What Makes an Effective Headteacher?

A Study to Determine the Qualities and Experience that Enable a Headteacher to Effectively Manage and Lead a South Wales Primary School.

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Declaration

This work is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of M.A. (Education Leadership and Management) and has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed ..........N.O’Neill..................................................

Date ........6.5.16......................................................

Statement 1

This dissertation is the result of my own work and investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly indicated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A Reference Page is appended.

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Statement 2(i)

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Abstract

This case study research of an Excellent Primary School Headteacher (Headteacher X) in South Wales was carried out over a four month period. The research aimed to highlight the qualities and experiences that enable a Headteacher to carry out their role so effectively. This information could subsequently be used to inform and improve the practice of current and aspiring school leaders. Data was collected as follows: an interview with the Headteacher and interviews with other effective Headteachers, an observation of a Senior Leadership meeting, diary extracts of a Senior Leader, staff questionnaires and analysis of the most recent School Inspection Report. The research found that all of the effective Headteachers had at least 5 years of experience of Senior Leadership before gaining headship. They had all believed that working for an effective Headteacher previously had improved their practice. All spoke of an inner drive, which led them to headship and of their need to help others. All advocated having core values and principles, which were upheld no matter what. The research found that Headteacher X was a strategic thinker; ensuring that the school was managed effectively through simple purposeful systems and effective distributed leadership. Head teacher X led the school effectively by having excellent relationships with staff. Headteacher X provided staff with challenge, honesty and inspiration. Headteacher X had a wealth of knowledge of the practice within the school and of the education world outside of the school. Headteacher X constantly demanded high standards of pupils and staff and clearly communicated expectations and vision.
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ESTYN- Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

BERA- British Education Research Association

NPQH- National Professional Qualification for Headship

SLT- Senior Leadership Team

TA- Teaching Assistant
Chapter 1

Introduction

Research Statement
This research aims to discover what makes an effective Headteacher; identifying the ‘magic ingredients’ that make some people more suited than others to this very important but also very difficult job (Pepper, 2010). The first aim of this research is to identify the career path and past experiences that have enabled Headteacher X to become so effective and compares the past experiences of four other effective Headteachers to identify any similarities. The second aim is to identify the qualities displayed by one effective Headteacher (Headteacher X) in a South Wales Primary School (School X), whose leadership has been judged as excellent by ESTYN inspectors as part of Key Question 3 of the Common Inspection Framework (2010). This case study research took place over a period of four months. I sampled a range of staff at the school of Headteacher X to discover their perspectives of their Headteacher. Headteacher X was observed in practice in school X and while Headteacher X was overseeing another school (School Y) over a two week period as a caretaker Headteacher, diary entries were made by a member of the senior leadership team detailing the influence of Headteacher X on their practice. Headteacher X was interviewed and the qualitative data collected was compared with the data from the interviews with four other effective Headteachers to determine any links between past experiences leading to effective headships. This research will inform current and future leaders of best practice so that they can improve their own practice and
understand the qualities and experience needed to become an effective Headteacher.

**Key Questions**

1. What career path and past experiences have led to Headteacher X being so effective and how does this compare to the past experiences of other effective Headteachers?

2. How does Headteacher X manage a school effectively?

3. How does Headteacher X lead staff effectively?

**Rationale**

It is well documented (James et al, 2006; Jackson, 2014; Gilbert, 2009; Abrahams & Judd, 1995) that effective leadership is crucial to the success or failure of a school. The ESTYN Guidance for the inspection of primary schools (2015b) devotes one third of its key questions to the effectiveness of the school leadership, asking in Key Question 3 ‘How good are leadership and management?’ When researching ‘How Very Effective Primary Schools Work’ James et al (2006) found that good leadership was a key characteristic in all of the schools studied. Jackson (2014) describes, after 35 years of experience in the education sector, of his belief in the strong link between the quality of leadership and the quality of a school. He describes never having visited an outstanding school with poor leadership and likewise, he could not recall visiting a poor school with outstanding leadership. He believes that good leaders create good
schools. Gilbert, writing in the Telegraph (2009, p. unknown) tells us how a "good head can save a school" while Abrahams & Judd, (1995, p. unknown) state in the Independent ‘Yes, Head its all down to you.’ They quote Shepherd (1995, p.unknown) saying that a good head is ‘the key to a successful school’. In my opinion, by determining the qualities of an effective Headteacher we can better inform those aspiring to be as effective.

In today's education system the government has placed a lot of emphasis on the ability of a school to produce learners of the highest standards. Data is monitored closely and standards of pupil achievement are crucial to the success or failure of a school. 'The concept of effectiveness in the UK has most often become associated with the government led agenda of raising standards of student achievement' (Day, Harris & Hadfield, 2001a, p. 39). They go on to point out that other factors such as the ability to motivate teachers, create a positive learning ethos or involve parents are factors which are not given the same importance but are ‘arguably core components of quality education’ (Day, Harris & Hadfield, 2001a, p. 39). These components are likely to have a significant impact on standards within a school, but are much more difficult to assess, providing qualitative not quantative data. In their guidance ESTYN set out key indicators of a good leader, for the purposes of this study I decided to include Headteachers whose leadership had been judged good or excellent by ESTYN, who run schools categorised by Welsh Government as being Yellow or Green; meaning they are effective or highly effective schools (Evans, 2015, p.unknown) and who had been recognised outside of their school as being good leaders.
I have recently taken on the new and exciting role of Foundation Phase Leader within my Primary School. I am thoroughly enjoying this new role and am keen to learn as much as possible about effective leadership so that I can serve those I am leading to the best of my ability. Having ambitions of Deputy Headships or Headships in the future, I believe that researching what makes an effective Headteacher will equip me with valuable knowledge for now and the future. I believe that the Headteacher is the centre point of a school, linking all stakeholders together. I am interested to discover the opinions, experience, knowledge and advice of an effective Headteacher, as I believe this can only improve and widen my knowledge of effective leadership.

As a primary school teacher, I have seen first hand the many demands on a Headteacher’s time, without even witnessing what happens when the Headteacher’s office door is closed. A Headteacher’s day is incredibly busy and fragmented (Fulan, 1991, cited in Bush & Coleman, 2000) their time is precious and it is unlikely that they have the time to chat to their teachers about their role and their journey to headship. However, this is knowledge that I feel would be truly beneficial to members of the teaching profession. Knowledge that this research will highlight.

From my experience of working for a variety of different Headteachers, it is my belief that one of the most effective methods of observing the qualities of an effective Headteacher is to work for them in their school, Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001b, p.20) hold a similar view; that those ‘who know most’ about an effective Headteacher are the stakeholders of the school, however, they found
‘few studies’ which sort information from this source. It seems that there is a
demand for research that gains the perspectives and opinions of effective
Headteachers as well as those of stakeholders in their schools.

