

**The Challenges of Leading the Attainment
Agenda: Framing the Role and Practices of the
New Secondary Headteacher**

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Abstract

Scottish institutions within the educational networks, including Government, local authorities, and schools, are entangled in performative activities dedicated to improvements in student attainment. Secondary school performance in Scotland is measured nationally predominantly by the number and level of national qualifications achieved. The thesis makes the case that this *attainment agenda* places enormous pressures on Headteachers to ensure student outcomes are maximised and that the culture of performativity is a major factor in shaping the roles and practices of Headteachers. The study is based on four new secondary school Headteachers in a single Scottish local authority. It is through an examination of their work practices that the formation of subjectivities within a range of power relations and discursive regimes are explored.

Performativity and accountability influence the role and actions of the Headteacher in many ways which are unanticipated. There is an ongoing power struggle engendered by the pressures and controls imposed on new Headteachers which modify and discipline their behaviours. In this thesis, a case study methodology is employed and the concepts of Michel Foucault are applied to provide an alternative means of understanding the practices of Headteachers. A Foucauldian approach also provides a different perspective on the problematic conceptualisation of school leadership. The aim of this study is to make a research-based contribution to our understanding of the complexities and competing priorities negotiated by new Headteachers. The research evidences the dominance of the attainment agenda on the lived lives of the new Headteachers. This study should enable the development of additional ways to assist with Headteacher preparation and the provision of improved support in the early years of Headship.

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List of Abbreviations

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CfE	Curriculum for Excellence
DHT	Depute Head Teacher
DSM	Devolved School Management
ES	Education Scotland
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
FRH	Flexible routes to Headship
GTCS	General Teaching Council of Scotland
HMIe	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education
HGIOS	How Good Is Our School?
LTS	Learning and Teaching Scotland
NCSL	National College of School Leadership
NPF	National Performance Framework
NPM	New Public Management
NQ	National Qualifications
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PIRLS	Progress on International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PTC	Principal Teacher Curriculum
QIs	Quality Indicators
SCEL	Scottish College for Educational Leadership
SEED	Scottish Executive Education Department
SfH	Standard for Headship
SMT	Senior Management Team
SNP	Scottish National Party
SOEID	Scottish Office Education and Industry Department
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SQH	Scottish Qualification for Headship
STACS	Standard Tables and Charts
TIMSS	Trends in International Maths and Science Study
VSE	Validated Self-Evaluation

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Dedication

In memory of my father Douglas Cowie who inspired me with his intelligence and love of learning. His help and guidance would have been greatly appreciated and are very much missed.

Chapter 1

Research Context and Purpose

Any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledge and power which they carry. (Foucault, 1981a, p.64)

Introducing the attainment agenda

This chapter provides an introduction to the research rationale and background. In the context of a professional doctorate, the research is related to my own field in education and an important area of responsibility, i.e. raising attainment in Scottish secondary schools. In this study, my specific aim is to investigate the influence of the attainment agenda on the role and practices of the Headteacher. The investigation should be of practical value in gaining an understanding of how to improve the preparation, development and support of Headteachers, both pre-appointment and in the early years of Headship. This introductory chapter provides an initial discussion of the pressures under which Headteachers operate and summarises the general policy environment influencing school leadership priorities.

Headteachers face a myriad of responsibilities and pressures including: improving attainment; wider achievement; skills for learning, life and work; professional learning; parental engagement; student transitions; vocational and employability strategies; community and other stakeholder partnerships; building staff capacity; developing learning communities and much more. Raising attainment plays a major part in the role of Headteachers, and given the internal and external accountabilities placed upon them, they “are faced with tremendous pressure to demonstrate that every child for whom they are responsible is achieving success” (Shields, 2004, p. 109).

In Scotland, there is a continued emphasis on raising student attainment and the measurement of the performance of secondary schools in terms of *Scottish Qualification Authority* (SQA) examination success. Until September 2014, *Standard Tables and Charts* (STACS) provided by the Scottish Government, were “a major part of the mechanism for holding Headteachers and schools to account in the secondary sector, and the key source of data for school and local authority self-evaluation of attainment in SQA examinations” (Cowie et al., 2007, p.30). In September 2014, as a result of the earlier introduction of *Curriculum for Excellence*, STACS were replaced by a more sophisticated *National Benchmarking Tool* named *Insight* (Scottish Government, 2014a). This focus on performance in national examinations is referred to in this study as *the attainment agenda*. There is a constant reinforcement of the attainment agenda by the Scottish Government. *The Raising Attainment for All Programme* was launched in June 2014 (Scottish Government, 2014b). Successive Scottish Education Secretaries have consistently emphasised raising attainment and closing the socio-economic-related attainment gap as the being of the highest priority (Scottish Government, 2013c, 2015a). The recently introduced *Education (Scotland) Bill 2015* contains provision to make reporting on narrowing the attainment gap a statutory duty for local authorities (Scottish Government, 2015b). In February 2015, the First Minister announced the *Scottish Attainment Challenge* backed by a new *Attainment Scotland Fund* (Scottish Government, 2015c).

The statutory obligations under *The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000*, and Scottish Government policy, make raising attainment a high priority for local authorities and hence Headteachers and their schools. This prioritisation is also evidenced by local authority mandatory *Statements of Improvement Objectives and Progress Reports on*

National Priorities (now *National Outcomes* (Scottish Government, 2011c)). The attainment agenda permeates within the hierarchical structure of schools where accountability rests with the Headteacher. This ultimate accountability for school performance represents one of the greatest challenges for Headteachers.

Performativity and accountability influence the role and actions of the Headteacher in many ways which are unanticipated. The school improvement agenda, with its systems, processes, benchmarking and quality control is accepted by Headteachers as part of the challenge of leadership. There is an ongoing power struggle engendered by the pressures and controls imposed on new Headteachers which modify and discipline their behaviours (Niesche, 2011; Ball, 2013; Gillies, 2013). In this thesis, I use the work of Foucault to provide an alternative way of understanding the development of the Headteacher through examining educational leadership, as influenced by the attainment agenda, from the level of Headteachers' practices.

Overview of the study

This thesis is based on the study of four new secondary school Headteachers and their work practices within their respective schools in a single Scottish local authority. The specific research questions addressed were as follows:

1. How does the attainment agenda influence the role and challenges of the newly appointed Headteacher?
2. What are the strategies and positions adopted by newly appointed Headteachers to negotiate the challenges of the attainment agenda?
3. How does the impact of the attainment agenda vary between different newly appointed Headteachers?

The back-drop to the research is the influence of national and international policies on the development of the performativity and accountability regime under which Headteachers and their schools operate in the Scottish education system. The focus is on the attainment agenda and how this influences the roles and practices of new Headteachers. Using Foucauldian concepts, I examine their work practices, as influenced by the attainment agenda, exploring the positioning of the Headteachers within a range of power relations and discursive regimes. The method I have chosen for this thesis is that of a comparative case study of the lived experiences of each of the four new Scottish secondary school Headteachers. The Headteachers participated in two semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion over an 18-month period. The questionnaires utilised for this purpose are provided as appendices. These questionnaires were constructed around the three research questions underpinning the study. In Chapters 7 and 8, the interview material from the case studies is presented and discussed under key issues related to the research questions.

Significance of the study

The significance of this study is based on the premise that Headteachers are important and, in leading their schools, building capacity, and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, Headteachers make a material difference to the lives and educational outcomes of students (Day et al., 2009; Lingard et al., 2003). Given the political significance of the attainment agenda, and its influence on the role of the Headteacher, it should be beneficial to gain a greater understanding of the strategies the Headteacher employs in making sense of and delivering on attainment, with all the tensions and challenges it embeds. If we are to train and provide career-long support for Headteachers in their work, both to build effective schools and implement national policy, we need to understand at a granular

level, the nuanced issues Headteachers face in accomplishing often conflicting aims. The study will reveal the day-to-day influence of the attainment agenda on Headteachers and demonstrate some of its unintended consequences.

The Scottish College for Educational Leadership is currently leading the development of the new *Specialist Qualification for Headship* in Scotland (SCEL, 2015). In terms of preparation for Headship and post-appointment support for Headship, this study should have particular relevance. MacBeath et al. (2009) highlighted a Headteacher recruitment problem and any study which brings greater transparency to the role should assist in the recruitment of better informed and more suitable candidates.

This following section provides an introduction to the policy background. There is a general discussion of the current school performance culture and the way in which prevailing policy discourses circulate among educational networks. This prefaces a more detailed consideration of the Scottish policy context in Chapter 2. A brief description of the structure of the thesis is provided in the latter part of this initial chapter.

Policy discourses and performativity

The general movement in international educational reforms is towards market-driven policies and the devolution of powers to schools, strategically combined with a set of centralising Government policies which form an accountability-performance regime (Ball, 1998; Gewirtz, 2002; Maroy, 2009). This entails measures such as the definition of a national curriculum and standards, examinations, assessments and league tables, school inspections, and an escalating emphasis on, and scrutiny of, performance outcomes. This trend can be seen in recent education policies adopted in Scotland such as: *The Standards in Scotland Schools Act 2000*; *National Priorities in Education* (SEED, 2003a); the

document *How Good is Our School?* (HMIe, 2007); the implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence* (2010); and the introduction of the recent *Education (Scotland) Bill 2015*. School management is devolved (Cameron, 2011) while school targets, standards and evaluations are centralised and nationalised.

Educational quality becomes a discursive construct representing an objective notion that can be observed and measured by testing student outcomes. Biesta (2009) argues that what now counts as real and necessary are mainly measurable targets and outcomes. Ball (1997, 2003b) argues that the pre-eminence given to performativity leads to practices which produce opacity and inauthenticity, instead of the promised transparency and objectivity, therefore, Headteachers do not perform authentically but perform in a way in which they presume will be judged positively. As a consequence, local authorities, Headteachers, teachers, parents and students, are entangled in performative activity in reproductive and creative ways (Ball, 2001, 2003b). Local authorities and Headteachers implement practices dedicated to improving results in terms of the performance measures imposed. Discourses of performativity within the educational arena justify these practices and provide a rationale for actions leading to improvement in outcomes (Ball, 2003b).

Even though there are discursive resistances, there is an overall acceptance by Headteachers of educational priorities and notions of effective schooling. Headteachers engage in diverse strategic behaviour to produce visible and successful school outcomes according to assessments and rankings, and to improve the school's general public image. Consequently, the functions of school leadership are directed in accordance with these motives and subject to resultant limitations, discipline and control. Ozga (2009) calls this approach *governance by numbers*, as educational leadership (at a global, national and local level) is prevalingly focused on and driven by assessment information.

The Performing Headteacher

One of the premises of the previous section is that schools are discursively formed and that this discourse also shapes and disciplines those working within schools (Gillies, 2013). The implications of this for the role and practices of the new Headteacher will be developed in this study using the concepts of Michel Foucault. In this study, educational leadership is seen as constructed through multiple discourses including the discourse of measurable and quantifiable school outcomes and school effectiveness criteria correlated with examination success. In Scotland, performance measurements are a powerful influence on Headteachers, who are held accountable for results and monitored, judged and effectively controlled by performance data. This is reinforced by a school inspection regime which compares and classifies in accordance with a performance agenda. School effectiveness and hence Headteacher success or failure is seen mainly as a function of statistical outcomes. The concept of the performing Headteacher and the constraining impact of the attainment and accountability agenda constitute a central focus of this study.

Summary of chapters and themes

This chapter has very briefly introduced the research topic and objective and given an outline of the discursive policy environment. I endeavoured to make the case that all institutions, within the educational networks, including Government, local authorities, and schools, are entangled in performative activities dedicated to improve results. The study is set within a framework of educational leadership using a number of Foucauldian concepts to examine the influences of the attainment and accountability agenda. In order to do this, I propose exploring how the new Headteachers are transformed into subjects

by a range of performativity-related discourses. This final section provides a broad overview of the structure of the thesis.

In Chapter 2, I first consider developments in education policy in post-devolutionary Scotland. Examples of these developments include: Scottish Government legislation; the school inspection regime; the setting of *National Priorities* and targets in education; the influence of international indicators; and the development of a framework for standards of school leadership. I then move to a detailed discussion of accountability and performativity in the context of the attainment agenda with particular reference to the targets and standards under the Scottish education system.

In the third chapter, I examine the literature and theories associated with leadership in general and then focus on those related to school leadership. Leadership as conceptualised is often unchallenged as key to school improvement and highlighted as fundamental to the success of national education systems. I therefore examine developments in the discourse of leadership and investigate various theories of leadership.

Chapter 4 examines the ways in which Foucauldian concepts can be applied in order to understand the impact of the attainment agenda on Headteacher practices. The chapter situates Foucault within the framework of school leadership based on the Foucauldian concepts of discourse, power/knowledge, governmentality (systemic), disciplinary power (school level), and ethics (individual). I explore how Headteachers operate within normalising discursive regimes of leadership and self-management, regimes of practice, influenced by the systemic power of governmentality.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the implications for my role as insider researcher (or practitioner researcher). I highlight the advantages and disadvantages of my role as insider researcher

and my relationship with the research participants. I explore and reflect upon the interpretation of the attainment agenda and how my research may be influenced by my own views and experiences.

Chapter 6 provides a detailed description of the theoretical framework and methodology and the linkage with the subject of the research and the research questions. The theoretical framework is based on a number of Foucauldian concepts, through which I examine the discourses and work practices of each of the four Headteachers as influenced by the attainment agenda. The chapter details the research orientation, research design, methods of inquiry, and analysis techniques used for the purposes of the thesis.

Chapter 7 is the first of two significant data presentation and analysis chapters. The emphases are on the conversations and observations emanating from the four case studies. I take each of the Headteachers in turn with the aim of providing a rich description of their thoughts, feelings and aspirations during the early period of their Headship.

Chapter 8 forms the second of the data analysis chapters. This chapter interrogates the interview data generated by the four case studies from a Foucauldian perspective. I examine the impact of the attainment agenda on these new school leaders and their practices in the context of the individual schools. There is some exploration of the way that new Headteachers practise technologies of the self: the self-forming activities by which the Headteacher transforms himself into an ethical subject. I complete this by exploring how the role and practices of the new Headteacher are influenced by the inherited levels of school performance and shaped by the inherited school narrative.

In Chapter 9, the concluding chapter, I summarise the key points arising from the study as they relate to the research questions. I discuss the insights and critical questions

emerging and the implications for policy and practice. I conclude the chapter with recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2

Education Policy and the Attainment Agenda

If change is a journey, then where does it lead? One of the problems that we associate with previous approaches to school improvement is that they have taken a short term view of change.
(Hopkins, 2002, p. 98)

Chapter overview

This chapter examines the post-devolutionary development of Scottish education policy and related issues pertaining to the attainment agenda. Aspects of education policy have the potential for direct and indirect influence on the role and practices of the Headteacher. The chapter focuses on various elements of policy impacting on accountability, performativity, and autonomy. Other connected themes covered include: international factors; self-evaluation and external assessments; and targets and standards. The concluding section summarises the most significant factors influencing the perception and practices of the Headteacher.

