education
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests for seven and eleven year olds in England
SEF	School Self-Evaluation Form
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SBM	School Business Manager
SMT	Senior Management Team
TLR's	Teaching and Learning Responsibility Points
VA	Voluntary Aided

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Research

According to statistics regarding school leadership, published in *The Independent* (written by Stanford 2007), there appears to be a distinct lack of enthusiasm for headship, especially prevalent within the Catholic primary schools in the English West Midlands. In the Stanford article (based on research conducted by Education Data Surveys and their partnership work with many of the teaching unions) it was found that “*faith schools are finding recruitment hardest. The re-advertisement rate in Church of England schools is 40.5 per cent and goes up to 58 per cent in the Catholic sector,*” (Stanford—*The Independent* 25/1/07). Indications from various other statistics discussed throughout this book highlight that senior and middle leaders appear to be remaining in their present positions, and as a result, a leadership crisis is imminent. It is underneath this overarching theme of “Leadership Crisis” that this research investigates the actuality of the crisis, the issues inhibiting others from moving up the career ladder, and the impact that various factors are having on the teaching profession and specifically grasping the reality within the Catholic sector.

I first became interested in the debate around a leadership crisis after reading an editorial paper from Alma Harris (2007) at the time when I was applying to start my doctoral studies. I was particularly interested in the paper as I was an acting head teacher at the time and was considering whether to progress towards the position on a permanent basis. The viewpoint, from Harris, was that the “*current crisis in leadership requires some rapid policy solutions,*” (p. 105). Harris discussed the leadership crisis as being “twofold”. The first reason was due to “*democratic change and fluctuation*” (p. 105) and the second being “*the consequences and pressures of accountability*” (p. 105).

Accountability, in Harris' opinion, whilst always being a part of education, has become "*relentless... the constant weighing and measuring of school performance plus the continual stream of policy changes have meant that many heads are finding the stress too great,*" (p. 105). The result of the "democratic change" being many experienced heads leave the profession (due to retirement or ill health) and that "*external interference causes frustration that impacts on schools' future potential head teachers,*" (p. 106).

The statistic "*58 per cent re-advertisement in the Catholic sector,*" (Stanford in the Independent 25/1/07) regarding recruitment to Catholic headship, alongside the paper from Harris (2007), also generated a personal interest. Primary Catholic Education has always been the sector in which I have taught for over twenty-one years. I was also immersed in the system throughout my own schooling and have a strong personal faith. With Catholic education engrained in my psyche, and with a child presently in the primary system, the apparent crisis in the system was of special concern. As a result, my initial reading (Harris 2007) made me start to question, what exactly was the reality of the situation around recruitment to Catholic headship, and what aspects of accountability were resulting in people leaving the profession.

The Catholic sector of education in England and Wales has a very distinctive school ethos which is based around the teachings of Jesus Christ. Children who attend Catholic schools are required to say prayers four times a day, to attend religious assemblies and have two hours of Religious Education lessons every week. Alongside these aspects, pupils attend school mass regularly and there is an expectation that parents take their child to mass during sacramental years (Eucharist in Year 3 and Confirmation in Year 6) on a Sunday. Schools follow the guidance from the National Symposium (held on 16 December 2010) where non-negotiables for Catholic schools ensure that admission policies give preference to baptised Catholic children, schools have governors appointed from the diocesan bishop, RE continues to be taught for two hours a week, and that Catholic head teachers, deputy heads, RE co-ordinators and school lay chaplains are practising Catholics. All of these directives were originally to be found in both the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts but were revisited in light of National Curriculum changes that were occurring at that time. Assistant heads, although expected to be Catholic, have some leniency regarding personal faith choices and as a result, some schools with low numbers of Catholic children, have appointed leaders of other faiths to this position.

Catholicism has been part of the make-up of England for the past two millennia. It was the dominating religion of the country until King Henry VIII's Reformation Act of 1534, which made him head of the Church of England. For the following 300 years, people who practised Catholicism were either persecuted or imprisoned. Most support for the religion went underground. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, the reigning Pope (Clement 13th) recognised the monarchy of the United Kingdom as head of the Church of England, and from then on the Catholic religion was recognised again as a legitimate aspect of society.