From my own experience of browsing teaching vacancy advertisements, there
are not many opportunities for experienced teachers in Wales to move schools
without taking on a leadership role. As a result, teachers stay in the same school
for long periods of their teaching careers and don’t have the opportunity to
experience how different schools are run, organised, managed and led.
Unfortunately, as The Annual Report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales, 2014-2015 noted (ESTYN, 2015a) not all
schools have effective leadership so some teachers will never be able to gain the
experience and knowledge of those led by an effective leader who see excellent
leadership modeled daily by their Headteacher. This research will give teachers
an insight into how other school leaders manage and lead their schools,
highlighting the qualities and experience of effective Headteachers to enable all
teachers in all schools to be better informed. This knowledge may help teachers
to feel content working within the school they are in or inspire them to move to a
different school to receive better management. Research suggests that a
Headteacher’s style of leadership can have a positive or negative effect on those
working within a school (Cerit, 2009; Saiti & Fassoulis, 2012; Alonderiene &
Majauskaite, 2016). I believe that all teachers deserve the best leadership
available and the knowledge of what that looks like in practice.
If the effects of leadership on staff and other stakeholders is so important, it seems logical to include the views of stakeholders within my research. Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001b, p.20) report that ‘there is evidence to suggest that when researchers turn their attention to alternative perspectives they prove to be rich sources of data.’ They believe that ‘failing to draw upon’ the perspectives of stakeholders is to ignore ‘a plethora of evidence about both the ‘production’ and the ‘consumption’ of leadership in schools’, a view that I would agree with.

This research will benefit the wider educational community. The conclusions of it will better inform current Headteachers and aspiring Headteachers of how to improve their practice. With good Headteachers reported to be in demand (Earley & Bubb, 2013), and some literature suggesting that its a position that less people want (Arrowsmith, 2007; Stone-Johnson, 2014), it can only be a positive act to gather information and knowledge that may help to better equip other aspiring Headteachers. Earley and Bubb (2013) highlight in their research discussion, that we still have a lot to learn about the skills of an effective leader. This research will assist this need for knowledge by ‘shining a light’ (Thomas, 2009, p.9) on one very effective Headteacher, hopefully adding more information to this area of research. As research suggests (James et al, 2006) the better the leader the better the school, and improved schools result in better standards of education for all pupils. This research will contribute towards achieving this.

**Ethics**

When considering who to case study, it was clear from BERA guidelines that research could not have a detrimental effect on participants (BERA, 2011, p.7).
Although it would have been interesting and useful to case study effective Headteachers and ineffective Headteachers and compare them, this would have had ethical implications. It was decided that the Headteacher to be studied and the four additional Headteachers interviewed needed to be proven effective Headteachers. Thus ensuring the validity of the research results and conclusions.

BERA (2011, p.5) also state that participants should ‘understand and agree to their participation without any duress’. Participants were provided with information and consent forms prior to being interviewed or completing questionnaires. They were made aware of the main purpose of the research and consequently had time to decide, without pressure, whether to participate or not.

Participants were accorded their ‘rights to confidentiality and anonymity’ as stated in the BERA guidelines. Questionnaires did not require names and were collected on a separate occasion to the signed consent forms. This ensured participants could trust the promise of anonymity. All of the Headteachers’ identities remained confidential throughout. The trust built between researcher and participants had the positive effect of enabling participants to speak freely and honestly with confidence. Throughout the research process ethical issues were constantly scrutinised to ensure all guidelines were followed.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

When reviewing the literature I decided to focus my reading on the 3 themes, which related to my research questions; the career path to effective leadership, how an effective leader manages a school and how an effective leader leads the staff.

The Career Path to Effective Headship

There is limited research evidence available in relation to how Headteachers take up their position. In an article in the Times, Brookes (2009), a Deputy Headteacher for 18 years warns that the path up the ladder to headship is not one to be taken lightly, advising that ‘you should be doing it because you want to help others, not because you want promotion’. Suggesting that the role needs a considerable amount of dedication. I believe that Headteachers have an inner drive and a need to help others on a wider scale that makes becoming a Headteacher something that they feel they have to do. Percival & Tranter (2004, p.2) write that ‘school leadership... has an enormous responsibility to make a difference to the world in which we live. This is the challenge and this is the privilege’. It would seem that the role allows for one person to have a positive impact on a wide number of people; on a community. This may be why a lot of Headteachers take on the role with such dedication and drive, because they driven by a moral purpose; (Sergiovanni, 2001) an inner need to make a difference.
There is not an abundance of literature documenting or advising aspiring Headteachers how to actually achieve the position of Headteacher, or how others did it. In the past, the career path was simple enough as stated in the Times Ed Supplement (Anon 2009), candidates just needed to complete The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). For those teachers who go on to complete the NPQH, it is reported that 90% of candidates found the needs assessment section particularly useful and said that the course highlighted their strengths and weaknesses (Collarbone, 1998). In a more recent study, 156 graduates of NPQH found many elements useful (Rhodes, Brundrett & Nevill, 2009), however the study also found that a significant number of candidates felt that there is not enough training on financial management of a school. It would seem that for many Headteachers, they learnt the skills needed while being in the role for the first time.

**Leadership and Management Qualities**

There is some literature that attempts to identify key traits of effective leaders. Sutcliffe (2013) quotes vision, courage, passion, emotional intelligence, judgment, resilience, persuasion and curiosity as key traits. While Gurr found the following qualities to be present in effective Headteachers,

Acumen, optimism, persistence, trust…tolerance, empathy, alertness …curiosity, resilience, benevolence, honesty, openness, respectful, and humbleness were some of the traits on display. They have a strong ethic of care, empathy for others, value individuality.

(Gurr, 2015, p.141)

I found these lists of qualities interesting and informative. I wondered how many of these qualities could be learnt and how many are just in built in certain
individuals. In many ways, these qualities would aid the identification of possible effective leaders of the future as not everyone possesses such an impressive list of qualities. However, as an aspiring Headteacher, who hopefully possesses some of these qualities, I found myself thinking “Yes, but how do effective Headteachers do it? How do they manage and lead their schools so effectively?” It was my opinion that an individual could be a very honest, optimistic, humble and respectful person but not necessarily manage and lead a school effectively.

Effective School Management

James et al (2006) states that effective schools are managed effectively and efficiently. From my own experience, being organised, methodical and systematic is crucial to the smooth management of a school. Having systems in place is vital to ensure that staff are following school policies, there is consistency and that standards of teaching and learning are improving. A Headteacher needs to be able to manage as well as lead,

Leadership is essentially the process of building and maintaining a sense of vision, culture and interpersonal relationships, whereas management is the co-ordination, support and monitoring of organisational activities. To enact both roles successfully requires a careful balancing act.

(Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2001b, p.29)

Some Headteachers maybe excellent managers but not effective leaders or vice versa. Do effective Headteachers manage their schools? Or do they delegate the management to others to allow them enough time to lead? Recently I am aware of a number of primary schools having a non teaching Deputy head to manage the daily running of the school. This leads me to wonder if the role of the
Headteacher is changing and becoming even less involved with the school at grassroots level. In a 2014 study, Stone-Johnson, spoke about the reasons why teachers did not want to pursue headships, stating that ‘teachers were not attracted to principalship as it took away from students, teaching and the classroom ‘aspects they treasured’. It could be argued that effective Headteachers keep close links with the classroom and the students despite having many other demands on their time. Gilbert, 2009, believes that good Headteachers are visible and involved, stating that ‘great Headteachers are old-fashioned creatures...they patrol their patch religiously’. The Headteacher Gilbert describes learns ‘the names of every pupil, making sure that the naughty kids are punished and the good ones are praised’. I wonder if an effective Headteacher is able to be visible and involved as well as delegating management to enable them to lead effectively.

More recently, distributed leadership has been advocated to allow for the Headteacher to lead a school effectively and to enable others to develop their leadership and management skills.

distributed leadership: develop the capacity of your school and lighten the HT’s burden, freeing her/him to do those key things only HTs can do. Enliven colleagues and improve provision/ raise standards for pupils.