An introduction to the policy landscape

It is important to consider the policy context within which Headteachers currently operate. A more detailed history of the present is provided in the section which follows, headed *Scottish education policy post-devolution*. Successful implementation of policy, under the direction of the local authority, is integral to the role of the Headteacher and to the assessment of school effectiveness. An overview of the policy background and the current policy context is therefore relevant to this study. Aspects of policy, directly or indirectly, impacting on the role of the Headteacher, include the increasing emphasis on efficient and accountable public services with a consequent focus on target-setting and attainment in education. These escalating corporate management approaches in the public

sector are reflected internationally. In education, the international trend is towards greater local democracy, and public sector efficiency and accountability (Wöbmann et al., 2007).

Scottish Government policy continues to reflect these influences. *The Scottish National Party Manifesto* (2011) sets out a vision for the 21st century:

The delivery of modern education and the realities of the more flexible curriculum demand a modern approach, based on the strong Scottish tradition of local accountability. We have already reviewed how budgets are managed, giving more power to schools. We will take this further, building on clusters of schools and reviewing the balance of power between government, local authorities and on-the-ground delivery. We will devolve further funding and ensure greater autonomy for learning communities. (*Scottish National Party Manifesto 2011 - School Governance*, p. 24)

Internationally, new curricula reflect a response by education systems to pressures associated with globalisation, particularly with respect to economic competitiveness and citizenship (e.g. *Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education* (HMIe), 2009; Yates and Young, 2010). These considerations were apparent in the evolution of Scotland's new curriculum policy implemented in August 2010, *Curriculum for Excellence*:

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) arrived on the scene at a moment when Scottish education had to negotiate tricky political and ideological terrain, which was at the same time both national and international. (Priestley and Biesta, 2013, p. 15)

Recent policy developments in Scotland continue to reinforce centralised control of education and a strengthening of the accountability regime. In a speech delivered in March 2013, the Scottish Education Secretary stated, "we must redouble our efforts to break down every barrier to attainment and every blockage on the learner journey" (Scottish Government, 2013c). In 2014, the Government announced the launch of a £100 million *Attainment Scotland Fund* to support school pupils in some of the most disadvantaged areas. Most recently, the *Education (Scotland) Bill 2015* incorporated clauses on improving attainment, including a proposal to impose a statutory duty on local authorities to report on narrowing the attainment gap. Escalating legislative controls on

local authorities and the increase in attainment funding were reiterated in the *Scottish National Party Manifesto 2015*.

In summary, the trend in Scottish education policy is towards increased prescription and accountability and a continued elevation of the attainment agenda. This is in an environment in which the Government is apparently advocating greater local democracy and school autonomy but with increased monitoring and measurement. As we shall see, this has profound implications for the role and practices of the Headteacher.

Scottish education policy post-devolution

It is instructive to consider developments in education policy in Scotland in the context of specific changes that have impacted on schools and school leadership following Scottish devolution in 1999. These changes involve legislated school standards, inspection regimes, and target-setting and measurement, which are all highly relevant to the role of the Headteacher.

The first major development was enshrined in legislation enacted in the year following Scottish devolution. *The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000* set out the relationship between Scottish Government and local authorities concerning the delivery of education in Scotland. The Act formalised approaches to self-evaluation, development planning and reporting on progress by specifying duties for schools and local authorities. The Act also introduced the inspection of the functions of local authorities by *Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education* as a statutory obligation. In Section 3 of the Act, the main focus is on the responsibility of the Government and local authorities for raising standards in schools. The Act also establishes the responsibility of Scottish Government to set *National Priorities* in education and local authority responsibility for setting

improvement objectives on an annual basis. In December 2000, following a period of consultation, five *National Priorities* defining strategic outcomes for education were approved by the Scottish Executive under the following headings: *Achievement and Attainment; Framework for Learning; Inclusion and Equality; Values and Citizenship; Learning for Life*. The target under *Achievement and Attainment* was:

.....to raise standards of educational attainment for all in schools, especially in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, and to achieve better levels in national measures of achievement including examination results.

National target setting and related initiatives signalled the increasing prioritisation of attainment in Scottish secondary schools. Until September 2014, *Standard Tables and Charts* (STACS) were used for the purposes of measurement and accountability systems, and were derived from *National Qualifications* data for each Scottish secondary school, to compare the performance of each subject in the school and to analyse performance in attainment measures against the *National Priorities*. In September 2014, STACS were replaced by a new *National Benchmarking Tool* named *Insight* (Scottish Government, 2014a). The details of this change are discussed more fully later in this chapter. The Scottish Government also employs an international indicator of improvement in the levels of educational attainment, the indicator measure being the difference in performance in the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) between Scotland and the *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development* (OECD) average (Scottish Government, 2013b).

The national policy context

Scottish education is generally agreed as a key indicator of national identity. It enjoys an autonomy and distinctiveness of provision from the other countries of the United Kingdom (Humes and Bryce, 2008). The policy environment in Scotland has been shaped

by a ‘Scottish myth’ about the purpose of education, one that perceives education as being “for the public good as much as for private advantage” (Munn and Arnott, 2009, p. 438). While reflecting many of the changes in England, the Scottish education reforms were implemented within a framework that continued to support the centrality of the principle of comprehensive provision (Arnott and Ozga, 2010). Rather than the market-based approaches which gained momentum in England, Scottish regulatory politics continued to exercise principally bureaucratic and professional control over local authorities and schools (Arnott, 2007).

The Donaldson Review, *Teaching Scotland’s Future* (Donaldson, 2010), summarised the principal factors driving education policy in Scotland. The emphasis on international educational and economic parameters continues (p.2). Numerous international studies have shown there is a high positive correlation between educational performance and economic growth (e.g. OECD, 2010; Hanushek & Woessman, 2007). Successful performance in international student attainment tests is also highly correlated with those countries allowing substantial school autonomy over the allocation and management of resources (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Wöbmann et al., 2007). These international and economic considerations continue to influence policy development in Scotland, e.g. the rationale underlying the introduction of *Curriculum for Excellence* (SEED, 2004a) and the extension of *Devolved School Management* (Scottish Government, 2011a).

Global pressures pushing educational systems in the direction of greater convergence constrain Scotland’s political ability to diverge from the rest of the United Kingdom. Scotland’s political leaders are very sensitive about international studies of educational attainment, comparing results in literacy, numeracy and science (OECD, 2007).

In 2011, a new body, *Education Scotland* (ES) was created bringing together *Learning and Teaching Scotland* (LTS) and *Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education*. The management of the new *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) was redefined as a partnership between Scottish Government, *Education Scotland* and the *Scottish Qualifications Authority*. There were those who feared that the attainment agenda promoted by *The Inspectorate* was inconsistent with the apparently progressive intentions of *Curriculum for Excellence* (Priestley and Biesta, 2013). MacKinnon (2011) highlighted major contradictions between the teacher engagement intentions of CfE, and the audit systems of inspection driven by a rigid attainment agenda.

International influences and the global panopticon

In England, policy-makers identify with broader global influences, while policy-makers in Scotland pursue a new political positioning in alignment with smaller successful European countries (Grek and Ozga, 2009). Arnott and Ozga (2010) refer to:

.....a self-conscious strategy by SNP of 'crafting the narrative' of government that seeks to discursively re-position a 'smarter Scotland' alongside small, social democratic states within the wider context of transnational pressures for conformity with global policy agendas.
(p. 335)

The OECD's *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA), *Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study* (PIRLS), *Trends in International Maths and Science Study* (TIMSS) and *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievements* (IEAs) have had considerable impact on national education systems throughout the globe (Lingard et al., 2013). International comparative studies represent some of the most prominent manifestations of the phenomenon of measurability (Biesta, 2009). In terms of today's educational governance, the global eye complements the national eye (Novoa and Yariv-Mashal, 2003) which, in combination with escalating

regimes of accountability, has resulted in what may be identified as a form of “*global panopticism*, with the global eye functioning in a regulatory capacity across and within national states” (Lingard et al., 2013, p. 540). New curricula internationally, including Scotland’s *Curriculum for Excellence*, are widely claimed by critics and advocates alike to be a response by education systems to pressures associated with globalisation, particularly with respect to economic competitiveness and citizenship. The Donaldson Review, *Teaching Scotland’s Future* (Donaldson, 2010) states, “Evidence of relative performance internationally has become a key driver of policy” (p. 2).

It is also informative to consider Europe’s strong international advocacy of policy driven by knowledge economy imperatives and the positioning of the Scottish Government. As Arnott and Ozga (2010) observe:

The knowledge economy produces a convergent policy agenda with an emphasis on competitiveness, skills development and employability, so that scope for national distinctiveness may be limited. (p. 347)

In the translation of global policy, however, national and local factors remain important (Ozga and Jones, 2006). Scotland provides a salutary lesson on how a nationalist government “may draw systematically on the international in order to reinforce its local cause” (Grek et al., 2009, p. 82)

Self-evaluation and external assessment

In recent decades, there has been a transfer of scrutiny from central government to local government and schools accompanied by a regulatory escalation in the level of scrutiny to be applied. The principal means of this transfer of scrutiny has been achieved through the development of a regime of school self-evaluation. There are two important developments in the political landscape that support the paradigm shift towards school self-evaluation: the first is the attempt by Government to create a stronger form of

accountability, and the second is the policy of subsidiarity and the transfer of autonomy to learning communities whose capacity for self-monitoring is therefore required to increase (Grek et al., 2010).

HMIe issued modernised school self-evaluation guidance under the heading, *How Good is Our school?* (2007) which continues to form the basis of the Scottish schools' self-evaluation programme as updated by *Education Scotland*. MacBeath (2005a) provided a formative definition of self-evaluation:

Self-evaluation is a process of reflection on practice, made systematic and transparent, with the aim of improving pupil, professional and organisational learning. (p. 4)

The quality indicators included in HMIe's editions of *How good is our school?* (HMIe, 2007) are designed to help schools to evaluate the quality of education:

Self-evaluation is not a bureaucratic or mechanistic process. It is a reflective professional process through which schools get to know themselves well and identify the best way forward for their pupils...Self-evaluation is forward looking. It is about change and improvement, whether gradual or transformational, and is based on professional reflection, challenge and support. (p. 6)

Education Scotland continued to supplement the advice contained in the HMIe (2007) document, *How Good is Our School?* (HGIOS3) and HGIOS4 will be launched by *Education Scotland* during September 2015.

MacBeath, who is both a proponent and critical voice of self-evaluation and its applications, commented:

While in many countries school inspection has traditionally been the path to quality assurance it is now seen as more economical and growth promoting to put evaluation in the hands of schools themselves. With off-the-shelf inspection models it is a small step for schools to adopt a ready-made self-inspection approach as opposed to a more organic self-evaluation. (MacBeath, 2005b, p. 5)

Despite the revised approach to inspection, with its increased emphasis on school self-evaluation, many have questioned whether there has been a shift away from what is described as a narrow attainment agenda. There is evidence that teachers are reluctant to make changes that do not directly contribute to examination attainment (*University of Glasgow, 2009*).

Accountability and performativity

Accountability is fundamental to an understanding of the relationship between schools, local authorities and central government and is, therefore, a significant concept in education. The policy document *Ambitious Excellent Schools: our agenda for action* (SEED, 2004b) heralded the introduction of “tough intelligent accountabilities” (p. 6). The foreword echoes the ambitious epithet, claiming that the document represents “the Scottish Executive's agenda for the most comprehensive modernisation programme in Scottish schools for a generation” (SEED, 2004b, p. 3). In this document it states, “we will act to build, at each level, systems of *tough, intelligent accountability*, that foster ambition and allow proper, informed public scrutiny” (p. 6). As Cowie et al. (2007) comment:

The appropriation of tough, intelligent accountability situates the concept within a continuing attempt to establish a culture of performance and performativity in Scotland. (p. 29)

O'Neill (2002) argued that, “the new accountability is widely experienced not just as changing... but distorting the proper aims of professional practice and indeed as damaging professional pride and integrity” (Lecture 3). In the Scottish education system, there has been increasing emphasis on performance management, quality assurance and accountability (Cowie and Croxford, 2006).

The practices of Headteachers are heavily influenced by the escalating accountabilities accepted by or imposed upon Scottish schools. As a preface to discussing the implications of this, it is useful to understand what is usually meant by the term accountability. Kogan (1988) argues that accountability:

...covers a wide range of the philosophies and mechanisms governing the relationship between any public institution, its governing bodies and the whole of society. (p. 19)

Accountability and responsibility are often confused in expert educational discourse. Strathern (1997) notes, the 'is' and the 'ought' become conflated in the drive to find quantifiable measures of educational outcomes. As Perry and McWilliam (2007) contend, responsibility encompasses and exceeds accountability. There are three purposes intrinsic to accountability in education, each of which serves different audiences and intentions: public or state control; professional control and self-regulation; and consumer control (Kogan, 1988). The category of consumerist control can be sub-divided further into serving two purposes: firstly, that of participatory democracy or partnership and secondly to support market mechanisms.

What is clear from the various models and frameworks defining accountability is that there are substantial differences between definitions which involve a right to exercise sanctions and those focused on rights to information and duties to report. Intelligent accountability should be focused on how the implications of mechanisms for ensuring accountability relate to the actions and responses of schools (Cowie et al., 2007). Ball (1997) refers to "the production of fabricated indicators and manufactured representations" (p.318). Ball and Olmedo (2013) proceed to elaborate on the implications for the Headteacher of an accountability regime within a culture of performativity:

The rationality of performativity is presented as the new common sense, as something logical and desirable...Resisting performativity at a discursive level implies problematising the essence and raw material of our own practices. It requires the deconstruction and recreation of the self and a certain capacity to examine ourselves critically. (p. 89)

Prior to implementation, policy analysis should involve a detailed examination of the extent to which accountability measures are properly designed, and likely to support, long-term improvement in teaching and learning. Successive legislation, increased prescription, and public monitoring, have led to the development of an audit culture. Shore and Wright (2000) have described this as coercive accountability. The current focus in many countries on standardised tests, used for the purposes of national and international comparisons, has led to the exclusion of other educational objectives. Such an approach reflects Goodhart's Law: what's counted counts (McIntyre, 2000). Biesta (2009) argues that "the danger here is that we end up valuing what is measured, rather than that we engage in measurement of what we value" (p. 43). This gives rise to ironies of representation by which Headteachers adjust their behaviours in order to appear to be meeting the requirements of accountability (Hoyle and Wallace, 2007). If this is the established practice then the profession may be accused of "colluding in its own de-professionalisation" (Bottery, 2001, p. 214).