As a result of the directive from Rome, the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 was passed (by the UK Government) which allowed Catholic districts to be reinstated across England and Wales. From 1850, Pope Pius 9th created the present system of twenty-two Catholic dioceses across England and Wales, in which a bishop presides over the day to day running of the parish and school system. All of these dioceses are part of the five archdioceses that span England and Wales. The five being: the Archdioceses of Birmingham, Cardiff, Liverpool, Southwark and Westminster. In each of the five archdioceses there is an archbishop who has overall strategic responsibility for the whole area that he is based within. The head of the Catholic Church resides in the Archdiocese of Westminster, and he is Cardinal Vincent Nichols. He was awarded his Cardinalship from the Pope in 2014 to signify his authority to make decisions about Catholic Education and Church Doctrine.

The 1944 Education Act was created to try to ensure that children remained in education post 13 years of age. Ball (2013) highlighted that *"88% of children were in 'all-age' schools in 1938 but only one in seven remained in school after 13"* (p. 73). The Act was the Government's response to viewing *"post war education as an urgent necessity"* (Ball 2013: 74). The Act paved the way for the secondary education system to be created.

The 1944 Act was also fundamental in that it solidified the church's position in education. The Act permitted faith schools to become voluntary *"controlled or aided"* (Ball 2013: 75). By becoming voluntary aided the church schools were responsible for the upkeep of their own school buildings, for teaching a specific Religious Education syllabus based on the life of Jesus Christ, and for the appointment of its own staff and governors. All of these specifics were under the remit of the Archdiocese's control. The Act remains relevant to Catholic Education today and is the backbone of the voluntary aided system that is still in place today.

The Archdiocese of Birmingham runs from St John the Evangelist Parish in Kidsgrove, Staffordshire to Our Lady and St Anne's in Caversham, Berkshire. The archdiocese is 8,735 square kilometres. There are 44 Catholic schools of the 252 in Birmingham, and that is where I have worked throughout my career, based solely across central and southern Birmingham. I have been a middle and senior leader for all but four of the twenty-one years. I hold a teaching qualification in English and Education and a Master's degree in Catholic Education. I also have the NPQH qualification and the national SENCO award. My natural love of learning and my passion for education made me question why there appear to be difficulties in recruiting school head teachers and what exactly is the leadership crisis that Harris (2007) adhered to?

This research looks at the factors underlying the features of the leadership challenge and strategies that could be incorporated into education policy to alleviate the problem. This research examines the many barriers that prevent teachers from taking up a leadership role within Catholic primary schools within the West Midlands, and especially the impact this has on the role of the head teacher. The research looks at the difficulties facing recruitment in school leadership. It offers a portrait of how people can be identified and developed throughout their career, and considers alternative options to ensure headship remains a valued career path. The study does not look at the quality of leaders within a school and in no way questions their ability to lead.

The leadership crisis encompasses the negativity of the education system from accountability to salary, whilst also counterbalances this with succession planning and talent spotting. The leadership crisis is linked to stability within schools and people being supported to complete their job satisfactorily.

There is a media discourse around the notion of the theme of a leadership crisis and this book is exploring how this plays out at school level looking at two facets. Firstly, leadership in general alongside its pertinent policy context, and secondly the faith school context and explicitly, leadership within Catholic Primary schools.

Dorman and D'Arbon (2003) first indicated that there is a "*leadership problem*" (p. 129) in their literature from Australia where they studied the impact of Catholic education. Dorman and D'Arbon (2003) argue that fundamentally the "*Church expectations that principals be leaders of a faith community and practice their faith in a traditional manner*" (p. 129)

are having a detrimental effect on the Catholic system as a whole. In their research on leadership succession, the specific problems associated with finding Catholic principals are causing “*surreal, unrealistic expectations*” (p. 129), that are ultimately stopping people from furthering their careers, thereby causing a “*leadership crisis*” (p. 130).