(Arrowsmith, 2007,p.21)

Do Headteachers use this strategy? I would assume that close monitoring and regular reports to the Headteacher would be essential. Thus ensuring that the Headteacher is fully aware of all developments, as they are ultimately accountable. Distributed leadership gives staff members the opportunity to
develop their skills and knowledge. It would be interesting to discover if effective leaders develop their staff extensively.

**Effective Leadership**

Gurr (2015, p.140) has attempted to simplify a Headteacher’s role of leadership into four core practices. These are ‘setting direction, developing people, leading change and improving teaching and learning’. Reporting that ‘even in a remote village context in Kenya, these dimensions can be seen clearly in how a principal transformed a school.’

When considering and simplifying the role of the Headteacher it seems logical to think that a Headteacher’s relationship with their staff is crucial. After all, the teachers are the ones who need to effectively teach and assess, provide pastoral care and ensure their pupils are able to learn in a safe environment. So it seems feasible to suggest that everything that a Headteacher does is to ensure and enable the staff to deliver the best possible education. In a study of two effective Swiss schools, it was found that, ‘for both principals it was very important to work closely with the teachers. Not challenging their ideas but cooperating around important common visions and goals’ (Hoog, Johansson & Olofsson, 2009, p.743) This suggests an effective Headteacher gently steering the teachers towards their vision without being too directly challenging towards the teachers. In contrast, in a study of effective leaders, Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001b, p.28) found that ‘it was the human resource management which occupied most of their daily time and which created the most tensions and celebration’. Suggesting that
in this study there were more extremes experienced between the Headteachers and their staff.

Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001b, p.29) highlight in their study, the awkward position that the Headteacher can sometimes find themselves in, ‘positioned uneasily between those forces outside schools instigating and promoting changes and their staff’ who, have to implement them. It seems there is a fine balance between driving change and improvements and ensuring staff are not overloaded or disillusioned.

In my experience of the education system over recent years, Headteachers need to be able to instigate change within their schools; the introduction of statutory documents such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework in 2013 and the Foundation Phase Profile in 2015, has meant that Headteachers have needed to ensure that their schools keep up to date. Sergiovanni (2001, p.6) highlights the ability to instigate change and explains how this can be done effectively. He warns that ‘if changes do not affect the teaching and learning that takes place when no one is watching, they can hardly be considered changes’. He recommends the need for a ‘cultural ‘cement’ in the form of shared purposes... to tie things together’ (Sergiovanni, 2001, p.6). Do effective leaders use this transformational style of leadership to ensure staff follow their lead?

In research by Hoog, Johansson and Olofsson (2009, p.743) the two Headteachers of effective schools that they studied, both exercised their leadership effectively as ‘they developed professional authenticity in their role through democratic dialogues with their staff’. It would therefore seem crucial...
that the Headteacher has up to date, in depth knowledge of the workings of their school at grass roots level. The literature (Gilbert, 2009; Hoog, Johansson and Olofsson, 2009) suggests that effective Headteachers have excellent knowledge of their schools; they are present, visible and have hands on experience and knowledge of how it is running on a day-to-day basis. Hoog, Johansson and Olofsson (2009, p.742) found that ‘they showed an awareness of the relation between structure and culture of their school and they worked hard to bring those parts together to achieve success’. Effective Headteachers also need to have knowledge of other schools’ practice to ensure they can both inform their staff to enable democratic dialogues and to be able to advise staff of strategies that are working in other schools. The most effective Headteachers are able to choose and adapt initiatives to best suit the values and circumstances of their schools (Day, Harris & Hadfield, 2001b); ultimately enabling the initiative to have the most impact possible. After all, will staff continue to follow a Headteacher who is constantly trying out new ideas and initiatives without researching their suitability for the school? It would seem that knowledge of current practice is a key quality needed by an effective Headteacher.

It would seem that instigating change in the form of improving standards of teaching is crucial. Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001b, p.29) quote a primary Headteacher saying ‘If I don’t develop others, the school won’t develop. So that’s my priority. Other jobs can be delegated but not this one’. They identify a tension between the amount of time and energy devoted to system maintenance and that devoted to ensuring that staff were always more than competent and were challenged and supported actively in seeking higher standards.

(Day, Harris & Hadfield, 2001b, p.29)
It seems that a Headteacher’s attention is often pulled away from their priorities. Monitoring, supporting, challenging and praising staff must be key if they are the ones delivering the high quality teaching and learning opportunities. Sergiovanni (2001, p.48) tells us that ‘teacher development can help build the intellectual capital of a school and is well worth investing in’. I believe that effective Headteachers ensure their school is managed in a way that allows them time to focus on inspiring and developing the staff.

Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001b, p.26) observed ‘a people-centered model of leadership’ with an ‘emphasis upon improving teaching and learning via high expectations of others.’ Having high expectations of their staff will ensure that improvement and change continues to occur. I would agree that effective Headteachers always have high expectations of staff and pupils.

One common personality trait found by Hoog, Johansson and Olofsson (2009, p.743), was that both Headteachers of the effective schools they studied were ‘very self-confident and outspoken, convinced of their capacity to implement higher efficiency and school improvement through changes in structure and culture of the school’. Maybe all effective Headteachers have an inner confidence that enables them to listen to the opinions of their staff and remain in control of the direction and values of the school. Arrowsmith (2007, p.21) states that Headteachers need to ‘enliven colleagues’, while Sutcliffe (2013) tells us that ‘Successful school leaders are optimistic and resilient, remain calm in a crisis and are energetic and positive at all times’. Staff may be more likely to stay positive if their leader is, or at least appears to be.
It would seem that self-confidence and resilience go hand in hand. Gurr (2015, p.141) reported that the effective Headteachers in his study ‘view challenges as obstacles to overcome rather than problems that are insurmountable’. It would seem that these Headteachers had an inner belief in themselves and positive outlook.

To lead and not just manage a school effectively, does a Headteacher need that extra drive inside them? Gurr (2015, p.4) found that the successful principals that he studied ‘were restless folk, seeking new ideas, new ways to do things, new opportunities for their schools, and so they are always developing as professionals.’ While Sutcliff (2013) describes them as visionaries, who are able to shape the future for themselves.

So what style of leadership do teachers prefer to see in their Headteacher? Bowman (2005, p.258) wrote that servant leadership is, ‘establishing high standards of performance’ by giving those served the tools that they need to succeed. From a teacher’s perspective this style seems highly desirable. This is an opinion echoed by other teachers. In a 2009 study, Cerit found a strong positive relationship was between servant leadership behaviours of school principals and teachers’ job satisfaction, it was found that servant leadership was a significant predictor of teacher job satisfaction. Alonderiene and Majauskaite (2016) found similar results when researching the opinions of university lectures, stating in their abstract that ‘servant leadership style has been found to have the highest positive significant impact on job satisfaction of faculty while controlling autocrat leadership style has the lowest impact’. It seems logical to
predict that all effective Headteachers use a transformational style of leadership such as servant leadership. So is there a place for an autocratic leadership style as it has such a negative effect on teacher job satisfaction? Sergiovanni explains more about a transactional style of leadership,

Follow me because of my position in the school and the system of roles, expectations, and rules the I represent... This is the simplest and most direct way to get things done in schools: rely on bureaucratic authority......few readers would advocate a leadership based primarily on bureaucratic authority.

(Sergiovanni, 2001, p.28)

While Sergiovanni does not advocate a transactional style of leadership as the primary style to be used, he does make us think that an amount of bureaucratic authority may be needed.