An element of the imperative for greater accountability arises from the increasing public transparency required of governments to justify the return on spending and investment. The consequence of this is a broadening of the accountability imperative. In Scotland, the political discourse is focused on performance indicators linked to approved outcomes such as literacy and numeracy, employment skills, citizenship, research and innovation, and international competitiveness (Scottish Government, 2011c). This has heightened the political importance of performance data and benchmarking techniques, allowing for local, national and international comparisons (Perry and McWilliam, 2007).

The school inspection regime: accountability pressure

Headteachers operate in a climate of accountability and performativity where the findings of inspection reports can have serious implications for the Headteachers and their schools. The results of this surveillance process are made publicly available, resulting in an external view of schools as successful, average, coasting or failing. This is based principally on student performance against national examination data, the rated quality of learning and teaching, and an assessment of school leadership. Pressure to improve is crucial in understanding the rationale of inspection systems which purport to be an external condition for effective school development. The use of output information on student performance puts more pressure on schools than other criteria, because much public attention is focused on results (Altrichter and Kemethofer, 2015). *The Inspectorate of Education Scotland* is central to the function of the accountability and performativity regime and school inspection is a primary concern for Scotland's Headteachers. *Education Scotland* has the status of an *Executive Agency* which means that it operates independently, whilst remaining directly accountable to Scottish Ministers for the standards of its work. It is interesting to recognise the political diversion of responsibility here away from the Scottish Government and onto *Education Scotland* and hence Headteachers. The inspection process may be viewed as the means by which schools comply with government policy (Scott, 1999). Ball (2003b) maintains that inspection is an extreme form of performativity. Performativity is widely claimed to have a number of serious consequences, substituting short-term instrumental goals as Headteachers play the game (Gleeson and Gunter, 2001). This game can take the form of fabrication of the school's image - careful impression management and discourses of excellence (Keddie et al., 2011).

Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change - based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). (Ball, 2003b, p. 216)

Perryman (2009) argues that inspection is in effect the policing of normalisation through using surveillance strategies that are co-existent with disciplinary power. She provides some clarity regarding performativity and the subsequent role of inspection through this lens:

Performativity becomes the mechanism by which schools demonstrate, through documentation and pedagogy that they have been normalised, and inspection, through surveillance and panoptic techniques, examines this process. (p. 616)

The operation of surveillance can be explained in terms of this notion of panopticism, viewed as a key feature of the functioning of disciplinary power (Niesche, 2011). Ball and Olmedo further comment on the impact of performativity within this panoptic environment:

In the realms of performativity value displaces values. Results are prioritised over processes, numbers over experiences, procedures over ideas, productivity over creativity. (Ball and Olmedo, 2013, p. 91)

Targets and standards: Scottish Schools

Targets and standards are core to the operation of the attainment agenda within Scotland's secondary schools. Since the introduction of the *Quality Initiative* in Scottish Schools, over two decades ago, the use of target-setting, school and departmental planning, and the publication of outcomes, inspection reports and reviews, have become entrenched within the education service (Reeves, 2008). The performativity agenda evolved in the 1990s with *Taking a Closer Look at Quality in Schools* (HMIe 1999) which attempted to link the school inspection performance indicators to the *European Foundation for Quality Management* (EFQM) system, used by many local authorities to evaluate aspects of *Best*

Value. Through target setting and review, the techniques of performance management are an increasingly salient element in the work of schools as reflected in the approach of *The Inspectorate*:

There are three core elements in the approach to assuring and improving quality in schools: school development planning, school self-evaluation using national performance indicators, and staff development and review. (HMIe 1999: Section 1)

However, exactly who benefits from these practices is often unclear (Priestley et al., 2012). Targets and standards are embodied in various documents, directives, and legislation; SOEID (1999), *Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000*, SEED (2002), GTCS (2002), SEED (2004b), SEED (2005), GTCS (2006), and GTCS (2012).

An OECD report commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2006, points to a widening gap in attainment at each stage of education, associated with poverty, deprivation and low socio-economic status (OECD, 2007). The Review suggests that the focus of current accountability systems on comparing school performance obscures the extent of within-school inequalities. The report indicates:

Who you are in Scotland is far more important than the school you attend so far as achievement differences on international tests are concerned and we need to look more carefully at the cultural and organisational factors that are common to Scottish schools, but which weigh unequally on individuals of different family backgrounds. (OECD, 2007, p15)

It is easier for schools to achieve measurable improvement in a short space of time by focusing on marginal pupils in the middle and upper attainment range than by attempting to raise the achievement of the lowest attaining pupils (Cowie et al. 2007). Until recently, the main source of data for evaluating performance in secondary schools was the *Standard Tables and Charts* (STACS). A major weakness was their focus on aggregate data at the level of departments in schools, which did not encourage schools to consider individual students. The Scottish Government, in partnership with other professional

bodies, has now developed *Insight*, the *Senior Phase Benchmarking Tool* (Scottish Government 2014a), to replace STACS and to support the implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The objective is to assist with the analysis, comparison and improvement in teaching and learning of students in the senior phase. *Insight* was made available to *Education Scotland*, local authorities and all teaching staff in secondary schools from September 2014. Data is provided under the following four different measures, which were specifically selected in order to support *Curriculum for Excellence*:

- Increasing post-school participation (from February 2015);
- Improving attainment in literacy and numeracy;
- Improving attainment for all; and
- Tackling disadvantage by improving the attainment of lower attainers relative to higher attainers.

A virtual comparator feature takes the characteristics of students in a school and matches them to similar students from across Scotland to create a 'virtual school'. This is stated to be an effective way of identifying a school's strengths and areas for improvement. *Curriculum for Excellence* continues the Scottish curriculum's adherence to articulation in terms of assessable outcomes, set out by subject area in hierarchical levels with all the implications contained therein for assessment-driven teaching (Priestley and Biesta, 2013).

The changing perception of the Headteacher role

What do these policy shifts towards accountability and performativity, standards and targets, defined by outcomes, attainment and external inspection processes, imply for the Headteacher role? One of the main themes is that greater autonomy for the Headteacher

has been accompanied by increasing accountability. An important factor underpinning the accountability agenda, and influencing the policy context in which Headteachers work, relates to economic competitiveness. Educating students to enable them to become part of a skilled and adaptable workforce is essential to Scotland's future economic prosperity. There are other changes in the education environment with consequences for the Headteacher role. Self-evaluation, development planning and benchmarking appear to be becoming a part of the discourse of education policy, and set the context in which the Headteacher operates. With the continuing escalating emphases on standards, attainment and accountability, shown in the previous section, Headteachers must operate within an increasingly public and competitive environment. The Donaldson (2011) report on teacher education makes an explicit connection between "the qualities of leadership" and "the ability and willingness of teachers to respond to the opportunities (CfE) offers" (p. 4). This indicates the intention to place on Headteachers the responsibility to ensure compliance as well as teacher motivation to comply.

The policy context therefore provides many challenges and complications for the Headteacher. This is particularly so with the pressure for improvement in attainment while addressing the learning needs of all students. This pressure is set against an economic requirement for the high cognitive and technical skills which are part of the rationale for the introduction of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The continually developing culture of accountability and performativity compounds the difficulty and complexity of the Headteacher role. Against this policy context within which Headteachers operate, the next chapter examines the nature of leadership and positioning of leadership in Scottish schools.

Chapter 3

Framing School Leadership

There are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept.
(Stogdill, 1974, p.259)

Approaching leadership

There is a considerable literature and theory associated with leadership (Stogdill, 1974; Calder, 1977; Burns, 1978; Rost, 1993; Bass, 1998; Nicholls, 2002; Yukl, 2002; Horner, 2003; Gronn, 2010). This study is centred on the practices of secondary Headteachers in relation to school improvement and raising student attainment. The construction of the term leadership and the operation and recognised practices of leadership in schools merits some investigation. It is worth noting at the outset that there are often differences of opinion in the literature as to the appropriate use of the terms leadership and management. In some literature, management is considered to be more task-oriented, whereas leadership is viewed as more inspirational and visionary. This is reflected in the revised *Standards for Leadership and Management* published by *The General Teaching Council for Scotland* (GTCS) in December 2012:

Leadership is the ability to:

- develop a vision for change, which leads to improvements in outcomes for learners and is based on shared values and robust evaluation of evidence of current practice and outcomes;
- mobilise, enable and support others to develop and follow through on strategies for achieving that change;

Management is the operational implementation and maintenance of the practices and systems required to achieve this change. (GTCS, 2012, p.4)

The role of the visionary Headteacher in school transformation has become a core theme in education literature (Bass, 1985; Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999; Hallinger, 2003; Day,

2003; Darling-Hammond and Rothman, 2011; Townsend, 2011). Leadership preparation programmes are claimed to have a substantial impact on how schools operate and on the quality of learning and teaching (Cowie and Crawford, 2009; Schleicher, 2012; Forde et al., 2013). However, the positioning of leadership as a solution for many of the challenges faced by schools requires further examination, especially the extent of its influence on pupil outcomes.

The meaning of the term leadership is widely contested. Often unchallenged as key to school improvement and highlighted as fundamental to the success of national education systems, it is useful to examine developments in the discourse of leadership. Thought itself is disciplined, channelled in a particular fashion, constrained, when a discourse exerts such a hold on our understanding of what is real, true and good (Foucault, 1977). My principal intention in this thesis is to interrogate leadership by directing a Foucauldian lens on the discourses of leadership in order to gain a greater understanding of leadership practices as they relate to student outcomes. My approach is to view leadership as a field of related discourses correlated with the policy and pedagogical discourses surrounding the attainment agenda in Scotland. Identifying connections between the present and the past in leadership discourse is consistent with Foucault's concept of the "history of the present" (Foucault, 1977, p. 31). This study employs Foucault's key concepts of discourse, power/knowledge, discipline and subjectivity. This is developed more fully in Chapter 4 in relation to educational leadership. The focus of this chapter is on leadership theory in general and school leadership in Scotland in particular.

Conceptualising leadership

A recent qualitative study of new Headteachers (Earley and Bubb, 2013), funded by the *National College for School Leadership*, examined how their time was utilised. The broad

average allocations were: leadership (32%); management (46%); administration (17%); teaching, continuing professional development and personal (5%). The categorisations of leadership by the researchers included: strategic planning; school self-evaluation and improvement; staff development; leadership and governance meetings; and staff and student learning-centred observations and interactions. The range of allocations to leadership by the research participants varied widely and extended to 62% in the case of one secondary Headteacher. This indicates a potential fluidity in the interpretation of what constitutes leadership and how it is conceptualised and differentiated from functions often arbitrarily referred to as management, administration or other activities. This is reflected in a survey of over 3000 empirical articles on the topic of leadership and on examination of 350 definitions provided by a variety of experts where there were no conclusive findings as to what constituted effective leadership (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2011).

The discourse of leadership has become ubiquitous. Governments, industry, academics and education systems have developed a material vested interest. What is the effect of “privileging words such as ‘leader’, ‘leading’, and ‘leadership’ as discursive modes of representing reality instead of previously favoured terminology such as ‘manager’ and ‘management’” (Gronn, 2003, p. 269)? Indeed, it has been questioned as to whether leadership and management require any differentiation. Nicholls (2002) suggests an adequate distinction may be between managers and high-performing or more talented senior managers. Is leadership merely a preferential term amongst other concepts such as authority, power, influence and persuasion? Some explanation may be located in the dualism of leader and follower, which is entrenched in popular consciousness and intrinsic to the discourse of leadership. Leadership is perhaps most usefully understood as an unstable social invention, varying in form, function and effect in response to changing norms, values and circumstances.

Calder (1977) makes the point that leadership is a lay, everyday knowledge term, and not a scientific construct. Rost (1993) defines leadership as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p. 102). However, this definition begs some questions: “If leadership is a type, or aspect, of influence (or power), doesn’t that make leadership unnecessary?” (Gronn, 2003, p. 277). A practical approach to examining the causal possibility of what may be termed leadership is to study the work practices within an organisation necessary to accomplish a given body of work. The causal phenomenon, defined as leadership, may then possibly be detectable as a subset of these work practices, or associated organisational requirements for their efficient completion, predicated to one or more specific individuals. Lakomski (2008) argues that leadership may be “more productively viewed as an emergent self-organising property of complex systems” and that “leadership may be no more than an organisational feature of coordination” (pp. 150 - 160).

Whatever the approach to identifying or defining leadership, the ubiquity of the term, and the plethora of leadership theories as applied in the area of education, require some historical contextualisation. A sample of these numerous types of leadership include: trait; visionary; instructional; transformational; transactional; collaborative; strategic; sustainable; contingent, situational and distributed. Gillies (2013) suggests that many variants of leadership theory can be divided between two categories. The first views leadership as residing in the individual analysed by attributes or characteristics and may be termed *trait* or *heroic* theories (*ibid.* 2013). The second orientation focuses on contexts and styles of leadership, leadership as practice, and is referred to as *contingency* or *situational* (*ibid.* 2013). The latter category inevitably overlaps with the first otherwise leadership would be reduced to teachable competencies independent of the characteristics

of the recipient of that teaching. By a similar argument trait theory requires evidence in practice in order to demonstrate the presence of the desired traits and involves some value judgement as to whether these practices constitute good leadership.

School leadership by design

Bass (1998) claims that, “both improved conceptualisation and improved methodology stimulated the return of the trait approach to the study of leadership in the 1990s” (p. 120). Trait theory assumed that the capacity for leadership was inherent, as opposed to a range of teachable competencies. Such leaders are presumed to have qualities and characteristics which allow them to be successful. Specific characteristics and behaviours are identified as essential. Trait theories have been criticised for ignoring the situational and environmental elements associated with the leadership of others (Horner, 2003). Such heroic theories have largely been superseded by situational and latterly transformational and transactional leadership theories (Leithwood, 1992; Bottery, 2004; Harris and Spillane, 2008). Much of the more current educational leadership literature can be described as post-heroic (Gronn, 2010), with the focus moving to relational theories of leadership. Gronn argues that evidence-based capability-building is a more productive alternative to the pursuit of heroic individualism. The alternative to a normative behaviour-based approach to standards is an attempt to privilege various forms of evidence-based practice to drive leaders’ decisions and the development of leadership competencies and capabilities.