Dorman and D’Arbon (2003) ask pertinent questions as to whether the non-negotiable aspects of the Catholic faith are in fact hindering the movement of senior and middle leaders. This issue of personal Catholic faith affecting the role of a head is also discussed in the article by Stanford (The Independent 2007). The article found that there is pressure on “*Catholic heads—as they are expected to be the spiritual leaders of their school as well as [carrying out] all their other responsibilities,*” (Stanford 2007), an outlook that is not found in the mainstream sector of education. The effect of these higher expectations, according to Stanford (The Independent 2007), is that they *can put potential applicants off. It is hard to defend the number of practising Catholics who are ruled out of contention for headship because they have chosen, in good faith, to live with their partners before marriage, or who have been divorced despite the church's teaching on the sanctity of marriage.*

Modern society mixing with church teaching appears to be encroaching on the leadership crisis, from the article, so evidence of any impact will be closely scrutinised in the analysis of the book’s fieldwork.

An article found in the Times Education Supplement and written by Maddern (2011) entitled “*Crisis: third of primary head posts go unfilled*” is the most recent indication of the reality of a

school leadership crisis as John Howson, director of Education Data Surveys, has shown disastrous statistics whereby the number of deputy positions has fallen from 2,345 in 2006 to 1,806 in 2010. (Times Education Supplement online)

Professor Howson has been studying the trends within education annually for over twenty-six years and he argues that “*We are not appointing enough new deputy heads in the primary sector to meet the current or future demand for head teachers*” (Maddern—Times Education Supplement 2011).

This reflection is very timely with news headlines such as “*Schools face teacher shortage crisis, claims Labour*” from Sellgren’s article for the BBC (March 28, 2013). The medium is indicating that as the United

Kingdom is heading for a shortage of places within primary schools (due to a population increase) there needs to be “14,545 teachers” and if the present “520 vacancies are added in, 15,065 more teachers by the next election in 2015” (Sellgren’s article for the BBC 2013). As with all media interpretations there is a political slant to the article, but there is indeed a shortfall of places for school starters.

The National Audit Office (2013) foresees that issues related to primary places are become increasingly worse, “*In 2010 the Department of Education had estimated that 324,000 additional places would be needed by 2014/15. In 2012, the Department expected demand to continue to rise, and 400,000 further places could be required by 2018/19,*” (p. 7). There does appear, from available statistics and head teacher re-adverts, to be a decline in the take up of teaching positions and with the birth rate increasing, indications are that there is a teaching crisis and that this will impact even further on the future of recruitment to headship. Although there is a lot of dialogue on the future crisis, there are limited solutions forthcoming as to how to solve the problem now. From the statistics available via the General Teaching Council (Smithers’ report in The Guardian Newspaper 2006), Howson (2010) and Evans’ (2014 Wales Online) comments include “*The GTC findings suggest little appetite for headship among experienced class or subject teachers. Of those with 15 or more years’ service, 64% indicated that they intend staying in the same role for the next five years*” (Smithers’ report in The Guardian 2006) and “*there is a 58 per cent re-advertisement rate in the Catholic sector*” (Stanford—The Independent 2007). There’s a clear indication that the Catholic Church appears to be facing a head teacher recruitment crisis, but there does not appear to be any apparent urgency in dealing with the situation.

In my research, there was only one interview (number seven) where a distinct concern was raised about the quality and commitment of future Catholic leaders, “*it kind of worries me a great deal that we have people coming through who have no kind of idea of the legacy of Catholicism and the work put into creating these institutions.*” To suggest ways to resolve the leadership crisis (including how to solve the future recruitment process) the findings of the research questionnaire and interviews hint at some possible future directions.