With many questions left unanswered after reviewing the literature. I embarked upon finding some answers through my own research.
Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

The most appropriate methodology for my research was Case Study. Gomm (2000, p.3) tells us that ‘case study refers to research that investigates a few cases, often just one, in considerable depth.’ I felt that focusing on one Headteacher would enable triangulation of data and give the opportunity for one Headteacher to be researched from a number of different perspectives. Gomm (2000, p.3) goes on to explain that ‘the aim of case study research should be to capture cases in their uniqueness, rather than use them as a basis for wider generalization’. This brought me to consider the usefulness of my research if it cannot be used to make general assumptions. Thomas (2009, p.115), compounded this thought even more by pointing out that ‘you are choosing this very restricted sample in order to be able to gain greater detail, but at the expense of being able to make useful generalisations’. I briefly considered survey as a more purposeful method i.e. surveying a large number of effective Headteachers. However, I realized that the more Headteachers I interviewed, the less time I would have to observe them and interview or question the staff of their schools. This would have resulted in a ‘watered down’ version of my research with little triangulation. Gomm (2000, p.2) tells us that ‘the fewer cases investigated, the more information can be collected about each of them... surveys gather only a relatively small amount of data from each case’. In this study, I believe the smaller the sample size, the better the quality of the research data collected. Thomas (2009, p.9) describes case study as ‘shining a light on something’ and expands by telling us that ‘objects will look different when the
light shines from different angles, and will appear different from various viewpoints and to different people.’ I felt that triangulation was key to gaining valid data. The lack of opportunity to generalise was still a cause for concern to me, Thomas (2009, p.19), wrote that ‘we expect an inquiry to be carried out so that certain audiences will benefit - not just to swell the archives, but to help persons toward further understandings’. I wanted to ensure that my research would be worthwhile, so looked for arguments in favour of the use of case study as a valid methodology. Gomm wrote that

others argue that case studies need not make any claims about the generalizability of their findings, that what is crucial is the use others make of them: that they feed into processes of ‘naturalistic generalization’ or facilitate the transfer of findings from one setting to another on the basis of ‘fit’.

(Gomm, 2000, p.15)

When added to a body of research from many different researchers examining effective Headteachers, I believe my research could then be used to generalize qualities and experiences of effective Headteachers. With this in mind, I felt confident of the purpose and usefulness of my research.

I did consider carrying out a comparative case study, comparing an effective Headteacher and a less effective Headteacher. However, this would present ethical issues, therefore I decided to concentrate only on the most effective Headteachers.

To answer Research Question 1, I felt that comparing the experience of Headteacher X with other effective Headteachers would be useful. By using a
wider sample to answer this question, I was able to compare and look for similarities in experiences while keeping the research manageable within the timescale.

A crucial aspect of my research design was being able to identify effective Headteachers, thus ensuring that the research would be valid. In my opinion the most obvious method of identifying effective Headteachers would be to work for them. As this was unrealistic I needed to find reliable methods of identifying effective Headteachers. I decided to find Headteachers whose schools were either Yellow or Green in the government categorisation of schools, who had a good ESTYN inspection report of their leadership and who had been recommended by an external adviser to the school. This ensured triangulation in the choice of the Headteachers involved in the study because they had all earned external credibility.

I needed to ensure that my research would be valid; ‘the degree that a method investigates what is intended to investigate’ (Kvale, 2007, p.122). I researched the most suitable methods to gather data for each Research Question. Table 1 shows the research methods that were used to gain the data required to answer each research question.
Table 1: The research methods used to gather the data needed to answer each of the research questions.

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<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Research Method</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1. What career path and past experiences have led to Headteacher X being so effective and how does this compare to the past experiences of other effective Headteachers?</td>
<td>• Interview with Headteacher X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Interviews with Headteachers A, B, C and D</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. How does Headteacher X manage a school effectively?</td>
<td>• Diary of a Senior Leader in School Y</td>
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<td>• Interview with Headteacher X</td>
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<td>• Analysis of ESTYN Inspection Report for School X</td>
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I opted to use a number of different research methods to gather data. I studied each method carefully and considered the suitability to ensure my research questions would be answered as fully as possible.

**Interview**

I decided to interview Headteacher X as well as 4 more effective Headteachers (Headteacher A, B, C and D). Silverman (2013, p.38) questions the use of the interview by qualitative researchers commenting that their use of this ‘default method of data gathering is perplexing given what we know about how participants produce their accounts differently for different audiences.’ I understood this opinion but felt that this method was most fit for purpose. After all Headteacher X is the person who can give the most detailed account of past experiences that have influenced current practice. Silverman (2013, p.54) also warns that the use of ‘direct questions will influence what people say and are not usually a useful way to investigate a phenomenon.’ This made me even more confident that using observations and gathering the perspectives of others would enable me to investigate the ‘phenomenon’ of an excellent Headteacher more accurately. With the effects of direct questioning in mind, I began to consider the type of interview suited to the purpose of my research. An interview is;

> a conversation that has a structure and a purpose …It is a professional interaction, which goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday conversation, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge.

(Kvale, 2007, p.7)

I wanted to allow for the element of conversation and discussion within the interviews, so I decided to conduct a semi structured interview.
The semi structured interview provides the best of both worlds as far as interviewing is concerned, combining the structure of a list of issues to be covered together with the freedom to follow up points as necessary.

(Thomas, 2009, p.164)

I would be able to clarify points through further questioning and ensuring that the most relevant and detailed information could be gathered.

I began to ponder the content of the interviews and the most effective way to conduct them. Kvale, S. wrote some useful advice regarding the opening of an interview,

The first minutes of an interview are decisive. The interviewees will want to have a grasp of the interviewer before they allow themselves to talk freely and expose their experiences and feelings to a stranger. A good contact is established by attentive listening, with the interviewer showing interest, understanding and respect for what the subject says, and with an interviewer at ease and clear about what he or she wants to know.

(Kvale, 2007, p.55)

To ensure reliability; ‘the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings’ (Kvale, 2007, p.122), I wanted to make sure that the interviewees felt at ease and wanted to avoid them feeling as though they were being judged. I wanted those interviewed to feel that they were ‘imparting their knowledge onto another, for the benefit of others’ (Kvale, 2007, p.55) rather than feeling they were being judged against a set criteria or tick list.

When requesting consent from Headteachers to participate in the study, it was obvious from reading the BERA guidelines that participants needed to give
informed consent. It is worth considering that this information sharing may affect the results. An alternative approach would have been a study whereby the specific purposes of a study are initially withheld in order to obtain the interviewees’ spontaneous views on a topic and to avoid leading them to specific answers. In such cases full information should be given in debriefing after the interview.

(Kvale, 2007, p.27)

Although this may have added a different perspective, it would have been unlikely that any Headteachers would agree to themselves and their school being part of a study of which they did not know the purpose. With the research methodology and methods prepared I embarked on data collection.

**Diary of a Senior Leader in School Y**

During the process of this case study, Headteacher X was brought into School Y as a caretaker Headteacher by the Consortium Joint Education Service, to oversee the school, which was in need of external support to prepare for an ESTYN inspection. During the two week period that Headteacher X supported the school, a member of the Senior Leadership Team (Senior Leader Y) kept a diary of all contact with Headteacher X.

A diary is an invaluable data-gathering tool for the researcher undertaking a small project. It may involve you, or a participant in your research, making a record of thoughts, feelings, actions, responses, conversations.