It may be argued that improving attainment in a school is at least partly dependent on how the Headteacher interacts, motivates and develops capacity throughout the school (Day et al., 2009; Hallinger and Heck, 2010). This leads us to a consideration of transformational forms of leadership. The theory of transformational leadership owes

much to the work of James McGregor Burns (1978) who makes the distinction between transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership involves leaders clarifying goals and objectives and communicating these to staff in order to ensure that, with their cooperation, organisational requirements are achieved. For such a relationship to be successful is dependent on a recognised hierarchy and the ability to conform to this mode of exchange. Burns (1978) defines the transformational leader as one who recognises transactional needs but goes further in seeking to arouse higher needs and engage the full person. Transformational leadership occurs when “one or more persons engage(s) with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (p. 19). Bass (1985) describes transformational leaders as people able to articulate a compelling vision of the future. Burns emphasises values and morals in his description. This may explain why such an approach has been favoured by some writers on educational leadership due to the emphasis on morals and values which are compatible with normative views of education. Transformational leadership is viewed as being motivational, inspiring and values-driven and engaging staff in the leadership vision.

Whether leadership is understood to be a characteristic possessed or a process exercised has fundamental implications for approaches to leadership development and leads to very different practices. If leadership were possessed, then the identification of leadership and fostering of leadership traits would be the key to any development programme. If leadership were exercised then professional development would be focused on practice, behaviours and skills. Stodgill (1970) could find no evidence of identifiable leadership traits and concluded that leadership was relational and situation dependent. The situational or contingency theory of leadership, however, is also problematic in its attempt to reduce leadership to a list of behaviours and activities. This is borne out by Day et al.

(2009) based on a major study of the impact of school leadership on pupil outcomes in which it is concluded that:

There is no single model of practice of effective leadership, however, it is possible to identify a common repertoire of broad educational values, personal and interpersonal qualities, dispositions, competencies, decision-making processes, and a range of internal and external strategic actions which all effective heads in the study possess and use. (p. 2)

This invokes distinction between leadership and effective leadership and appears to blend traits (for example, personal and interpersonal qualities) and situational elements. The inevitable merger of the possessed and the exercised in any coherent approach to leadership theory becomes a disputed question of the balance between personal characteristics, developed competencies and learned practices.

Internationally, most noteworthy schemes are standards-driven with standards generally consistent across the schemes (for example: USA, Australia, Canada, Scotland and England). These national standards are a graphic instance of the institutionalisation of leadership theories representing a modality of leader formation that may be termed designer leadership. This “leadership by design represents the quintessence of Foucault’s notion of the disciplined subject” (Gronn, 2003, p. 283) where leadership formation is disciplined by a discourse providing norms and standards of behaviour against which aspiring leaders are expected to measure themselves. The formulation and publication of professional standards has emerged as the truth or the accepted interpretation of professionalism. In Foucauldian terms, professional standards function as “a procedure of objectification and subjection” (Foucault, 1977, p. 192). In this way, the subjectivities of school leaders become self-disciplined through a process of normalisation by conformity to a leadership design blueprint (Gronn, 2003).

Scottish Headteachers are required to aspire and conform to a leadership design ‘blueprint’ which has recently been updated. In late 2012, the *General Teaching Council for Scotland* (GTCS) ratified a new *Standard for Headship* in Scotland issued as *The Standards for Leadership and Management* (GTCS, 2012). Consideration of the *Standards* assists in contextualising the role expectations of the participant new Headteachers. The new *Standards* analyse the role of the Headteacher in three essential elements and five professional actions. The three essential elements are:

- Strategic vision and aims;
- Knowledge and understanding; and
- Personal qualities and interpersonal skills.

Although the professional actions and essential elements are listed and detailed separately they are considered to be fully interdependent. The five professional actions are:

- Lead and manage learning and teaching;
- Lead and develop people;
- Lead change improvement;
- Use resources effectively; and
- Build community.

The essential elements in the *Standards* are expressed through these professional actions. The professional actions have some common themes, many phrased around professional values, including: a commitment to young people; equality of opportunity; ethical practice; democratic values; lifelong learning; motivation of young people, staff, and members of the school community; shared vision and development of a positive school ethos; improving learning and teaching practice; applying knowledge and critical understanding of contemporary developments in education policy; applying knowledge

and understanding of leadership concepts and practice; and drawing on a range of personal qualities and interpersonal skills in leading effectively (GTCS, 2012). The *Standards* confirm the centrality of the Headteacher's role in ensuring student attainment through a consistent emphasis on leadership for student learning. GTCS (2012) emphasises the key purpose of Headteachers is to maximise student outcomes:

Headteachers lead the whole school community in order to establish, sustain and enhance a positive ethos and culture of learning through which every learner is able to learn effectively and achieve their potential. (p. 17)

Scottish school leadership development

GTCS (2012) incorporates the new *Standard for Headship* which is integral to leadership development programmes in Scotland (Forde et al., 2013). Headteacher preparation is regarded in many countries as a crucial aspect of school development and progression, as evidenced by the growth of global interest in this area (Hallinger, 2003). A coherent framework for leadership development has been identified by Darling-Hammond and Rothman (2011) as an important feature in high-achieving educational systems.

The *Standard for Headship* (SfH) was originally introduced in Scotland in 1998 and revised in 2002 and 2005. At that time, the only means of attaining the SfH was through the *Scottish Qualification for Headship* (SQH); however, alternative flexible routes were to follow. SQH has been recognised at international level by the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD, 2007, pp. 15; 39; 140) as being “world class”, “of international significance” and “an outstanding and demanding programme”. SQH however is being replaced by a new *Specialist Qualification for Headship*. The *Scottish College for Educational Leadership* (SCEL) is leading the development of the new *Specialist Qualification for Headship*. *Into Headship* will be

available for August/September 2015 (SCEL, 2015). This will be part of a comprehensive Masters qualification comprising three stages:

1. Middle leadership and management;
2. Initial preparation for Headship (*Into Headship*); and
3. Post appointment support for new Headteachers (*Extended Induction*).

The *Into Headship* programme is designed to enable participants to demonstrate their achievement of the GTCS (2012) *Standard for Headship*, and to become a requirement for appointment to a Headteacher post in schools in Scotland from the 2018-2019 academic year.

Distributed leadership in Scottish schools

Encouragement of a distributed leadership perspective is situated within the expectations underpinning the competences of the *Standard for Headship* (SfH) (SEED, 2005) and is similarly reflected in the replacement *Standards for Leadership and Management* (GTCS, 2012). There is reference to collegiality, building leadership capacity and effective delegation. Section 4.2 of GTCS (2012) is headed. “Develop staff capability, capacity and leadership to support the culture and practice of learning” and one of the professional actions listed under subsection 4.2.2 is to “create and utilise opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles across and beyond the school”. SQH participants are exposed to some of the ideas within the distributed leadership literature with an expectation they utilise theory to inform their own practice and the contextual practice of their schools.

Distributed leadership has become the focus of contemporary Scottish education policy. It has been argued that distributed leadership was positioned in policy discourse to advance workforce reform, address the Headteacher recruitment and retention crisis, and progress the school improvement agenda (Torrance, 2013). An immediate question that

should be addressed concerns the relationship between transformational and distributed leadership. In the field of education, both involve motivating staff to take on the tasks of improving teaching and student attainment (Leithwood et al., 1999; Spillane and Shere, 2004). The issue is whether one is a sub-set of the other, and if so which is a sub-set of which. Leithwood and Jantzi's (1999) analysis of transformational leadership lists distributed leadership as one of many components. Spillane and Shere (2004), on the other hand, consider that leadership in schools is mostly distributed. This distribution, however, may or may not be transformational, which leaves questions concerning the objectives of distributive leadership and the non-distributed functions of leadership. The various conceptions of distributed leadership evident across the literature illustrate that it is "a contested concept embracing a wide range of understandings and often bearing little apparent relationship to what happens in schools and classrooms" (MacBeath et al., 2009, p. 41).

There is an apparent paradox with "leadership at all levels" (HMIe, 2007, p. 5) coexistent with interpretations of the pivotal role of the Headteacher characterised as strategic leadership (Forde et al., 2011). Gronn argues for the existence of and indeed the need for individual focused leadership alongside more distributed forms of leadership and characterises this as hybrid leadership (Gronn, 2009).

The identity of the Headteacher: professional standards

The introduction of standards (SEED, 2005; GTCS, 2012) for Headteachers has clearly had a great deal of influence on the Headteacher preparation programme in Scotland (Forde et al., 2013). Standards provide the framework within which programmes such as the SQH and the alternative *Flexible Route to Headship* have been designed and delivered. Standards also, however, set the terms in which the performance, disposition,

behaviour and attitudes of aspiring Headteachers can be controlled, measured and assessed (Cowie and Crawford, 2009). International discourses concerning modernisation, performance management and improvement are reflected in educational policy in Scotland and these discourses have had an influence on professional development (Gleeson and Husbands, 2003).

The introduction of professional standards for Headteacher both mirrors the politically driven competencies movement that emerged in teacher education in the 1990s, and can be seen in terms of the attempts to control quality, specify outputs, and reconstruct meaning and identity (Clarke and Newman, 1997). This is echoed in comments made by Cowie and Crawford (2009):

The overall influence (of SQH) appears not to be related to specific areas of content but to processes that helped construct their identity as Headteachers. (p. 12)

Standards have been accompanied by an extension of institutional performance criteria, qualifications, and monitoring (e.g. HMIE and *Education Scotland*). This approach could be described as one of Governmental professionalism constructed around a competency model of professional knowledge and skills. Arguably, these policies and structures are part of a process of “institutional and discursive appropriation” (Beck, 2008, p. 133). Standards can be seen as a controlling mechanism and a means of limiting the discourse surrounding what it is that Headteachers are and what they do (Cowie and Crawford, 2007).

Concluding remarks

In Chapter 3, I began by discussing the concept of leadership and the numerous theories of leadership. I showed a distinction that is often drawn between leadership and management: the latter incorporating references to vision, strategy and values and the

former related more to supporting operational matters. It was concluded that the inevitable merger of the possessed and the exercised in any coherent approach to leadership theory becomes a disputed question. The adoption of various national standards for school leaders, such standards seeking to govern behaviours and values, might be termed designer leadership. The revised *Standards for Leadership and Management* (GTCS, 2012) represents an example of this approach. The power and language of the *Scottish Qualification for Headship* empowers programme participants because it reflects a privileged managerial discourse, which is endorsed by the Scottish Government. GTCS *Standards* continue the emphasis on transformational aspects of leadership but also stress the need for an approach based on distributed leadership by requiring Headteachers to establish and sustain teacher leadership and collaborative working and to create and utilise opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles across and beyond the school.

In relation to this study, professional standards have particular relevance to Headteacher identity as influenced by the discourse surrounding the attainment agenda. Standards construct a discourse of leadership that operates through a range of managerial competences to construct the notion of the ideal Headteacher (Land, 1998). Headteachers are therefore being discursively constituted in accordance with these standards. The standards result in the normalising of leadership into lists of expected qualities and behaviours (Niesche, 2013). As described on page 44, the key role of the Headteacher under GTCS (2012), the new *Standard for Headship*, is to create the conditions under which student outcomes are maximised. The discourse of attainment would therefore appear to be central to the formation of Headteacher identity.

Chapter 4 examines the ways in which Foucauldian concepts can be applied in order to understand the impact of the attainment agenda on Headteacher practices. The chapter situates Foucault within the framework of school leadership.

Chapter 4

Foucault and School Leadership

....there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. (Foucault, 1980, p. 93)

A Foucauldian approach

Prominent theorists of educational leadership such as Niesche (2011) and Gillies (2013) have shown that the application of Foucauldian concepts can yield important insights into the dynamics of educational leadership. This chapter situates Foucault within the framework of school leadership based on the Foucauldian concepts of discourse, power/knowledge, governmentality (systemic), disciplinary power (school level), and ethics (individual). Headteachers operate within normalising discursive regimes of leadership and self-management, regimes of practice, influenced by the systemic power of governmentality (Niesche, 2011). Practices surrounding senior leadership and staff involvement, self-evaluation, parent councils and community engagement, school improvement and effectiveness, the attainment agenda and performativity measurement, are all examples of disciplinary practices which attempt to control the actions of Headteachers (Anderson and Grinberg, 1998). This thesis is concerned with exploring the power relations that influence Headteachers' subjectivities and how interacting regimes of practice impact on and discipline their daily work. I use Foucault's notions of docile bodies and panopticism to show how Headteachers are placed within disciplinary regimes and how the Headteacher is constituted by particular accountabilities within a culture of performativity.

Discourse and practice

According to Foucault (1972, 1991a), discourse can be understood as texts and utterances but also as ways of thinking and sense-making and as behaviours, relationships, interactions and arrangements of signs and material objects. Discourses therefore are not just what are said, but they are also practices. Leadership can be understood as a discursive social practice. Through sense-making processes such as problematisation and categorisation, discourses frame not only what can be thought, said and seen but also what it is possible to be and do. Discourse includes and excludes, foregrounds and backgrounds, and renders some things important and others invisible. Discourse thus constructs knowledge and governs, through the projections and enactments of knowledge and assemblages of texts, what is legitimate, worthwhile and right. As practice, it re/produces knowledge and power simultaneously (Thomson et al., 2013). Within the education system certain types of discourse are privileged and others not:

Any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledge and power which they carry... What, after all, is an education system other than a ritualisation of speech, a qualification and a fixing of roles for speaking subjects, the constitution of a doctrinal group, a distribution and appropriation of discourse with its powers and knowledges? (Foucault, 1981a, p. 64)

Practices can be described as the routinised ways in which “bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated and the world is understood” (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 250). According to Schatzki (2001), practices can be understood as “embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organised around shared practical understanding” (p. 32). The notion of patterns in practice is important; because practices are routinised, rather than random acts, they are coherent and thus comprehensible and codifiable (Thomson et al., 2013). In this thesis, the focus is on those aspects of leadership practice that are to do with the routine actualisations of ideas, utterances, dialogue and actions. The everyday practices of the Headteacher can be conceptualised in terms of

what Foucault (1977) refers to as discipline being the political anatomy of detail. Here, he refers to the minute techniques and acts of everyday practices where the exercise of power is embedded in these practices of school life (Niesche, 2011). Thomson (2001) argues Headteachers' work, as everyday practice "is both messy and ecological - it is holistic, unpredictable, consuming and contradictory, pulling in all directions at once" (p. 16).