If there is a lack of enthusiasm for becoming teachers, senior leaders and then ultimately a head teacher, there must be underlying reasons. Deputy headship in the last century was often the stepping stone to

becoming the head, and this appears on the surface to have changed dramatically. There has to be questions asked as to what has happened to change the enthusiasm for school leadership. Stanford (2007), writing in the *Independent*, thinks the reason is fundamentally:

responsibility. This is the word that comes up most often in diagnosing today's shortage of heads. Senior teachers just don't want to take on the extra commitments that come with headship. There has been a huge increase in the past few years in the responsibilities of head teachers and also in their accountability to an ever longer list of official bodies—from national government to local education authorities, to OFSTED, to the Health and Safety Executive, to the Learning and Skills Council, and so on. With all this responsibility and accountability has come a much greater vulnerability. Get a bad OFSTED, if something happens to a pupil, if mistakes are made, the buck stops with the head and many, many more heads are now losing their jobs as a result. (Stanford in The Independent 2007)

The National Union of Teachers (2014), in an online document printed by Hays, a school recruitment company, agrees that the responsibilities of being a head teacher are playing a key role in why more people are not becoming heads. *It is simply that the job of being a head teacher is extremely burdensome, and many people entering teaching do not consider that they can maintain any work-life balance and also fulfil the role of head teacher. (NUT online article 2014)* In other words, school staff members are seeing the role of the head teacher and are not aspiring to that position. The report discusses the true expectations upon a school leader, which include:

ensuring that all staff understand the school's policy, arrange staff training, keep parents informed regarding the school and their children, regularly report to governing bodies, manage suspensions and maintain the smooth day-to-day running of the school. They also need to establish a method of contacting the police in the event of emergency and, in some cases, teach classes. (NUT online article 2014)

With so many expectations placed upon the shoulders of one person, the head-teacher position appears, from both the article by Stanford (*The Independent* 2007) and the Teaching Union's perspective, to be an impossible task. John Howson's statistics, along with both the Stanford article (2007) and the NUT's viewpoint (2014), make for negative reading. The articles appear to describe possible reasons for a "leadership crisis" (p. 130), a phrase coined from the Dorman and D'Arbon (2003) literature.

The rationale for this current research is to investigate the issue of a crisis in recruiting primary heads, which, from the statistics and literature discussed in chapter two, appears to be acute in the Catholic education sector. The method for researching the Primary Catholic School system within the English West Midlands was by way of a questionnaire to eighty schools and then subsequently fifteen individual interviews with senior and middle leaders. The research will look into the reality of the expectations of the Catholic Church on its school leaders, the possible reasons for not becoming a head teacher, and also the veracity of being the head teacher of a Catholic primary school.

1.2 Educational background to the research

Education is constantly evolving. The fundamental changes started when the 1944 Education Act was reviewed and updated to create the 1988 Education Reform Act. The Act was introduced by the Conservative Government of the time, led by Margaret Thatcher.

The Education Reform Act (1988) set up the present schools system which has remained so up to this academic school year (2015-16). In chapter one of the 1988 Act, the National Curriculum was created based upon the expectation that nine subjects, either three core (English, Maths and Science) or six foundation (PE, RE, History, Geography, Music, Art and Design and Technology) plus a foreign language at KS3 (eleven to fourteen years of age), would be taught to all pupils following the same attainment targets. Ball (1994) argues that the head teacher's "*ethical and ideological position*" (p. 59) towards the National Curriculum changes in the 1988 Education Reform Act, was central. The role of the head changed as a result of the 1988 Act to a more "*reconstructed*" (p. 59) one where the previous "*professional authority was replaced by a managerial one*" (Ball 1994 p. 59). Quite simply, the role of the head evolved into strategic long-term school planning with more emphasis on the governing-body partnership.

The Act also created four key stages, all of which had a statutory test (known as SATs) at the end of the phase. Key Stage One (KS1) was for children of 5-7 years of age; Key Stage Two (KS2) for 7-11 years of age; Key Stage Three (KS3) for 11-14 years, and finally Key Stage Four (KS4) for GCSE preparation. Since this introduction of end-phase testing the main change has been the abolishment of the KS3 test.