(Thomas, 2009, p. 166)

Advice was taken from Thomas (2009, p.187) and diary entries were written immediately after each session with ‘thick description’ to enable high quality analysis to take place once all data had been collected.
Observation of a Senior Leadership Meeting in School X

Kvale (2007, p.45) advised researchers that the ‘interactions ... observations and informal conversations of field studies will usually give more valid knowledge than merely asking subjects about their behaviour’. I wanted to observe Headteacher X ‘in action’, managing and leading his school. Silverman (2013, p.38) noted that ‘observation...when done properly, can take months or years’. This prompted me to think of how best to use the method of observation. I agree that the best timescale would be observation of Headteacher X over a long period, day in day out. However, this was not possible due to the timescale of this research case study and the practicalities needed to observe someone full time over a long period of time, while working myself. I decided to conduct a planned observation of Headteacher X conducting a weekly Senior Leadership meeting (SLT meeting) within the school. This would provide the opportunity to see how Headteacher X related to his senior leaders and the strategies Headteacher X used to manage and lead the school. I was careful to stay as inconspicuous as possible however, it should be noted that once a participant knows they are being observed, there is a possibility that they will behave differently.

Our data cannot be entirely ‘natural’ but will be mediated by presence of our recording equipment and by the process of obtaining informed consent as required by contemporary ethical standards.

(Silverman, 2013, p.51)

However, the observation would still provide evidence of certain qualities and strategies used to manage and lead, so I felt this was still a useful method to use. Triangulation in the form of other methods of data collection would support or contradict observations made during the SLT meeting observation.
Analysis of ESTYN Inspection Report for School X

I decided that a good starting point would be to read and analyse the most recent ESTYN inspection report (2014) for School X as it was completed within the last two years. I particularly focused on Key Question 3: ‘How Good are Leadership and Management?’ as this provided details, which were specific to the Headteacher. I analysed the report, highlighting key descriptions of the Headteacher's leadership.

Questionnaire or Group Interview?

When deciding how to best collect data to answer Key Question 3, I needed to consider the value of questionnaires compared to group interviews. I wanted to gain the teachers perspectives on how they felt they were being led by Headteacher X. Initially I considered group interviews. I felt that the specific advantage of using group interviews was that staff would ‘bounce off each other’ and remind each other of times when they would have observed certain qualities in Headteacher X. Thomas (2009, p.169) wrote that ‘people behave differently in groups; particular individuals may become more or less talkative’. After consideration and reading, I felt that staff were more likely to give honest answers if questionnaires were used as they provide the increased freedom that comes with confidentiality and anonymity. I briefly considered conducting individual interviews with staff. However, this would have been time consuming and also very disruptive to School X. Questionnaires were definitely the most suitable option. They would be easy to distribute and less disruptive to the school day. Kvale (2007, p.45) also reminded me that ‘when there is little time available for a project, questionnaires will usually be faster to administer,'
analyze and report than qualitative interviews.’ Of greater priority was which method would allow the most reliable data to be gathered from the teachers at School X. Questionnaires were used. To ensure that both the questionnaires would gain the data required I piloted them with staff in my own school. This proved incredibly useful and enabled me to smooth out any ambiguous questions before data collection began.

It was decided that all 16 teachers at School X would be given questionnaires, this would allow for some who would not return and also ensure that as many opinions as possible would be collected to truly represent the views of the teachers. Questionnaires were distributed by myself during lesson time, allowing teachers to complete them in the privacy of their classrooms during break and were returned to me at lunchtime. Staff were made aware of the research purpose and that their anonymity would be protected throughout the study. In total, 13 members of staff completed and returned their questionnaires to me. They consisted of 1 office clerk, 3 members of the Senior Leadership team (SLT), 5 Teachers and 4 Teaching Assistants (TAs).
Chapter 4
Results and Analysis

Research Question 1

What career path and past experiences have led to Headteacher X being so effective and how does this compare to the past experiences of other effective Headteachers?

Figure 1 shows the length of time Headteacher X spent firstly as a teacher, then as a member of a Senior Leadership Team SLT and as a Deputy Headteacher before becoming a Headteacher.

Figure 1: The number of years Headteacher X spent in different roles.

Headteacher X spent only 2 years as a classroom teacher before joining the Senior Leadership Team. Headteacher X spent a further 3 years on SLT before applying for Deputy headships. Headteacher X spent one year as Deputy
Headteacher of a Junior School then was seconded to an Infants School for a second year of Deputy headship, where Headteacher X gained increased knowledge of Infant teaching. Overall, Headteacher X had spent a 5 year period on various Senior Leadership Teams before becoming a Headteacher. Headteacher X gained a headship of a small primary school for 3 ½ years before moving to the present (much larger) school.

I compared this career progression with those of Headteacher A, B, C and D. Figure 2 shows the amount of time (in years) each Headteacher (including Headteacher X) spent in different roles on their path towards becoming a Headteacher.

![Figure 2: The number of years each Headteacher spent in different roles during their careers.](image)

It is interesting to note that all of the Headteachers went into Senior Leadership early in their careers similar to Headteacher X. This indicates that all were ambitious during their early careers. All of the other Headteachers also had at
least 5 years experience of being a member of the SLT as a senior leader or Deputy Headteacher before gaining a headship. It seems that all Headteachers spent a short time as Deputy Headteachers, and progressed onto headships within 3 years of being a Deputy Headteacher.

Headteacher X had leadership qualifications in the form of the NPQH. This was similar to the other 4 Headteachers. Headteacher X had completed part of a MA Masters degree in leadership. This was also the case for Headteachers A and C, while Headteacher B had completed and gained a MA Masters degree and commented that it definitely helped towards gaining a Deputy headship.

When asked if Headteacher X had always wanted to be a Headteacher, the answer was “No.” Headteacher X had originally had other ambitions and worked as a property developer before entering the profession. Headteacher X believed that this knowledge of the “real world of work” had enabled him to deal more effectively with people in his current role. In comparison Headteachers A, B, C and D also said that they did not always want to be a Headteacher. One Headteacher commented that “You don’t know from the start, but you are hungry for it. You keep doing extra things and taking on more responsibilities.” 3 out of 4 of the other Headteachers also reported working in other careers before becoming teachers. Not all felt that this had improved their leadership skills.

All of the Headteachers including Headteacher X responded that they were “very glad” they had become a Headteacher and all gave similar reasons why. Headteacher X said,
“I may not be the brightest bulb in the chandelier, but what I am good at is making all the other bulbs light up. I am making a brighter light than I can make on my own”.

The other Headteachers gave similar reasons, indicating a need to help a wide number of people.

“I became a Headteacher to make a difference to children and their families like a teacher, but I can make more difference, have more influence, I can change more as a Headteacher. Your core purpose as a teacher doesn’t change it just grows.”

Headteacher C

“Thinking that I could make a difference and not just to the pupils but to the community, the families, the staff. My school is a central part of the community.”

Headteacher D

“I feel a huge responsibility for the people I serve, I want to help them and have an impact on society.”

Headteacher B

“To make a difference to peoples lives. I want to look back and think that I made a difference.”

Headteacher A

All of the Headteachers had very noble reasons for becoming a Headteacher; they had a moral purpose as Sergiovanni (2001) advocated. This data also supports the opinions of Brookes (2009) who recommended only progressing to Deputy or Headteacher if your primary goal is to help others.

Headteacher X reported having worked for 3 effective Headteachers previously and said that this did have a bearing on the leadership style subsequently used
by Headteacher X. Headteacher X had learnt from the different strengths of each Headteacher. All of the other Headteachers reported also having worked for at least one effective Headteacher previously. Two of the Headteachers reported being given opportunities to progress by effective Headteachers and 2 reported learning from the strengths and weaknesses of previous Headteachers. Headteachers A and B recalled working previously for an ineffective Headteacher commenting that lessons were learnt about how not to do things.