Discourses operate within discourse communities which share common ways of thinking, being and doing. The discursive practice within a discourse community can be seen as normative, in that it creates "truths" about what are appropriate thoughts, speech and actions. A school can be thought of as a discursive community. Policy, however, is a discursive assemblage in that it sutures together sets of discourses which do not necessarily all cohere, but which are made to do so in temporary policy settlements (Ball 2006a). It is possible to examine regimes of meaning-making, constructed in and as discourse, to see how some lines of thinking and arguing come to be taken as truths, while other ways of thinking/being/doing are marginalised. Analysing discourse requires looking for patterns of category-making and asking from what broader discourse or discursive assemblage they emanate, what they omit and include and what they legitimise as practice (Fairclough, 2003; Maclure, 2003). Concepts such as leadership and management are constituted and sustained through certain discourses, and, as such, "leadership is not what it claims to be, but rather it is an effect of a discourse, a superficial surface, a mask that deflects attention from its genealogy and effects" (Lingard et al., 2003, p. 128). Headteachers are constructed as subjects through school leadership and management discourses (Lingard et al., 2003). It is through their work practices and the power relations invested in these actions that the Headteacher is made a subject (Niesche, 2011).

The principal tools that Foucault brings to educational discourse are scepticism, critique and problematisation (Gillies, 2013). By scepticism is meant the expression and application of doubt as to: the value of stated objectives; effectiveness of chosen means; accuracy of claims; declared motivations; coherence of beliefs and status of knowledge (Veyne, 2010). Critique is the challenging of assumptions and the questioning of all about which scepticism is expressed (Gillies, 2013). Scepticism is the stance and critique is the activity (*ibid.* 2013). Foucault calls for this to be a permanent ethos and refers to it as “akin to virtue” (Foucault, 2007a, p. 43). Problematisation is the purpose of critique. It is the raising of problems and difficulties in such a way that improvement and revision become necessary (Gillies, 2013). Foucault (1988) states “critique is not a matter of saying things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged and unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest” (pp. 154 - 155). Positioning educational leadership as constituting a discourse renders it open to critique on that basis. In a Foucauldian analysis ‘truths’ and ‘facts’ about educational leadership are, therefore, viewed as discursively formed, contingent, fragile, and contestable (Gillies, 2013). From a Foucauldian perspective, it is possible to critique leadership discourse with respect to a number of related elements: its formation of objects; its formation of subjects; its formation of concepts; its strategic choices; its procedures of exclusion; and its procedures of controlling and delimiting (Foucault, 1972; 1981a).

Leadership discourses operate in relation to the formation of the Headteacher as subject and this is expanded upon under the headings of discipline, governmentality, subjectivation and ethics in the following sections. In relation to the formation of objects, leadership discourse forms the school as something which can be managed and led:

management addressing organisation and stability and leadership concerning direction and influence (Leithwood et al., 2006). Leadership discourse also forms as objects the staff and students. Schools have been constructed as hierarchical organisations supporting a management/leadership paradigm as a means by which discipline and surveillance are instituted (Foucault, 1972). Leadership discourse owes its dominance in educational literature to this way of seeing a school. As has been observed, this involves the construction of staff and students as objects for the attention of leadership. Additionally, in order to determine the reputed effectiveness of leadership and management, the discourse constructs school outcomes in specific ways: measurable, quantifiable and material. There are a number of common inter-related concepts that may be viewed as discursively contingent, i.e. terms that have gained prevalence and importance as a function of a particular leadership discourse. These include: school effectiveness; the successful school; school improvement; and desired pupil outcomes: where the focus tends to narrow to those issues which are susceptible to measurement with other areas of education being ignored or manipulated (Gillies, 2013). Within educational leadership discourses, examination, assessment and evaluation become dominant concepts and, as a result they assume central importance in the exploration of the operation of disciplinary power. As Gillies (2013) states:

The central aims of leadership and effectiveness discourses of improving the efficiency of the system and maximising potential in relation to desired outcomes, therefore, comes at the cost of subjection and domination. (p. 48)

The net effect is to render “docile” individuals and bodies: “a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, 1977, p.136). The examination, the process by which individuals and schools are assessed as to their effectiveness, “manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected” (Foucault, 1977, pp. 184 - 185). A Foucauldian exploration of

discourse offers the capacity to analyse the extent to which leadership discourses construct a conceptualisation of schools and their operations, “a construction that is neither necessary nor inevitable” (Gillies, 2013, p. 49). Rethinking schools as discursive constructions where meanings are emergent, deferred, and dispersed (Westwood and Linstead, 2001) opens up a critical creative space for school leaders to engage with competing discourses and narratives.

Discourse and power/knowledge

Foucault (1980) asserts that power relations permeate society, but that these power relations cannot be established without the “production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse” (p. 93). Foucault explains his concept of power as follows:

Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation.....power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society. (Foucault, 1978, pp. 92-93)

Foucault argues that power at the individual level should be analysed through techniques of hierarchical surveillance, control and normalisation. In Foucault's analysis, this notion of power is not repressive, “It produces effects at the level of desire and also at the level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it” (Foucault, 1980, p. 59). Foucault states that, “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (1978, p. 100). An understanding of Foucault's concept of discourse is essential to the study of power/knowledge and disciplinary power. Knowledge does not exist in itself, it exists through power relations. In effect, knowledge is always a strategic relation in which one is placed (Foucault, 1994). Subjects are constructed by these power/knowledge relations. Self-forming practices are analysed by studying the “interplay between a code that governs ways of doing things and a production of true discourses that serve to found,

justify and provide reasons and principles for these ways of doing things” (Foucault, 1991a, p. 79). For Foucault, discourses are mechanisms and practices that frame what can be said and thought: “discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p. 54) and as such can become the mechanisms of disciplinary power. These methods of control over the body are what Foucault refers to as “disciplines” (1977, p. 137). These disciplines have their own discourses and produce and subjectify ‘docile bodies’.

Discipline makes individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise. (Foucault 1977, p. 170)

It is important to acknowledge, however, that discipline does not “represent all power relations and all possibilities of power relations” (Foucault 1986, p. 380).

In this thesis, I use the work of Foucault to look at different ways to understand how leadership discourses operate to produce particular Headteacher subjectivities and the spaces in which these Headteachers can resist this disciplined subjectivity.

Power/knowledge and truth

In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault expounds his views on the relationship between power and knowledge:

Power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (1977, p. 27)

In a later chapter he further elaborates that “knowledge follows advances of power, discovering new objects of knowledge over all surfaces on which power is exercised” (p. 204). Foucault (1980) reinforces his view concerning this reciprocity of power and

knowledge: “the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power...It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power” (p. 52). Ball (2013) elaborates on Foucault’s concept of power, “power is not a structure but a complex arrangement of social forces that are exercised; it is a strategy, embedded in other kinds of relations” (p.30). Power is as much about what can be said and thought as what can be done – it is discursive. As highlighted in Foucault (1978), “discourse can be both an instrument of power and a stumbling block to it” (p. 101). Power is a multiplicity of intersecting and overlapping “force relations” of different kinds, that may be joined up or discontinuous, and are set within a “process of ceaseless struggles and transformations” (Foucault, 1981b, pp. 92-93). The person “is the ‘place’ where power is enacted and the place where it is resisted” (Mills, 2003, p. 35). The basic molecules of power relations, what Foucault calls the “microphysics of power”, are individual choices, interactions and behaviours. Like power, leadership is an internal qualitative relation, and always enmeshed in social practice. Leadership is constantly “in-tension” and subject to a myriad of “meanings, values, ideals and discourse processes” (Alvesson, 1996, p. 472). We are dealing with a “density of discursive practices, systems that establish [leadership as] events” (Foucault, 1972, p. 128).

Discipline, surveillance and normalisation

Educational leaders are subject to a whole range of measures which seek to normalise. Headteachers are compared, inspected and graded in relation to the performance of their schools according to the same principles and are disciplined to become aligned with what is expected of them. Educational leadership becomes a unified concept within a system constraining conformity.

Headteachers are in the position of being subject to a number of disciplinary techniques through surveillance from students, parents, the community and governing bodies, as well as being a mechanism of surveillance over others. Audits, inspections, target-setting and performance indicators and measures are deployed as a means to influence behaviour (Bush and Bell, 2002). It is through such relations of power that the Headteacher is constructed and maintained under scrutiny and scrutinises others. It is necessary to work both inside and outside the discourses to examine the exercise of power and to identify normalisations (Niesche, 2011). Foucault's (1977) analysis of the ways in which the micro-disciplinary techniques of hierarchical observation, normalising judgements and examinations operate within institutional contexts provides a theoretical framework for understanding the operation of the current Scottish school system of local authority control, self-evaluation and inspection. The aim of this study is to investigate Headteachers' sense of themselves as subjects within these discursive frames and the impact of the attainment agenda on Headteacher practices. Foucault shows us that "truth itself has a history" (Foucault, 2002a) and definitions of evidence and ideas about appropriate modes of inquiry are part of that history (Foucault, 1977). Foucault's analyses reveal the ways in which "effects of truth" are produced within discourses; how different "regimes of truth" hold sway at particular times and in particular places (Hall and Noyes, 2009). His analytical interest is not in uncovering hidden truths but in understanding how norms are established within discourse, and how discourse creates a normative context for possible thought and action, which then becomes legitimised as truth (Olssen, 2006, p. 137).

Now I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth, and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically

how the effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false. (Foucault, 1980, p. 118)

Foucault's innovation was to historicise "truth", first, materially in discourse as "regimes of truth" and, second, in practices as "games of truth" (Peters, 2003, p. 208). These concepts - of regimes and of games of truth - are important to the analysis offered in this study. The methodological consequence of adopting this theoretical approach is that it requires detailed engagement with the specificities of particular practices and systems and different people's ways of understanding them. Olssen describes Foucault's approach as based on "minute and detailed analysis of practices", an attempt "to account through a microscopic materialism for the emergence of our present truths" (Olssen, 2006, p. 137).

Statistics are fundamental to the regime of truth created within the educational discourse of a school. Aggregated lesson and examination grades provide a proxy for quality of teaching and learning: inspection descriptors and numerical grades reduce the vocabulary for describing lessons, and even teachers, to simple hierarchical formulations (Hall and Noyes, 2009). The importance of statistics is consistently highlighted in the discourse and practices of educational leadership. New representations of the truth are also constructed through quality assurance activities. These representations, or "fabrications" as Ball calls them, are not "outside the truth" - they are created to enable the school to be accountable and to be effective in inspections (Ball, 2001, 2003b). Technologies of hierarchical observation, judgement normalised to the views of the local authority by processes of self-evaluation and quality assurance, and the inspection itself become, for Headteachers, the conditions which mould their professional identities and practices. Under the *Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000*, local authorities and *The Inspectorate* function of *Education Scotland* have statutory roles in relation to school improvement and the raising of educational standards. This study seeks to make a contribution to

understandings about how the performativity culture as a disciplinary system creates what Foucault has termed “regimes of truth” within Scottish schools, and how these conditions position Headteachers and influence their professional identities and practices.

Under systems of school inspections, the implication of disciplinary technology is highly visible. The increasing use of self-evaluation (e.g. Croxford et al., 2009; MacKinnon, 2011) can also be seen as an effective technology for reinforcing the panoptical power of the local authority and inspection regime as a disciplinary system. The power of this disciplinary system is illustrated by the Foucauldian adaptation of Bentham’s panopticon. Foucault utilises Jeremy Bentham’s claim that the panopticon offered the opportunity to obtain power “in hitherto unexampled quantity” and he itemises four ways in which this works. Firstly, it reduces the number of people who exercise the power while increasing the number over whom the power is exercised. Secondly, it creates “constant pressure”. Thirdly, it derives strength from the fact that “it never intervenes and is exercised spontaneously and without noise”. And fourthly, “without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry, it acts directly on individuals; it gives power of mind over mind” (Foucault, 1977, p. 206).

He who is subjected to a field of invisibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (Foucault, 1977, p. 202)

Foucault challenges the notion that power is something that is wielded and argues that it is embedded in social relations. In contemporary society, power is exercised through institutional relations that discipline our ways of thinking and act through self-regulation (Anderson and Grinberg, 1998). A major implication of Foucault’s view of power is that educational leadership and management practices that appear democratic or participatory may in fact constitute forms of power and therefore result in more effective means of

control. From Foucault (1977, 1980), it can be argued that market and performative policies work as disciplinary techniques for Headteachers and schools, entailing observation, normalising judgement and examination, which produce “the power of normalisation” with homogenising effects. It is a productive and mobile power, internalised by individuals as self-government. It is a kind of power that “produces effects at the level of desire - and also at the level of knowledge” (Foucault, 1980, p. 59), since state targets are felt as personal aspirations and practices are changed accordingly. An accountability regime, furthermore, has a saturating effect on Headteachers’ and teachers’ thinking, shaping the performative school. There is also the powerful effect of “governmentality” (Foucault, 1991b) that works through dispersed networks, embracing diverse spheres, within and beyond the frontiers of the education system. This implies a process of ethical and social transformation that flows within and beyond the education system. The state, as Newman (2005) points out: “continues to have a crucial role of metagovernance, setting the rules of the game within which networks operate and steering the overall process of coordination” (p.6). In Foucault's words:

Power is also organised as a multiple, automatic and anonymous power; for although surveillance rests on individuals, its functioning is that of a network of relationships from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally; this network “holds” the whole together and traverses it in its entirety with effects of power that derive from one another: supervisors perpetually supervised. (1977, pp. 176 - 177)

In Foucauldian terms, power is produced and organised in multiple and anonymous ways, coming from diverse points as a “polymorphous technique of subjugation” (1980, p.96). Hence, daily performance practices are not an enactment of a repressive power, directed against the will of a person, thereby implying a binary relation between dominated and subordinated, rather, power is reproductive and multiple, working as self-government. Not only are indirect tactics employed, but also direct, top-down, explicit and most obvious power strategies for pushing schools to do things in certain ways. This means

that the state not only employs a panoptical control at a distance, but also a mixed conception of power involving disciplinary and sovereign power (Foucault, 1977, 1980). Power at the individual level should be analysed through techniques of hierarchical surveillance, control and normalisation. In Foucault's analysis, this notion of power is not repressive. If it is strong, this is because: "It produces effects at the level of desire - and also at the level of knowledge: far from preventing knowledge, power produces it" (Foucault, 1980, p. 59).

Foucault argues that a normalisation (establishment of rules and judgements around a norm) of values takes place, such as in a school, and that certain knowledges and practices are central to this (Perryman, 2009). Kearins (1997) suggested that a Foucauldian perspective seeks to look beyond the manifest and obvious exercise of power, to ask how resistance and expression of dissent have been minimised or even eliminated. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) argue that the goal of his work had not been to "analyse the phenomena of power nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis" (p. 208) but rather, to create a "history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (p. 208). In the chapter detailing the role of discipline in producing docile bodies, Foucault (1977) wrote:

What was being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A 'political anatomy', which was also a 'mechanics of power', was being born; it defined how one may have hold over others bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. (p. 138)

Ever present surveillance and normalising judgment, in the form of increased stakeholder involvement in decision making and accountability regimes, serve to minimise resistance to systemic norms and produce a mode of self-regulation in Headteachers. Foucault's

Discipline and Punish (1977), in particular the chapters on the panopticon and docile bodies, expands on these themes.