The theme of leadership crisis has interested me throughout the past decade, as during this time I have slowly progressed in my own leadership journey. As my own career path has developed, the National College and the NPQH qualification for school headship have dominated the education sector and been an integral part of senior leader development and training. Courses for staff have been under the umbrella of succession planning and support the development of middle leaders through courses such as “Leading from the middle” and “Leadership Pathways”. During the time taken to produce this book, the United Kingdom Education system has changed dramatically under a coalition government. In April 2013, the role of the National College was amalgamated with the “Teacher Training Agency”. The education body is now known as the “National College for Teaching and Leadership”. The work of both organisations was scaled down with “Teaching Alliance” groups and “Teaching Schools” increasingly becoming responsible for the NPQH, NPQSM and NPQML courses, as discussed in their literature “*Teaching schools: a guide for potential applicants*” (2014). Initial teacher training (graduate) courses are moving to “Schools Direct” with more focused partnership work between universities and outstanding schools. Succession planning is integral in the new systems, and so conclusions from this book could be used to influence future training courses.

In 2014, the National Curriculum was changed again by the serving Conservative party led by David Cameron to a more flexible syllabus where schools can design their own programmes of study from a set of objectives. The only proscriptive aspect of the 2014 curriculum was the revised expectations for the three core subjects, many of which are traditional methods of teaching.

As there were many changes to education in the 1988 Act, for the purposes of this book, the aspects that affect leadership specifically are Local Management of Schools (LMS—Chapter Three 1988 Education Act) and the role of the Governing Body (Chapter Eight—Miscellaneous). The Act can be accessed online from the National Archives website.

Chapter three of the 1988 Education Reform Act (sections 33-51) according to Tomlinson (2011) was where “*schools were delegated their total budget through a formula worked out by each LEA and approved by the secretary of state,*” (p. 53). Before this, schools were responsible for the capitation aspect of the school budget, thereby allowing schools to purchase the everyday equipment required throughout schools. “*Governors were given powers to manage the school budget and hire staff*” (Tomlinson

2011: 53), which in reality meant that governors needed to closely monitor pupil numbers to ensure they remained high as this affected school budgets. Through a funding formula, every child is allocated money for their education. Quite simply, the higher the number of pupils, the more financially viable a school became. Head teachers in 1994, according to research conducted by Maychell, found that the LMS allowed for greater autonomy, “*allowing for staff development and allowed for a fairer distribution of money*” (p. 110). However, the negatives felt by the heads, in the NFER research 1994, were that the less time they had for the curriculum and teaching, “*the higher levels of stress they were feeling*” (Maychell 1994: 112) and that paperwork had increased drastically.

Chapter eight of the 1988 Education Reform Act (sections 106-111) according to Tomlinson (2011) gave the “*duties of governors clarification regarding payments for school extras and permission for voluntary contributions to schools*” (p. 53). This was alongside the powers that came from all the financial controls through the delegated budget expectations. The extra duties of the governing bodies included “*responsibilities to report progress to parents, holding parents evening and the composition of the governing body for all schools with VA schools to have two LEA governors*” (p. 100). Governing bodies, from 1988, were made up of volunteers from the local community and school staff, and in faith schools, people of the appropriate faith background. The Act made the GB more accountable for the decisions it made and the responsibilities it had to the parents regarding the education of the pupils within their school. The GB, as a result of this legislation, annually delegated the daily running of the school to the head teacher and called the head to account for decisions that were made. These changes are still prominent today with OFSTED inspections connecting a judgement of governance with leadership as a key aspect of their investigations.

Education is constantly evolving. Since the millennium there has been a fundamental shift in the make-up of the school leadership team. Schools have moved from the two-person school leadership team (the traditional head teacher with a supporting deputy head) to teams of leaders who run schools. School Leadership Teams (SLTs) may now include assistant head teachers, special needs coordinators, pastoral managers and financial school bursars. West-Burnham (1997) saw that changes were imminent after the introduction of the Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) and the league table system, introduced in 1995:

There has been a tendency to express leadership as ‘super-management. The model of headship is omicompetence: the skilled classroom practitioner, curriculum leader, technical expert, plus many other manifestations... It is no wonder that so many head teachers seek early retirement. The job as historically constituted is almost impossible. (p. 232)

The argument was that with so many facets to a head teacher position, there needed to be delegation in order to fulfil the expectations of the head’s role. A two-person school leading team was quite simply too small.