When asked what advice Headteacher X would give to themselves just starting their role as Headteacher for the first time, Headteacher X said,

“To thine own self be true. Your pulled from pillar to post in this role and you can be distracted. Make sure you stick to your own values and principles.”

All of the other Headteachers also spoke about ‘being true to yourself’. One head warned that it would be easy to “lose your focus” or forget your principles and core values. Another said to “stick to your guns, be confident in yourself and what you're doing.” It would seem that Headteachers need an inner confidence and resolve, results which support the research of Hoog, Johansson and Olofsson (2009). This self-confidence enables them to follow the vision they have for their schools when there are external pressures such as those described by Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001b) being placed on them.
Research Question 2

How does Headteacher X manage a school effectively?

Headteacher X has a clear vision for School X, which was shared with all staff. In the most recent inspection report (2014), ESTYN commented that...

...The dynamic leadership by the Headteacher is highly successful in establishing a common vision of continuous improvement among staff...He shares this vision with staff, governors and parents very effectively.

(ESTYN, 2014, p.9)

During the interview Headteacher X explained that;

“I am a leader. I provide strategic direction. I ensure a positive ethos and culture is developed amongst the staff, pupils and community. I empower staff to teach well and children to learn. My aim is to provide a culture of opportunity where children learn to the best of their ability in a safe and happy environment.”

Headteacher X demonstrated a very clear vision for School X.

During the interview with Headteacher X it transpired that School X was a failing school when Headteacher X took over the headship. Five years later it is now judged as an excellent school by ESTYN. Headteacher X was able to put a strategic plan together to improve the school and followed it. Headteacher X had used strategic thinking to improve the school.

Headteacher X ensured effective lines of communication were in place. In School Y, Headteacher X implemented a weekly diary meeting every Monday morning, this ensured that all staff were aware, prepared and organized for the week ahead. Headteacher X was able to identify areas of School Y that needed most development and acted strategically, writing a plan, calling for the assistance of specialists in Foundation Phase and Health and Safety to advise staff and
instigate improvements. While in School Y for a short period, Headteacher X was able to identify key reasons why the school was failing, reporting to the SLT that leadership was not distributed effectively and that the Senior Leadership Team were not operating effectively and as a team. Headteacher X was putting in place systems to ensure the school would run effectively, these included Performance Management, an effective Senior Leadership Team and a robust Monitoring Evaluating and Reviewing Cycle.

On a fact finding visit to School X, Senior Leader Y learnt that Headteacher X used the school budget strategically to enable teachers to focus on their teaching. Teaching Assistant in School X worked extra paid hours simply to complete and maintain displays, this ensured a high quality learning environment within School X while allowing teachers to concentrate on providing quality lessons. In contrast, Senior Leader Y reported the constant feeling of not having enough time to prepare quality displays and quality lessons in School Y.

During the interview with Headteacher X and SLT meeting at School X, Headteacher X demonstrated the effective use of monitoring systems within the school. Headteacher X was able to use files of information at a moments notice to track learners or evaluate teachers’ targets. This data is supported by the school inspection report (2014) where ESTYN reported that;

The highly effective procedures for self-evaluation include monitoring pupils’ books, the use of learning walks, lesson observations and rigorous analysis of data...Senior leaders carefully analyse the outcomes from self-evaluation on a termly basis to assess the impact of initiatives and the progress each pupil is making.

(ESTYN, 2014, p.11)
Headteacher X had highly effective, organised systems in place.

While overseeing School Y, Headteacher X ensured that roles and responsibilities were clearly defined; sourcing and agreeing job descriptions and implementing an improved Performance Management system. Headteacher X arranged weekly meetings with different staff members including the caretaker, secretary, SLT, teaching staff and midday supervisors to ensure that roles and responsibilities were being carried out effectively. Senior Leader Y reported feeling calmer as a result and being under less pressure as staff were fulfilling their roles properly.

ESTYN (2014, p.12) stated that in School X, ‘the Headteacher deploys all staff very effectively to make best use of their talents.’ They also state that ‘all staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and undertake these conscientiously and purposefully.’ (ESTYN, 2014, p.10). The observation of an SLT meeting in School X demonstrated that the roles and responsibilities in School X had been clearly defined and adhered to. There was evidence of distributed leadership being used to manage the large school. The SLT members were able to feed their knowledge and feedback into the meeting, they were trusted and decisions were made as a result of the information they gave. The SLT at School X were a strong, cohesive team who communicated well with each other resulting in a very smoothly run, organised school.

An analysis of the Diary of Senior Leader Y was carried out to determine which quality was witnessed most frequently in Headteacher X. Figure 3 shows the frequency of qualities demonstrated by Headteacher X.
Figure 3: The frequency of qualities demonstrated by Headteacher X from the perspective of an SLT member over a 2 week period.

Senior Leader Y most frequently witnessed Headteacher X developing others.

This would seem logical as Headteacher X had been brought in by the Consortium Joint Education Service to oversee the school in need of improvement. It is evident that Headteacher X spent a lot of time training the SLT to ensure they had the knowledge and skills needed to complete their roles more effectively. Headteacher X was distributing leadership but ensuring that the leaders were trained and able to fulfill their roles.

In School X Headteacher X has created a culture of developing staff. ‘All staff are suitably qualified and many readily take on additional qualifications to improve
their knowledge, understanding and skills’ (ESTYN, 2014, p.12). During Performance Management Training at School Y, Senior Leader Y reported Headteacher X explaining “I am fulfilling my role effectively, if staff members leave to gain promotions in other schools.” Headteacher X emphasised the importance of developing staff and how this helped to raise standards and keep staff motivated.

Senior Leader Y reported feeling highly motivated and inspired to do an excellent job after meetings and discussions with Headteacher X. Senior Leader Y reported feeling more confident in the leadership role with direction, advice and training given by Headteacher X. Staff in School X also reported Headteacher X as having increased their self esteem.

During the 2 week period that Headteacher X was overseeing School Y numerous meetings and training had taken place with SLT to enable the school to make improvements quickly. Senior leader Y reported a sense of purpose and a satisfying sense of speed to which actions were taken and targets achieved. Headteacher X worked quickly to meet the needs of staff, for example securing extra funding for the purchase of much needed resources. Senior Leader Y reports Headteacher X having short, focused conversations and meetings with little time wasted. Headteacher X was decisive. which enabled the SLT to act efficiently as a result.
Research Question 3

How does Headteacher X lead staff effectively?

On first meeting Headteacher X, it was clear that Headteacher X who was very welcoming and personable. Headteacher X seemed relaxed, confident and cheerful. Headteacher X had a good sense of humour and was able to put others at ease. Headteacher X spoke to staff with respect and interest and spoke kindly to the children who walked passed in the corridor.

When overseeing School Y, Headteacher X used the staffroom, was friendly to staff and interested in them. Senior Leader Y reported this being a refreshing change and that staff appreciated this relaxed interaction. Headteacher X was visible and involved with the children from Day Two of being in School Y. Headteacher X took assemblies, which the children visibly enjoyed, leaving the hall in very positive spirits. In School X, Headteacher X conducted daily tours of the school, calling into classrooms to greet pupils and staff. Figure 4 shows the amount of times that the staff in School X see Headteacher X over a week.
6 out of 13 reporting that they see the Headteacher a few times a week, while 5 out of 13 see the Headteacher every day. Headteacher X was visible and involved, as described by Gilbert (2009). Despite not seeing the Headteacher daily, 92% still consider the Headteacher to be very effective. This would suggest that a Headteacher does not need to be seen daily to have a positive influence on their school and staff.