The framing of educational leadership in this thesis as a disciplinary practice, in Foucault's terms, is an extension of previous work in the field that has focused on hidden dimensions of social and organisational life (Anderson and Grinberg, 1998). Disciplinary practice refers to a set of discourses, norms, and routines that shape the way in which a field of inquiry (educational leadership, and more specifically, the strategic role of the Headteacher) and its related practices constitute themselves. This self-constitution establishes "conventions, agreements, and rules that regulate and legitimise current ways of distinguishing among best practices, and desired outcomes" (Anderson and Grinberg, 1998, p. 330). As has been described, Foucault argued that the ultimate expression of modern disciplinary technology was epitomised by Bentham's panopticon. The function of constant perceived surveillance (the logic of the panopticon) is that the surveillance becomes internalised and therefore invisible. The observed individual does not need to be constantly watched because he continuously watches himself (Jones, 2004). By endorsing, and in turn legitimising, the expansion of participants in the strategic leadership process at the school level to include teachers, school communities and in some cases students, the system has expanded the level of surveillance on the Headteacher under the guise of empowering them to direct their own school. In collaboration with the level of public accountability applied to school leaders, the system has increased the level of examination on school leaders while actually removing the focus of that examination from the system. With surveillance, comes the notion of normalisation. Through the "imposition of a model of well-ordered human activity (Hoy, 1986, p. 12), systems, such as education systems, seek to mould actors within that system into normal as opposed to abnormal, delinquent or deviant. Foucault referred to this process as normalisation.

Building from Foucault, Gore (1998) defines normalisation as “invoking, requiring, setting, or conforming to a standard - defining the normal” (p. 237). Normalisation, like surveillance becomes one of the great instruments of power (Foucault, 1977). The power of normalisation imposes homogeneity, but it also individualises, by making it possible to measure variance. Normalisation operates through both individual self-discipline and group control (Anderson and Grinberg, 1998). The enactment of surveillance, combined with normalising judgment, makes it possible to “qualify, to classify and to punish” (Foucault, 1977, p. 184).

In a bygone era, the school leader was under surveillance mainly by the local authority. The surveillance may now come in many forms, including all stakeholders and the extensive political bodies and media outlets overseeing the school’s operations. The enactment of this technique of power remains relatively invisible in everyday practice. Surveillance in this panoptic form is a functional mechanism that improves “the exercise of power by making it lighter, more rapid, more effective, a design of subtle coercion for a society to come” (Foucault, 1977, p. 209). With the stated goal of bringing multiple voices (e.g. teachers, students, and parents) into school governance, the language of empowerment for stakeholders has penetrated the educational leadership discourse on all levels. According to Barker (1993), “the relative success of participatory approaches hinges not on reducing control but on achieving a system of control that is more effective than that of other systems” (p. 433). Participation increases the intensity of control by embedding ever present surveillance and normalising judgment, while at the same time, hiding the sources of control. Participation becomes a disciplinary practice that “embodies forms of unobtrusive or non-overt control in which control no longer appears to come from outside the organisational members’ sphere of activities” (Anderson and Grinberg, 1998, p. 580). Whereas in the panopticon items were arranged so as to give the

effect of constant surveillance, in a school context this is enacted through many other means, including the public spaces and architectural design of schools. It is an important mechanism that consciously embeds surveillance in all activities while at the same time removing surveillance from any one individual. Foucault (1977) states:

Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up. ... The more numerous those anonymous and temporary observers are, the greater risk for the inmate of being surprised and the greater his anxious awareness of being observed. (p. 202)

An undeniable power relationship is established from this conscious observation-based context. The need for punitive measures for non-compliance is reduced as the constant surveillance produces a mode of self-regulation on the Headteacher. This highlights one of the major contentions that constant surveillance, through stakeholder participation, changes the nature of school leadership. Foucault (1977) wrote of the panopticon:

It arranges things in such a way that the exercise of power is not added on from the outside, like a rigid, heavy constraint, to the functions it invests, but is so subtly present in them as to increase their efficiency by itself increasingly its own points of contact. The panoptic mechanism is not simply a hinge, a point of exchange between a mechanism of power and a function; it is a way of making power relations a function, and of making a function through these power relations. (p. 207)

Surveillance and normalising judgment work to produce and regulate differences between schools and implicitly, school leaders. An analysis of the role of the Headteacher reveals a regime of disciplinary practices which produce and specify individuals as objects of knowledge and power. What is most evident is a dependence model, where school directions are the result of contextual factors, both systemic and stakeholder pressures and input. Government, therefore, achieves its goals through what Ozga (2009) terms “disciplined self-management” (p.152), a means by which the self appears to exercise behavioural agency, however, it is behaviour that has already been shaped discursively.

Resistance and counter-conduct

Increasing accountabilities and an escalating emphasis on performativity entail different ways of thinking about and theorising school leadership as forms of resistance to the intense compliance structures and expectations of attainment (Thomson, 2008; Niesche, 2011). There are many factors influencing the role and practices of the Headteacher. Some of these are school, local authority, and community specific and others may be more personal, relating to the Headteacher as ethical subject, in providing the perceived necessary level of care and support for students.

Foucault's reading of power, as relational and not fixed, opens up the potential for resistance and agency:

In power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance (of violent resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation), there would be no power relations at all. (Foucault 2000a, p. 292)

Within the theoretical stance of subjectivity and political rationalities, there is also space for resistance, reflexivity and discursive agency. Individuals are subjected to disciplinary power, and at the same time, they practice micro-resistance, i.e. constraint and agency simultaneously go together. Yet this resistance is produced within the limits of subjectivity, i.e. within the vocabularies of discourse. It is in the relational character of power that Foucault highlights a multiplicity or plurality of points of resistance, i.e. they are present everywhere in the networks of power. The importance of Foucault's conceptualisation of resistance lies in the idea that resistance operates as a part of power, not in opposition to it or against it (Niesche, 2013). Foucault (2007a) develops the term counter-conduct to refer to "the sense of struggle against processes implemented for conducting others" (pp. 201 - 202).

Resistance is not only productive but also intrinsic to the functioning of governmentality (Foucault 1991a). Foucault sees power as productive which can also be seen as an instrument of resistance. Human agency and the opportunity for resistance are intrinsic to the Foucauldian concept of power relations:

A power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements that are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that ‘the other’ (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognised and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible interventions open up. (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982, p. 220)

The ability to resist, Foucault maintained, is inherent within the dynamic quality of the relation of acting agents. Resistance, for Foucault, therefore is not the goal of action. Rather, action can be understood only through the potential for resistance. Resistance is thus both a precondition for power relations and a manifest response to ongoing relations of power. Bleiker (2003) argues that discourses not only frame and subjugate our thoughts and behaviour but also offer possibilities for human agency. It is here that there is possibility for resistance to systemic and discursive practices. Foucault states that, “in order to understand what relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate those relations” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 211). For Foucault, “discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (Foucault, 1978, p.p. 100 - 101). Here Foucault relates the idea of discourse and power to the concept of resistance. He asserts that “resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (ibid, p. 95) and that “there cannot be relations of power unless the subjects are free” (Foucault, 1984, p. 123).

Foucault was very clear that dominant discourses are not a straitjacket, nor are dominant discourses all that there are. There are alternative ideas and practices that exist alongside

those that are dominant. Dominant discourses are not totalising and are coexistent with counter, submerged and subjugated discourses. Counter-discourses can and do emerge and are brought into play at points of disruption and contradiction. Counter-discourses, however, cannot simply be made to take over from those that are dominant: they generally exist in tension with them and are framed and delimited by them. Leadership can be rethought of as a disruptive practice, a form of counter-conduct that also allows for more context-based or situated understandings of leadership practice (Niesche, 2013). Resisting performativity at a discursive level implies problematising the essence and raw material of our own practices. It requires the deconstruction and recreation of the self and a certain capacity to examine ourselves critically (Ball and Olmedo, 2013).

School leaders are able to work both normatively and deconstructively at the same time. The implication of this line of thinking is not that Headteachers must be continually engaged in self-surveillance and the adoption of deconstruction as a new self-disciplining regime. Rather, it is to argue that leaders might both mobilise and be sceptical of policy and their own discourses at the same time (Thomson et al., 2013). School leaders do not have the time to engage in abstracted deconstruction exercises for their own sake, but rather these must be integral to the sense-making work that will inform everyday practice. It is at the level of practices, that it can be seen how power operates through these regimes and how Headteachers are formed as subjects through undertaking particular practices in pursuit of measurability. Countering this are the forms of day-to-day resistances that they employ to act and lead more authentically for the needs of their schools and students (Niesche, 2013).

Governmentality and leadership

Foucault sees government as a continuum in the sense of the same issues and practices, whether these are operated by an individual in relation to his or her own behaviour, or by an administration at state level. Governmentality, therefore, is concerned with not only governing others but also governing the self and can operate in both an upwards and downwards direction (Foucault, 1991a). As Foucault (2000a) further elaborates:

I am saying that governmentality implies the relationship of the self to itself, and I intend this concept of governmentality to cover the whole range of practices that constitute, define, organise, and instrumentalise the strategies that individuals can use in dealing with each other. (p. 300)

For Foucault, a governmentality approach means studying the “art of government: that is, the process of *conducting conduct*, whereby conduct means both the power of states and institutions to shape individuals *and* the power of individuals to shape and conduct themselves and others” (Foucault, 2002b, p. 341). In applying ideas of governmentality to educational leadership, the object is to uncover the rationality of its practice and the ways in which the subjects involved are positioned (Gillies, 2013).

Explorations of on-the-ground enactments of education policies are useful when analysing the lived lives of Headteachers. It shifts the focus away from understanding policy and governance as merely implemented from above instead framing these processes as *mediated phenomena*. Headteachers, from this perspective, are understood as both *subjects* of policy and as *active agents* in mediating and enacting policy meanings and practices. Governmentality, therefore, provides an illuminating lens for understanding and connecting the *macro* and *micro* realms of governance and the production of both normalising *and* resistive effects at the local level of the school (Gillies, 2013).

Subjectivation and the ethics of leadership

Related to the Foucauldian concept of governmentality of individual leadership behaviour is the idea of self-formation and how individuals operate technologies of the self to achieve or exercise leadership. Foucault refers to this as subjectivation (Gillies, 2013). This notion of the subject is important as Foucault is referring to the idea that subjects are not only shaped by social structures, but actively take up their own discourses through which they are shaped and by which they shape themselves (Blackmore, 1997):

....the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, *rappor a soi*, which I call ethics, and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions. (Foucault, 2000b, p. 263)

Foucault is interested in the self-formation of the subject within what he terms different regimes of truth or games of truth, by which he means essentially discursive disciplines. The Headteacher is encouraged as an autonomous education professional to consider their leadership behaviours as a form of ethical activity. Competence and standards frameworks construct a discourse of leadership that is instrumentalist, i.e. they operate through a range of managerial competences to construct the notion of the ideal Headteacher. Headteachers are therefore being discursively constituted according to these particular competence frameworks. As highlighted by Gronn (2003), these standards-based regimes for school leaders can be viewed as a form of designer leadership that is not only problematic but also a form of disciplined subjectivity. These standards result in the normalising of leadership into lists of expected qualities, behaviours and anticipated behaviours. As a result, Headteachers become self-disciplined in conforming to these standards and designs. Headteachers will also be influenced by their specific local regimes encompassing the expectations of the school, community, local authority and

inspectorate. According to Foucault, power is productive, and it is through the self-forming work of Headteachers that they become disciplined subjects.

Foucault's notion of ethics can be used to illuminate the moral subjectification of Headteachers through their own actions. Foucault gives the term moral to the set of values and rules of action that are prescribed by agencies such as the family, educational institutions and churches; and ethics as the real behaviour of individuals in relation to these prescribed codes, whether these values are respected or disregarded (Foucault, 1978). It is this relationship that Foucault emphasises as important, for it refers to the way one conducts oneself according to these moral codes, a relationship with the self (Niesche, 2011). This is closely linked with the notion of practices of freedom, as Foucault states that ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection (Foucault, 2000a). Governmentality is concerned with not only practices of governing others but also practices of the self (Dean, 1999). Headteachers exercise such practices of the self to become ethical subjects.

Foucault's notion of ethics is concerned with the relationship one has with oneself and processes of self-formation in response to a range of prescribed codes of action (Foucault, 2000b). It is this relationship that needs to be seen as important rather than the codes of behaviour themselves. For Foucault, ethics is:

A process in which the individual delimits that part of himself [sic] that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve and transform himself. (1985, p. 28)

Thus, Foucault's notion of ethics does not correspond with an abstract normative code (Bernauer and Mahon, 2005, p. 152). Foucault (2000a) argues that it is the concept of governmentality that makes it possible to bring out the freedom of the subject and their

relationship to others. This, he argues, is what constitutes ethical work. It is through these active practices of the self that the subject constitutes him/herself. These practices are not invented by the individual but by society, culture and social group (Foucault 2000a). Foucault's notions of ethics and technologies of the self add a further dimension to the analysis of the narratives of the new Headteachers, in particular when considering the formation of their professional identities and to gaining an understanding of how it is possible for them to contest and respond to the proliferation of practices that can serve to discipline and normalise them (Niesche, 2011).

Foucault's notion of ethics moves towards the construction of subjectivity through a constant activity of acting upon oneself in a process of monitoring, testing, improving and transforming (Foucault, 1985). In brief, the four main aspects of Foucault's genealogy of ethics (Niesche and Haase, 2010) are:

- *Ethical substance*: the way in which the individual has to constitute this or that part of him/herself as the prime material of his moral conduct (Foucault, 1985, p. 26).
- *Mode of subjection*: the way in which the individual establishes his/her relation to the rule and recognises him/herself as obliged to put it into practice (Foucault, 1985, p. 27).
- *Forms of elaboration*: the ethical work that one performs on oneself, not only in order to bring one's conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one's behaviour (Foucault, 1985, p. 27).
- *Telos*: an action that is not only moral in itself, in its singularity; it is also moral in its circumstantial integration and by virtue of the place it occupies in a pattern of conduct (Foucault, 1985, pp. 27–28). It is a mode of being characteristic of the

ethical subject and the accomplishment of a mastery over oneself to become the sort of person one wishes to be (Niesche, 2011).

Foucault argues that it is through these active practices, or technologies of the self, that the subject constitutes him/herself and these practices are not invented by the individual but by society, culture and social group (Foucault, 2000a). Situating this notion of ethics within a framework of governmentality is important, for governmentality is concerned with not only practices of governing others but also practices of the self. It should be emphasised that these practices and technologies of the self do not supersede disciplinary power but function in a different way yet still operate as a form of governmentality.