In the “*School Leadership Today*” document from Munby (2009) for the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) the discussion is about the statistics of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF); there are presently 17200 state primary head teachers across England, a decrease of 1400 in eight years. There are also fewer (a smaller quantity) deputy head teachers “*just 11900, the number of assistant heads has risen fivefold from 1200 to 6000*” (p. 32). This comes at a time when there has been a decline in the number of primary schools throughout England. According to the UK Government Education Statistics, completed by Bolton (2012), there were “*22,347 England state primary schools in 2002 down to 21,469 in 2012*” (p. 15). This has been a decrease of 878 primary schools across England. Independent schools have increased from “*2,190 in 2002 to 2,420 in 2012*” (DfE 2012 Table 2a: 15) which is a rise of 230. These statistics indicate that there are head and deputy positions that have been lost in England in the past decade, but there is an anomaly between the numbers of headship positions within primary schools to reveal that there is a shortfall. As a researcher these statistics intrigued me and I began to formulate questions as to how schools were addressing this anomaly with deputy heads being in just half of the primary schools. Who exactly was moving towards headship and what was the reality regarding school leadership in this “*crisis in leadership*” (Harris 2007)?

As a researcher, the statistics started to pose queries as to why there is seemingly a leadership crisis, especially within Catholic Education. I was intrigued to follow a line of investigation to determine if West-Burnham’s (1997) research was indicative of the present perception of the role of headship, and if senior and middle leaders felt equipped to become head teachers. Munby’s (2009) statistics and Maddern’s article (The Times Education Supplement 2011) on the decline of deputy head positions, alongside Stanford’s (2007) comments about “*responsibility*” and “*accountability*” raise the question of what factors are stopping senior leaders from moving up the career path towards headship, especially in

light of Maychell's 1994 NFER research, which found that heads have been under pressure from accountability and paperwork, even as far back as twenty years ago, as a result of the 1988 Education Reform Act. From the government statistics, union research and newspaper reports, I wanted to investigate exactly what were the aspirations of the leadership group, and the impact that outside influences were having on headship within Catholic primary education.

From other NCSL literature there is a strong indication that the middle leaders of the primary schools in England do not appear to want to move further in their leadership career development towards the level of head teacher. In 2006(b) the NCSL surveyed teaching staff and found that "43% of incumbent deputy heads and 70% of middle leaders do not aspire to be a head teacher due to stress and loss of pupil contact" (p. 6). The NCSL in 2006(b) produced a *Leadership Succession* report, looking at helping governing bodies with ways to "talent spot" (p. 9) potential future leaders as the document states that "in 2016 2,500 heads are due to retire with not enough new leaders emerging to replace them" (p. 6). Rhodes, Brundrett and Nevill (2009) in their research, also comment on the issue of senior personnel development. They found that "many class teachers, middle leaders and deputy head teachers do not seek headship" (p. 5). These figures make worrying reading as there appears to be evidence (from the NCSL in 2006(b) and 2009; Stanford in *The Independent* 2007 and *The National Union of Teachers* 2014) to suggest that within the next few years there will be an acute shortage of school heads. This research will question the possible causes of demotivation of senior leaders, through delving into the realms of accountability and stress whilst also looking for other factors not previously implied by the literature. The research will be achieved through questionnaires to senior leadership teams and then fifteen interviews with middle and senior school leaders.