Headteacher X demonstrated an ability to gain knowledge and act on it. On entering school Y, a fact finding tour of the school was completed and an action plan consequently written. During the observation of the SLT meeting at School X, Headteacher X asked more questions than anyone else. Headteacher X displayed a desire to gain knowledge about all aspects of school life. During the meeting Headteacher X demonstrated an in depth knowledge of his school and the pupils and staff within it. ESTYN (2014, p.10) reported that ‘all staff share
good practice, work well as a team and participate fully in decision-making in order to take the school forward.’ Headteacher X actively sort staff opinions to inform decision making.

Headteacher X demonstrated an impressive knowledge of National requirements and of innovative initiatives being trialed by other schools. Senior Leader Y reported a number of separate occasions when Headteacher X was able to display up to date and in depth knowledge of current excellent practice and requirements. This sharing of knowledge also had the effect of gaining trust from the SLT who felt confident in their leader. As a result of Headteacher X demonstrating a wealth of knowledge, Senior Leader Y reported feeling a calmness and a trust to be “led” by Headteacher X.

Headteacher X held high expectations of staff. Senior Leader Y recalled a staff meeting during which Headteacher X outlined the expectations for learning environments. Staff appreciated being given success criteria and the impact, within a two week period, was a richer, more stimulating and more informative learning environment. Staff felt proud of their classrooms and visitors commented on the high quality learning environment.

The staff in School X were given a list of qualities and asked to describe how often they observed these qualities in Headteacher X. The graph shows their responses.
All staff reported that Headteacher X constantly displayed high expectations of pupil behaviour and high expectations of staff, data which is in line with the findings of Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001b). When interviewed, Headteacher X was asked “How do you ensure staff carry out your vision for the school?” Headteacher X replied “By creating an ethos and culture of high expectations with clear priorities. In staff meetings there is clear direction and staff know what is expected.” The graph demonstrates how clearly these high expectations were communicated to the staff as almost all identified high expectations as a quality they witnessed constantly in Headteacher X.
When asked what effect the Headteacher has had on each member of staff, responses were very positive, lengthy and in some cases very grateful. Staff wrote about a variety of situations describing how the Headteacher had influenced them.

![Figure 6: How Headteacher X has influenced Staff.](image)

Figure 6 shows that 53% of responses highlighted times when the Headteacher had developed their skills. One teacher commented that the Headteacher had ‘embedded the passion to strive for excellence in my teaching and personal life’, and went on to comment that the Headteacher was ‘the most caring and knowledgeable head I have ever worked for’. Headteacher X developed the staff at School X, an important quality as previously identified by others (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2001b; Sergiovanni, 2001).
Headteacher X had put in place robust systems to enable the constant development of the staff in School X; systems that allow for the monitoring teaching and learning within School X.

The school has highly effective systems for performance...This process challenges staff to achieve highly through the setting of personal targets that relate directly to the school’s main priorities.

(ESTYN, 2014, p.11)

Staff are challenged and supported to achieve high quality teaching and enable high quality learning to take place across the school.

Figure 6 also shows that 27% of staff described times when the Headteacher had influenced them which involved being given support and encouragement. One teacher reported that the Headteacher had ‘given me new motivation... I am a better teacher because of his support.’ 20% reported that the Headteacher had influenced their self-esteem positively. One staff member commented that the Headteacher had enabled them to ‘be more confident...the Headteacher delegates and trusts my judgment.’

During the interview, Headteacher X reported a very honest and open relationship with the Deputy Headteacher at School X, commenting that this enabled productivity and improvement. Headteacher X commented that in School X ‘I have a culture of honesty, its OK to make mistakes.” This was corroborated by ESTYN who stated that in School X;
There is a high level of openness, trust and respect among senior leaders, teachers, support staff and governors. This ensures a strong culture of support, challenge and shared professional development.

(ESTYN, 2014, p.10)

Headteacher X dealt with issues directly. Senior leader Y reported Headteacher X giving honest feedback to staff, which resulted in standards of learning environments being raised. After a book scrutiny in School Y Headteacher X met with individual staff members and told them honestly about the standard of their pupils’ books and how they could be improved. Headteacher X was able to do this in a positive manner which staff appreciated. Headteacher X explained that the only way to deal with a failing teacher is to be honest and direct. If you know your weaknesses you have a good chance of improving them.

Senior Leader Y reported feeling able to trust Headteacher X. Confidentiality was strictly adhered to and SLT were warned of expectations regarding confidentiality among staff and SLT. Senior Leader Y recalled a conversation during an SLT meeting with Headteacher X linked to Performance Management. Headteacher X said “Leadership is all about relationships, staff will need to open up to you. They need to be able to trust you.”

Staff in School X also trusted Headteacher X as a leader. All of the staff believed that they have an effective Headteacher. With 12 out of 13 describing the Headteacher as ‘Very effective’.
Senior Leader Y recalled the staff meeting taken by Headteacher X while overseeing School Y. Headteacher X enlivened staff. Senior leader Y reported feeling relaxed and valued and enjoyed being given the time to converse with colleagues in a meeting. Senior Leader Y reported this as being a marked difference to the usual staff meetings at the school. Headteacher X gave a motivational presentation. Senior Leader Y reported staff being enthralled by the visual presentation with one member of staff becoming emotional as the presentation had a very personal effect. Senior Leader Y recalls staff leaving the meeting remarking on how inspiring and motivating Headteacher X was and how refreshing this was. This directly impacted on Senior Leader Y and the quality of her management. Headteacher X had been inspiring.

When interviewed, Headteacher X spoke about effective leadership being based around effective relationships. After all, a Headteacher can only provide an excellent education to their pupils if they can inspire and enable their teachers to give it. An effective Headteacher once commented that “The Art of Headship is getting someone to do something because they want to.” Headteacher X said that “I look for positives in others. I sell the dream and make staff believe they can do it and they will.”

Headteacher X displayed empathy for the staff of School X and wanted to protect them from overload. During the SLT meeting at School X, Headteacher X was very mindful of how staff may be feeling and wanted to allay any concerns staff may have. When interviewed, Headteacher X spoke about relationships with pupils and staff, saying “They’ll remember how you made them feel.” This was
advice for teachers and leaders. The chart below shows how staff responded when asked ‘How happy are you in your job?’. 

![Pie chart showing job satisfaction levels]

**Figure 7: How happy staff are working in School X.**

When questioned, 12 out of 13 staff said that they were either happy or very happy in their job. Such high levels of job satisfaction could be attributed to the style of leadership used by Headteacher X.
Chapter 5

Evaluation of Methodology, Conclusion and Recommendations

The redrafting process described by Thomas (2009) was common place during the planning stage of my research, each time I improved my research questions to enable my research to be more focused. The main reason for this need to redraft is that finding out what makes an effective Headteacher is not straightforward. It was not simply about identifying the qualities of Headteacher X, as I initially thought, but about the specifics of how Headteacher X managed and led a school. By improving my research questions over time I was able to choose the most appropriate methodology. Having initially wanting to carry out more of a survey approach; speaking to many Headteachers in the search for what makes an effective Headteacher, I have come to realise that although this would have been extremely interesting, it would not have been the most appropriate methodology to answer my questions because it would not have provided a multi perspective view of each Headteacher. Within the time scale and word limitation, it would not have been possible to observe numerous Headteachers and questionnaire the staff of all of their schools. By using case study, I have been able to gain the knowledge of what makes an effective Headteacher by drawing on a number of different perspectives and view points. A large amount of the quantitative data gathered to answer the questions were not from the Headteacher at all but from observations and view points of others. My conclusions are set out in relation to the 3 research questions.
What career path and past experiences have led to Headteacher X being so effective and how does this compare to the past experiences of other effective Headteachers?