Accountability and performativity/attainment

The delivery of improved systemic and institutional performances and the achievement of examination benchmarks by individual schools are part of a broader audit culture embedded in the public sector (Ball et al., 2012). This constitutes what Jones (2003) calls “a regulatory system” which works by establishing strong links between “the microworld of classroom interactions and macro-level objectives of standards and achievements” (p. 160). These specific and rather mundane techniques of government give rise to a method of discipline, producing a general and essential transformation.

Public trust and dependence on professional judgment has been replaced with trust in “mechanisms of explicit, transparent, systematic public accountability” (Ranson, 2003, p. 468). A distinctive form of neo-liberal accountability has been the evolution of an “intensive system of evaluating and accounting for educational practice” (Ranson, 2003, p. 467). Codd (1999) argues that there are “deep-seated and problematic ethical assumptions imbued within current policy discourses that reinforce and perpetuate

externally imposed forms of accountability” (p.52). When the emphasis is on holding to account, the orientation is towards instrumentally rational goals of effectiveness (Power, 1999), creating the culture and technology of performativity that strives to optimise performance by maximising outputs (benefits) and minimising inputs (costs).

...the goal is no longer truth, but performativity - that is, the best possible input/output equation. (Lyotard, 1979/1984, p. 46)

What begins as an approach to assessing quality gravitates to an evaluation of efficiency (Elliot, 1999). Measures of productivity are created to judge and control the performance of organisational units, rendering them continually accountable. Yet as Foucault argues, the accounts produced typically become fabrications of performance, manufactured for their effects as accountability (Ball, 2001). Such regimes of accountability deny our agency, turning us into inauthentic subjects pursuing and resisting the impositions of extrinsic goals alone (Ranson, 2003, p. 462).

In essence, the measures of accountability shape the actions of the school and implicitly the school leader. If schools are measured, and potentially compared, based on statistics, it can be concluded that schools will behave differently based on their current levels of performance. In schools where the performance level is considered below average, the expectations on the school will be focused on doing “whatever it seems necessary” (Ball, 2003b, p. 225) to raise attainment. In contrast, for schools who are performing well or above systemic targets, their apparent strong market position may lead to forms of complacency or reinforcement and /or retaining commitment to current practices (*ibid* 2003b). The current management and instructional practices of the school are successively reinforced with each passing year and soon become part of the organisational culture. This poses few operational issues unless either the performance measures or the level of performance change at which point, the input of fresh and generally appropriate

ideas may be in conflict with current conditions. Schools whose performance sits around the average have the dual pressure of at least maintaining current performance, to prevent falling below average or desired targets, yet simultaneously seeking to improve what they do, to reach new heights. Schools in weak or average performance positions are more likely to use accountability measures as the rationale for decisions and actions. This is consistent with *prospect theory*, at the heart of which is the idea that people place a higher value on avoiding loss than on realising gain (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979). Ball (2003b) makes a similar argument about the nature of a strong market position:

In a strong market or performance position the impact of performativity may be different; either forms of complacency or reinforcement and/or the possibility of retaining a commitment to non-performative values and practices. Elite institutions are the best places to evade the judgements of the technicians of transformation (p. 225).

In relation to educational leadership, Foucault's work would suggest that leadership is incapable of asking critical questions because it is trapped within discourses of efficiency, productivity and performativity (Anderson and Grinberg, 1998). Due to the normalisation and constitution of such power relations being so widespread, it is difficult to escape these discourses in order to provide competing discourses (Niesche, 2011). Part of the problem with the discourse surrounding effectiveness and improvement is it is difficult to challenge:

An effective school is seen to be one where the levels of attainment achieved by its pupils, in some form of quantifiable measure, meet or exceed expectations. . . .all of the language of the school-effectiveness agenda, and of educational leadership discourse, depends on a notion of measurement, of assessment, to be practicable. (Gillies, 2013, p. 47)

The demand that we improve or become more effective discursively underpins the operations of an entire education system. We are looking at a discourse, or rather a discursive practice which connects research, policy, and administration to a degree which has begun to exclude alternative ways of thinking.

In the current educational environment where Headteachers are held accountable for results, the prevailing discourse tends to be related to managerial accountability. This is a consequence of a shift in emphasis in accountability policies during the last decades from a focus on providing educational inputs and processes, to a focus on measurable outcomes (Moller, 2007). Under this prevalent managerialist ethos, the outputs of schools require to be measured in order that managerial competence, success, or failure can be computed. This necessitates quantifiable data, most obviously through examination results or other objective assessment data. Student learning, however, is a complex process that defies a simple linear measurement.

The publicly available *School Improvement Plan* and performance data only heightens the level of surveillance on the Headteacher. Again, this is not suggesting that this is a good, bad or neutral process. Student outcomes as reported in the annual *School Improvement Plan* focus principally on the performance of students in examinations. While arguably an important set of data, it may not be reflective of the work that is, or is not, going on in the school. Targets which reflect Government and local authority priorities become the criteria for assessment of school achievement. The system has invoked and set the standard on which the *School Improvement Plan* (the written articulation of the school's strategic direction) will be evaluated. The system has used its access to all schools effectively to normalise its model of the strategic planning process. The availability of the information makes any person part of the regime of surveillance on the school and implicitly the performance of the Headteacher. As accountability measures are quantifiable data, a persuasive rationale for Headteachers would be to structure their school leadership and management based on adding value to school performance data. Simply put, if Headteacher performance is being evaluated on the basis

of quantifiable data and the system is delivering a rational model of decision making and goal setting, how is this shaping the strategic role of the Headteacher? With the increasingly public nature of performance, and the greater involvement of stakeholders in decision making processes, is the constant surveillance of Headteachers altering the way they go about their business?

The conflation of attainment via testing and other forms of assessment with notions of ability leads to school practices which sort students into groups and sets. Students are objectified as gifted, borderline, underachieving, and vulnerable (Ball, 2013). Different affordances and opportunities are offered to different groups which may well lead to inequitable life chances (Gillbourn and Youdell, 2000). As external policy changes focus on different metrics of performance, these changes are reflected in changes of emphases within the schools to focus on different sorts of students. So while attention to a value-added indicator may make the contribution of all students significant, a specific grade indicator may not (Ball et al., 2012).

Achievement and excellence are relative terms and can be understood only in terms of the relations of rank among students, where the standard by which students are judged is most frequently the norm as defined by examination performance:

Normalisation becomes one of the great instruments of power.... In a sense, this power imposes homogeneity; but it individualises by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities, and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another. It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences. (Foucault, 1977, p. 184)

The examination unmask those characteristics of the individual that fail to meet the norm or are abnormal in some other way. It allows each individual to be made into a case. Each case represents an individual who may be "described, judged, measured, compared with

others..., who has to be trained or corrected, classified, normalised, excluded" (Foucault, 1977, p. 191). Foucault suggests that the distribution of students in a hierarchy is also a form of punishment and reward (1977, p. 181). Goals, it would seem, are defined by the limits of the means we have to measure our success in reaching them.

Attainment in examinations has become accepted as the outward standard of school performance and encouraged the view that school effectiveness should be judged on the basis of outputs and not inputs. Schools are subject to an overbearing focus on raising standards (Ball, 2013). The discourse of standards works to articulate a particular version and vision of what schooling is and should be – more, higher, better (Ball et al., 2012). Such a discourse exists at an abstract level but it has the ability to arrange and rearrange, form and re-form, position and identify whatsoever and whomsoever exists within its field and it has a “heavy and fearsome materiality” (Probyn 1993, p. 167).

Government sets great store by school performance as a measure of the health of the education system, tightly tied to the needs of international economic competitiveness (Ball, 2013). Schools are made responsible for the “population-wealth problem” (Foucault, 2007b, p.365). “The nation, its schools, teachers and individual students, are captured within a matrix of calculabilities” (Ball, 2013, p. 103): within what Ozga (2008) calls “governing knowledge”; that is, “a regime of numbers – a resource through which surveillance can be exercised” (p. 264) – “addressed to improvements in quality and efficiency, by making nations, schools and students legible” (*ibid* p. 268). These numbers are deployed within schemes like the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA), national evaluation systems and school performance tables. One may consider international assessment programmes as transporters of ideology insofar as their impact

on educational affairs can be regarded as powerful contributions to the culture of performativity (Ball, 2006b).

The apparent objectives of *The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000* were tightening control, extending surveillance and pursuing a standards agenda. Sections 3 to 7 of the Act, under the heading of *Raising Standards* embody: distilled mechanisms of performativity; legislation inspired by the technology of managerialism; and a regime of surveillance, control and measurement. As discussed in previous sections, in post-devolutionary Scotland, school attainment has remained a primary focus of Labour and Scottish National Party Governments. The scale of the Scottish system has made achievable the task of constructing what could be described as a national statistical panopticon (Foucault, 1977). This numerical regime monitors all local authority secondary schools and illuminates every statistically significant deviation, trend and performance.

Standard Tables and Charts (STACs), produced by the Scottish Government, contained data and analyses of pupil attainment in SQA examinations. The data were constructed in the form of tables and charts and had been issued to local authorities and schools since August 2001 (recently replaced by *Insight* in September 2014). For Headteachers the pressures of the regime of numbers defines “a whole field of new realities” (Foucault, 2007b, p. 75) and the “pertinent space within which and regarding which” (p. 75) they must act. Schooling as a process is rendered into an input-output calculation (Ball, 2013). Modern systems enable the tracking of student performance, the mapping of actuals in relation to targets, and the calculation of point-scores and value-added. Headteachers, teachers, students, pedagogies, procedures, performance data and initiatives, all of these objects and subjects are to be focused on, in order to raise attainment (Perryman, 2009;

Ball et al., 2011). Headteachers adopt practices, participate in technologies of the self, and are normalised in accordance with this attainment agenda. As Tennant (1998), however, points out, when applying Foucauldian analysis to such practices the question should be to what extent the identities that are produced are empowering or limiting.

Summary

In the foregoing, I have overviewed the Foucauldian concepts of discourse, power/knowledge, disciplinary power, governmentality and ethics in the examination of issues surrounding school leadership. These are the key concepts that form the foundation for the data analysis chapters. Foucault's understandings of the concepts of discourse and power/knowledge are central and are essential elements in the examination of school leadership. Foucauldian analysis is potentially useful in exploring the lived experiences of Headteachers and the disciplining effects of the various accountabilities and culture of performativity on their work practices. Foucault's conception of critique can be used to evidence that there is nothing fixed about the discourse of educational leadership. The work of the Headteachers is complex and challenging, and their subjectivities are a constantly shifting and flexible phenomenon rather than a construct based on prescribed standards of Headship and numerous leadership policy documents (Niesche, 2013). The work of Foucault illustrates the different ways in which the constitution of Headteachers' subjectivities is influenced through a range of particular discourses, power relations and work practices. Theorising how Headteachers are formed as subjects can reveal how power and authority are critical to educational leadership. Foucault's notion of power relations provides a more nuanced understanding of power that moves beyond hierarchy and position. Governmentality provides a broad framework within which to view more

school specific issues of disciplinary power, panopticism and the subjectification of Headteachers through technologies of the self as a part of their ethical work.

In the next chapter, I discuss the implications of my role as insider researcher. I consider my relationship with the research participants. I explore and reflect upon the interpretation of the attainment agenda and how my research may be influenced by my own views and experiences.

Chapter 5

Positioning the research: my multiple roles as researcher

The real art of discovery consists not in finding new lands, but in seeing with new eyes. (Marcel Proust)

Introducing the insider researcher

The worker researcher has a dual position which is inevitably influenced by the organisational context and the project inquiry process (Workman, 2007). This role is sometimes referred to as the insider researcher (van Heugten, 2004) or practitioner researcher (Robson, 2002). My current role involves supporting, challenging and setting strategy within the secondary school sector. This study is built on the opportunity to reflect upon the influence of the attainment agenda and its disciplining influences on the work practices of secondary Headteachers within my own local authority. Reinforcing this attainment agenda and supervising the work of the Headteachers is an integral part of my responsibility. In fact, I work directly with the Headteachers who were interviewed for the purposes of this study. Thus I am very much an insider researcher, a position which poses issues of power and ethics that require careful consideration.

Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) identified three key advantages of being an insider-researcher: (a) having a greater understanding of the culture being studied; (b) not altering the flow of social interaction unnaturally; and (c) having an established intimacy which promotes both the telling and the judging of truth. Further, insider-researchers generally know the politics of the institution, not only the formal hierarchy but also how it really works. Therefore, they may know how best to approach people to recruit and engage participants. In general, they have a great deal of relevant organisational knowledge, which takes an outsider a long time to acquire (Smyth and Holian, 2008).

Inquiry from the inside involves researchers as actors immersed in local situations generating contextually embedded knowledge that emerges from experience (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). The four Headteachers included in the study are based in schools within my own local authority. As a senior education officer, and former Headteacher colleague, I have a wide range of knowledge of their schools' past and present histories. This knowledge could lead to an over-reliance on preconceptions and the influence of questionable information not accessible to an outsider researcher. Information available to me included, for example: knowledge of the Headteachers through my involvement in the appointment process; my earlier experiences of the Headteachers post-appointment; and the opinions of staff and other colleagues. There are, however, many views counterbalancing this position. (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007) highlight the pre-understanding of rich and complex knowledge and experiences that is the strength of insider research. It is suggested that a heightened sensitivity is needed to enable this richness to surface (Gallais, 2008) whilst remembering that neutrality is not achievable as an insider researcher (Drake and Heath, 2008). Insiders undoubtedly have a better initial understanding of the social setting because they know the context; they understand the subtle and diffuse links between situations and events; and they can assess the implications of following particular avenues of enquiry (Griffiths, 1985).

The preceding polarising commentary might indicate that the insider and outsider perspectives are regarded as "two mutually exclusive frames of reference" as defined by Olson (1977, p. 171). It could also be argued, however, that "individuals have not a single status, but a status set" (Merton, 1972, p. 22) and that identities are "always relative, cross cut by other differences and often situational and contingent" (DeVault. 1996, p. 35). For this reason, a great many authors, including Anderson and Jones (2000), Carter (2004),

Hockey (1993) and Labaree (2002), reject the insider/outsider dichotomy proposed by Olson (1977) in favour of a continuum, with the two abstractions better considered as end points “existing in conceptualisation rather than fact” (Christensen and Dahl, 1997, p. 282). Merton (1972) suggests that the insider doctrine (only insiders can do proper research) and the outsider doctrine (only outsiders have the necessary detachment for proper research) are both fallacies precisely because we rarely are completely an insider or an outsider. This is echoed by Eppley (2006):

Insider/outsider positions are socially constructed and entail a high level of fluidity that further impacts a research situation. A researcher, by nature, has to have some level of outsidership in order to conduct research. This does not mean that the insider perspective is surrendered: both exist simultaneously. Researchers, then, can be neither insider nor outsider; they are instead temporarily and precariously positioned within a continuum. (p. 5)

I adopted this view in conducting and reflecting on my research. As Eppley (2006) further states, insider and outsider identities are changeable and constructed simultaneously through the researcher’s conception of self and their participants’ view of them as researcher and colleague. I accord with the view of De Andrade (2000) that “insider status is not simply granted or achieved: it is created through an ongoing process of evaluation that is dependent upon the performance of group membership by researchers and participants at multiple levels” (p. 283).