1.3 Definition of Succession Planning

Rothwell (2010) defines succession planning as:

a means of identifying critical management positions, starting at project manager and supervisor and extending up to the highest position in the organization... to develop internal talent to meet current or future talent needs of the organization. (p. 6)

Succession planning is, therefore, the identification of potential future leaders (within an organisation) and giving these prospective people

opportunities to gain appropriate experience in order to advance their career. Succession planning is often linked to “talent spotting”, not just of one person with a particular skill, but of many individuals, allowing education authorities, according to Fink (2010) “*opportunities to accelerate the development of a selected group of high-potential individuals for both current and future roles that may not be identifiable at present*” (p123). Succession planning permits schools to give middle leaders a variety of skills especially as “*a good development for potential assistant principal positions*” (p. 123).

Whilst in large business corporations there may be opportunities to spot future talent, in education talent spotting inevitably comes down to two aspects. One is where the head teacher “spots” potential, the second being a person’s own self-belief that they could be a future leader. Both of these methods to spot future talent have the potential to be biased and so the NCSL in 2010(f) produced guidelines to support this process, as they argue “*One school is unlikely to be sufficiently large to be an effective unit of succession planning alone*” (p22). The solution, therefore, is to ensure that the talent pool is wide enough for “*groups of schools, dioceses, local authorities and other agencies working together to plan their leadership needs and take action to meet them*” (p22). While the documentation was produced to support the needs of Catholic Schools’ succession planning, the principle of a collaborative approach to identifying talent remains the same in all education sectors.

The NCSL produced many documents in 2010, specifically around the theme of succession planning and leading schools. This was as a direct response to their own comments about the need to set up procedures to replace senior leaders. The National College’s website introduced a separate section with up-to-date statistics about the leadership crisis. The website gave its opinion about the possible main reasons why head teachers were in short supply:

Significant numbers of head teachers are retiring every year and this trend is expected to continue. About a quarter of assistant and deputy heads are over 55. There is a risk that the supply of younger leaders may not be sufficient. Some areas are struggling to recruit new heads. This is particularly acute for primary and faith schools. While headship is a great job, issues of workload and stress are a concern. (2010b: 1)

The NCSL document (2010b) was an updated overview on the theme of leadership succession which had first been commissioned in 2006. The 2010(b) edition gave the most up-to-date data on senior leadership

retirements, which they believe are presently at their highest “*increasing towards 2,500 in 2016*” (2010b: 6). In 2014, the National College amalgamated with the Teacher Training Agency and is run by the UK Government so the succession-planning aspect of the website has been archived but the documents are still available to view. One of the main areas of the website identifies the varying levels of training offered to senior and middle leaders. Exactly what the reality of this training entails will form aspects of this research’s survey. Academy and free schools are funded directly from the government, as opposed to receiving money from the local education authority. This system gives schools more flexibility with funding and staffing issues, as opposed to money being “top sliced” by the local authority for central services (such as legal services, etc.).

1.4 Models of school leadership

Since the turn of this century, schools have been encouraged to consider different and diverse school leadership models. With the demand for new leaders outstripping head teacher retirements, schools have had to start devising alternatives. The traditional twentieth-century model of one head teacher is evolving, as are the leadership models and partnerships. School leadership has changed considerably in the wake of education legislation since the 1988 Education Act. Ball (2013) describes a head teacher as “*the manager of institutional performance... as a result of process reforms*” (p. 164). The emphasis on standards and accountability, though, has a much longer history and the changes are not divorced from the direction of travel following the 1988 era. Many writers date this to (at least) the Ruskin Speech of James Callaghan in 1976. The main difference is that schools are compared formally against one another and schools have to market themselves in terms of “*achievements measured by tests and examinations through the outline of highly prescriptive forms of accountability such as performance indicators, inspections, league tables and achievements*” (Ball 2013: 173). Accountability, as Harris (2007) identified, appears to be a major part of a head teacher’s job, but appears to be adding extra pressure through the external requirements placed upon the headship role.

In November 2010, the NCSL (2010c) and the Diocesan Schools Commission (DSC 2010) both produced documents on models of leadership, designed to alleviate the headship crisis in both faith and maintained schools. The body that was set up for this purpose was the “leadership and partnership national support programme” based at the