The research shows that the effective Headteachers interviewed all spent at least 5 years on Senior Leadership Teams before gaining headships, learning the skills required for senior leadership. Not all of the effective Headteachers had qualifications additional to the NPQH, however one recommended gaining a Masters qualification to assist with the promotion to Deputy Headteacher. The research would suggest that effective Headteachers do not immediately have ambitions of headship but seem to naturally gravitate towards the position through an inner drive. All of the Headteachers studied had previously worked for at least 1 effective Headteacher and felt that this had benefitted their practice. All of the Headteachers had a moral purpose, they felt a need to help others and have a positive influence on the wider community. This would support Sergiovanni’s recommendation of a moral purpose (Sergiovanni, 2001). All of the effective Headteachers had an inner confidence which concurs with the research of Hoog, Johansson and Olofsson (2009). The Headteachers kept focused on their core values and principles and did not deviate from them. They remained ‘true to themselves’.

How does Headteacher X manage a school effectively?

Headteacher X had a clear vision for the school which was shared with staff, creating a positive ethos and culture of learning and improvement. Headteacher X was able to think strategically, having goals and following plans to achieve them and managing staff and budget to ensure the constant focus on learning.
Headteacher X had put in place extremely effective systems to ensure the school kept self evaluating and making improvements where needed. Headteacher X was responsive, hard working and used time efficiently when managing and leading the school. Headteacher X ensured that all staff had clear roles and responsibilities and held staff accountable. This ensured the smooth running of the school and added to the job satisfaction of staff. Distributed leadership comparable to that described by Arrowsmith (2007) was used extremely well with senior leaders being trained and inspired by Headteacher X. This did enable Headteacher X to have a manageable workload and allowed time for the development of senior leaders and to inspire staff, concurring with Arrowsmith (2007). However, the highly effective distributed leadership also enabled Headteacher X to have excellent knowledge of the whole school and it ensured that teachers were able to focus their time on delivering quality lessons.

**How does Headteacher X lead staff effectively?**

Headteacher X has built a relationship of trust and respect with staff. Headteacher X is visible and accessible to staff and pupils, a quality that Gilbert (2009) highlighted as being possessed by ‘Great Headteachers’. Consequently, Headteacher X has excellent knowledge of current practice at School X. Headteacher X has developed a ‘professional authenticity’ identified by Hoog, Johansson and Olofsson (2009, p.743) as being prevalent in effective Headteachers, thus gaining the trust of the staff and their will to follow the Headteacher's lead. Headteacher X also demonstrated excellent knowledge of national requirements and innovative developments within the education sector, as Day, Harris & Hadfield (2001b) also found, Headteacher X is able to use this
extensive knowledge wisely to choose the most suitable initiatives to introduce to the staff. Headteacher X listens to staff feedback and opinions but also sets out clear expectations that must be adhered to, it would seem that Headteacher X uses both a transformational style of leadership and a transactional style, supporting the opinion of Sergiovanni (2001, p.28). It is worth noting that the majority of staff in School X are very happy in their jobs and the majority believe Headteacher X to be very effective. It would seem that using a blend of transformational and transactional leadership is very effective. Headteacher X has an empathy with staff and is careful to protect them from overload and through strategic management, ensures that their focus is kept on teaching and learning. Headteacher X has high expectations of pupils and staff, an attribute also identified by Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001b, p.26), Headteacher X shares clearly these expectations and values hard work. Headteacher X challenges and develops all staff members through a culture of honesty and professionalism, while providing support, encouragement, motivation and inspiration.

**Recommendations**

It would seem that to become an effective Headteacher one needs to have core values and principles that are adhered to no matter what. One needs to take time to learn the art of leadership and have learnt from the good examples of others. It is evident that strategic organisation of staff into clear roles and responsibilities is crucial. In addition, excellent knowledge of all aspects of education is needed to be able to lead with conviction and certainty. The ability of a Headteacher to form effective relationships is crucial and leading that team requires an inner strength and courage to be able to selflessly give support,
encouragement, remain positive, responsive and inspirational. The role of Headteacher is in no way a simple one, it demands many different skills and competencies, qualities and knowledge.

Whilst carrying out this research I came across a wide variety of other possible research questions. I was intrigued by how lonely the role of Headteacher seemed and who the Headteachers lean on for professional support and council. A number of the Headteachers relied heavily on their secretaries which could be an interesting topic to investigate further.

In conclusion, I feel that this research has answered the question “What Makes An Effective Headteacher?” It would be interesting to repeat this research; completing individual case studies on a number of effective Headteachers across the UK to determine the essential attributes displayed by all. However, on completion of this research I now have a wealth of knowledge and information about one highly effective Headteacher, knowledge which will prove invaluable within my own career and hopefully those of others.
References


Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Headteacher Interview (Sample)

Headteacher Interview Headteacher X

How long have you been a Headteacher?

Do you have any leadership qualifications?

What path did you take to become a Headteacher?

What past experience has influenced you as an effective leader?

Did you always want to be a Headteacher?

When did you decide you wanted to be a Headteacher?

Why did you become a Headteacher?

How glad are you that you became a Headteacher? 1 Very….. 5 Not Very

What's your main aim as Headteacher of your school?

What does your role entail?

What's an ideal day like for you? How does this differ from a typical day?

What takes most of your time?

What is the most challenging part of your job?

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

What is the impact of your job on your family?

How effective do you feel you are as a Headteacher? 1 Very….. 5 Not Very

What qualities make an effective Headteacher?

What advice would you give to your younger self just starting the role for the first time?

What do you think of the new curriculum?

Do you know of any good/ bad initiatives you currently have in your school?

What would you like to say to the government?
How do you deal with a failing teacher?
Can you be friends with staff?
How do you ensure staff follow you? Listen to you?
How do you deal with stress?
How important is the Headteacher’s relationship with the governors?
Who gives a Headteacher support/ council/ mentoring?
Did you work for an effective Headteacher previously?
What are your strengths and weaknesses?
APPENDIX 2: Staff Questionnaire (Sample)

Staff Questionnaire

1. Please circle your current position.

Teaching Assistant  Teacher  Senior Leadership Team  Other (Please state)

2. How long have you worked at this school?

1-2 years  3-5 years  6-10 years  more than 10 yrs.

3. How happy are you in your job?

Not Very  OK  Happy  Very Happy

4. Do you have an effective Headteacher?

Yes  No

5. How effective is your Headteacher?

Not very  Ok  Quite effective  Very effective

6. How often do you see your Headteacher?

More than once a day  daily  few times a week  once per week

7. Where do you usually see Headteacher the most?

Corridor  Yard  Assembly Hall  Classroom  Staffroom

8. How would you describe your Headteacher?

9. How has you Headteacher influenced your practice as a teacher/leader during the past 5 years?

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P.T.O

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10. Please tick the qualities you have observed in Headteacher X, indicating how often you have observed them.

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<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Most of the Time</th>
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<td>Clear communicator</td>
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<td>High expectations of pupil behaviour</td>
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<td>Has high expectations of staff</td>
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<td>Challenges you to improve</td>
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<td>Listens to views of staff</td>
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<td>Develops your leadership skills</td>
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Thank you for your participation in this study. Your time and honesty are greatly appreciated.