Identifying the researcher

My thesis is based on the case studies of four relatively new secondary school Headteachers employed by my local authority. Reconciling my position as a researcher, and as a responsible professional practitioner, entailed methodological as well as ethical considerations. All of the Headteachers who took part in the research were known to me and worked with me in a professional capacity on a regular basis. I recognised that my

involvement as a senior education officer and line manager to the research participants, and a former Headteacher and peer group member, entailed a positionality which had to be acknowledged and accounted for within the project process. My focus was on understanding social reality by interpreting the meanings held by these Headteachers and this subjective interpretation was the key to the research process. Subjectivist ontology assumes that what is taken as reality is an output of human cognitive process (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). I also recognised in conducting my research that there was a continual impact on my relationship with the participants. As Mercer (2007) highlights:

The researcher's relationship with the researched is not static, but fluctuates constantly, shifting back and forth along a continuum of possibilities, from one moment to the next, from one location to the next, from one interaction to the next, and even from one discussion topic to the next. (p. 13)

Raising attainment is fundamental to my role within the local authority and therefore there is a high degree of correlation between my professional and academic interest. A permanent principal focus of my professional role is to improve the learning outcomes of students in my local authority. Essential to this is to understand the constitution of successful work practices amongst Headteachers and how these may be developed and enhanced. I acknowledge the fundamental tension between my professional position as embedding/conveying certain organisational commitments while as researcher endeavouring to open a critical space for the participants to speak candidly concerning the subjectifying effects of the attainment discourses. If successful, the research promises to enhance my knowledge of the current policy agenda in relation to school attainment and its impact on the development of new Headteachers. The research should therefore prove of great practical value within my local authority and hopefully beyond.

My own background, which is known to the new Headteachers, seemed to offer benefit during the research process, by establishing some common ground during the research

relationship. I was appointed to my first post as Headteacher in 2004 and during 2007 moved to another secondary school within the same local authority. Here performance had been weak and addressing the culture for learning and raising attainment were imperatives. With the help of new strategies and initiatives, a reorganised and motivated Senior Management Team, and highly committed staff and students, the school achieved great success and attainment levels rose significantly across all areas. The positive impact on the school and the local community were highly rewarding. My background, therefore, yielded some useful insights into my chosen research project. I have experienced secondary school teaching at every level and achieved success as a Headteacher in a challenging school. In my current role as a senior education officer in the same local authority, a key element of my brief was to raise attainment across all schools.

I am personally invested in the local authority priority to raise attainment for all our children and to improve sustainable positive destinations for our leavers. This corporate approach permeates through to the Headteachers (who are also officers of the local authority) and there is an expectation that the Headteachers are fully aligned to the priorities of the local authority. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the extent to which I am complicit in the discourse. It is made clear from my regular attainment meetings with the secondary Headteachers that improving attainment is a high priority for the local authority.

By the time that I had moved to my second Headteacher role, the need to raise attainment had become essential for the local authority, pupils, parents, and for the reputation of the school in the community. Students in the school that I was leading were doing significantly less well than expected, resulting in reduced opportunities for achieving positive destinations. The persistence of this situation was not acceptable to the local

authority, staff, community and most importantly the students. Although attainment was a priority, the culture for learning, the low aspirations of the teachers and pupils, and poor behaviour, all presented a barrier to attainment. It was very clear that many issues had to be addressed if this position were to improve. I instigated a strategy and associated actions agreed by the whole staff and student population, to implement a broad buy-in to a programme for improvement. The school managed to improve its performance in terms of examination attainment and is now high in its comparator grouping. My experience in this process naturally reinforced my belief in the importance of purposeful action by a Headteacher to set a clear strategy for school improvement and to involve everyone in achieving this.

However, all schools are individual and part of specific communities. I do not expect that one set of actions for improvement fits every school. In my current role as senior education officer, the principal advantage of my time as Headteacher was the development of knowledge, skills, expertise and credibility with my Headteacher colleagues. We regularly discuss strategies and tactics for improvement consistent with the characteristics and culture of their schools. These actions are expected to effect improved outcomes for our pupils reinforced by a strong sense of purpose for staff. Each school's self-evaluation must be robust and evidence-based thus underpinning any improvement strategies. I am also an advocate of inter-school collaboration and have set up cohorts to coordinate on quality improvement and building staff capacity. This also provides greater collegiate support for Headteachers and staff, and facilitates the proliferation of best practice. Although I am acutely aware that I am the line manager, I also have a responsibility to work on improvement strategies with the Headteacher group and not simply impose local authority policy and communicate the associated rhetoric.

At the same time, however, I am completely immersed in the discourses of attainment and school improvement in my professional role and practices as I work and act with the Headteachers. This inevitably impacts on my role of researcher. My experience as Headteacher also gave me the advantage of reflecting on my own possible responses as if I were a research participant in a similar position to my research subjects. I am therefore very much aware of the tension created by these sometimes competing discourses. The requirements of the attainment agenda, as communicated by the local authority, can sometimes conflict with the immediate priorities of the Headteachers. A critical part of this study therefore involved analysis of these conflicts and tensions, and a careful attention to reflexivity as explained below.

Researching the attainment agenda

(Ball, 2003b, 2004) asserts that many of the accountability and validity claims made for efficacy, influence and usefulness in educational research are done so within a culture of performativity and the commodification of education. Should the primary objectives of education practitioner research not be to improve practice and to measure the impact of this improvement? My research project examined the influence of the attainment agenda on the practices of Headteachers. What was the purpose of this research if not improvement - measurable or otherwise? There are many practitioners for whom securing tangible improvements in schools is the fundamental driver behind their decision to undertake research (Coleman and Lumby, 1999; Barker, 2005). In the context of the comments made by Ball, there are important issues relating to the balance between identifiable quantitative improvements and significant qualitative improvements which may be less amenable to performance measures. This is a question of the narrower definition of attainment against a wider understanding of school and student achievement.

The concept of attainment is highly problematic and it is common in educational discourse for this to be related to some measure of potential and whether this potential has been achieved particularly in terms of specific educational outcomes.

Throughout this study it was essential that I explored and reflected on the interpretation of the attainment agenda with the Headteachers in order to clarify any divergence of meaning among and between the research participants and myself as the researcher. Foucauldian methods involve subjecting the discourse of the attainment agenda to an analysis which probes the assumptions inherent in the system of thought upon which it rests, and seeks to trace its emergence in terms of practices. Such analysis would also examine the way in which the attainment agenda had been problematised and how its framing has served to constitute the Headteacher as subject. These themes require further elaboration and will be addressed in succeeding chapters.

Subjects, subjectivity, and relationships

When focusing on people working within the same institution, there are “inherent tensions between the role of researcher and the organisational role, which is especially true when the researcher is a manager” (Smyth and Holian, 2008, p. 39). It was critical that the implications of these power relationships were kept to the fore by me at all stages of the research. For Foucault, the value of history was to locate the historical conditions that allow us to think, speak and act as we do now. This has been termed history of the present (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982). Foucault argued that our experiences of selves and lives are discursive effects; in other words, they are the result of powerful discourses that structure our reality (Foucault, 1972). From a Foucauldian perspective, there is no essential subject that can be identified outside of discursive construction and discourse provides the means of articulation and action (Foucault, 1977).

The term 'research interview' refers to any conversation between two people undertaken for the purpose of generating original data for research (Gubrium and Holstein 2001). In Foucauldian terms it is necessary to question the suitability of research interviews for history of the present studies. Various issues must be addressed. What is the nature of the power intrinsic to my relationship with the Headteachers involved in the research and the power they exercise over me? I needed to remain conscious of the assertion that "those with power are simply unable to see the mechanisms that privilege their own viewpoint over others" (Parker 2005, p. 2). What shared understandings do I have with the Headteachers? Do I have personal bonds and/or professional commitments? Will my research strengthen trust or perhaps abuse it? What negative or embarrassing data can I anticipate emerging from this research? These were important questions for me in designing the research methods and ensuring sufficient processes of reflexivity throughout the conduct of the study.

Reflexivity and researcher positionality

Kenway and McLeod (2004) offer the opinion that "reflexivity is a much-used term, over-determined and under-defined" (p. 526). The practice of reflexivity, however, is a necessary methodological stance in qualitative research (e.g. Forbes 2008; Pillow, 2010).

A useful initial definition is provided by Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009):

Reflection means interpreting one's own interpretations, looking at one's own perspectives from other perspectives, and turning a self critical eye onto one's own authority as interpreter and author.

MacNaughton (2005) argues that the importance of reflection to critical educational research is that it provides a way of discovering an individual's understanding of their professional practices as well as simply unearthing them for the researcher's purposes.

Reflexivity is rooted in ethical values and relationship with self and knowledge creation. Pryce (2002) argues that reflective practice must be transformative and always contextualised by change and the creation of new knowledge from professional knowledge and professional experience. We no longer seek to eradicate the researcher's presence - instead subjectivity in research is transformed from a problem to an opportunity (Finlay, 2002). It is, however, essential to interrogate the impact of the researcher's presence as emphasised by Nightingale and Cromby (1999):

Reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process and acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining outside of one's subject matter. Involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research. (p. 228).

Epistemological reflexivity focuses on researchers' belief systems and is a process for analysing and challenging theoretical assumptions, whereas methodological reflexivity is concerned with the monitoring of the behavioural impact on the research setting as a result of carrying out the research (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). Shacklock and Smyth (1998) see reflexivity as the conscious revelation of the role of the beliefs and values held by researchers in the selection of research methodology for the generation of knowledge and its production as a research account. Altheide and Johnson (1994) claim, "All knowledge and claims to know are reflexive of the process, assumptions, location, history and context of knowing and the knower" (p.488). This resonates with the myth of objectivity in social research argued by Troyna (1994).

Reay (2004) suggests that Bourdieu underestimated the importance of individual reflexivity and reflection and the role they play in forming dispositions around practice. Reay looks at ways in which practice inevitably operates at an unconscious level unless disturbed by events that cause self-questioning. Foucault (1980) defined the role or identity of the qualitative educational researcher as an interpreter of meaning, rather than

one who discovers new knowledge. This problematises not only the role of the researcher but what is researched and how it is researched and necessitates an awareness of the power relationships within the discursive landscapes. I questioned myself about the limits of my knowledge and the disciplining effects of my profession and my position within my own local authority. We may self-regulate our actions toward ends that we may not conceive and with which we may not agree (Foucault, 1972, 2001).

I was concerned with how perceptions of school leadership might have formed and become discursively visible and dominant, and “the effects in the real” (Foucault, 1980, p.237) of challenging current practices arising out of these perceptions within school settings. Ladkin (2010) argues that leadership is a phenomenon which involves multiple dimensions in which the perception of the perceiver is of central significance. In conducting my research, I remained aware that the disciplining effect of my own knowledge and professional position as practitioner researcher, created a power dynamic, limiting access to the knowledge held by the Headteachers with whom I was seeking to develop research alliances (Foucault, 1986).

Alcoff (1992) argues that in making claims to speak for others, to re-present others in our research texts, we need to consider carefully our own positionality. For Pendlebury and Enslin (2001) the concept of positionality defines human subjects in terms of their social position, historical experiences and external contexts. Foucault (2001) expounds the idea that, “one must put a *technology of the self* to work in order to have access to the truth” (pp. 46-47). This methodological *technology of the self* asks the question: what is it about myself? I reflected on this in order to be better able to conduct research in this context with these social subjects. Davies et al. (2004) conclude that a researcher must find a way to write that includes making visible the technologies of the self. Myers (2008) warns that

the emotions and passions can direct the practitioner-researcher toward ambivalence and avoidance, as well as toward challenging established power relationships. It was also important to identify instances of reflexivity in the Headteachers. This was a very difficult undertaking given the nature of reflexivity which sometimes is akin to the world of quantum physics, where the process of observation impacts on the observed. Understanding reflective discourse had the potential to lead to key research insights into the modes of thinking adopted by the different Headteachers and their thoughts about thoughts. Foucault emphasises the importance and potential difficulty:

Hence the necessity of converting reflexive language, it must be directed, not towards any inner confirmation....but towards the outer bound where it must continually content itself. (Foucault and Faubion, 1998, p. 152)

The selection of my research problem could not be separated from my professional role. The research problem was arrived at partly as a consequence of my responsibility for raising attainment in schools within my local authority area. As practitioner researcher, I was keenly aware that, in exercising power over the Headteachers who are the subjects of my research, I needed to reflect on the very mechanics of how such power is operationalised and the limitations and disciplining effects of my own knowledge. In conducting all such due diligence, I observed the caveat expressed concisely by Skeggs (2002), “some forms of reflexivity are reproductive, repetitious and reinforce existing power relations” (p. 367).

Conducting educational research amongst educators raises some broader issues:

There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all. (Foucault, 1985, p. 8)

There is the problem of research relationships in education being always already disciplined within the discourses that constitute them in practice (Weiler 1997; Harrison

1996). This means that “as educators researching education we are often subject to and subjects of discursive norms constituting us as professional practitioners, and we need to become more explicit about the nature and effects of this in our research work” (Reid, 1997, p. 1). I needed to be aware and reflexive of the relations of my research situation and to make explicit the basis for my own knowledge production. This was benefited by an awareness of the importance of Bourdieu’s notion of habitus. For Bourdieu, habitus is the set of embodied predispositions that structure and are structured by social interaction (Bourdieu, 1984). For me, this necessitated considering the interrelationship of three key conceptual terms in social theory: discourse, subjectivity and practice (Reid, 1997).

In conducting my research, I realised I was more naturally positioned to take a privileged view from the top. I was already situated in the field, as a player in position, with a particular history and an investment and keen interest in the actions of the participants. I was aware that this potentially restricted the moves and actions of all involved in the research. I needed, therefore, to be very clear about what it was I represented as the action, especially with regard to the limitations and potentialities for action within the field. As Bourdieu (1992) cautions, wherever the question of data is concerned we must immediately be suspicious. “Reality offers itself to you when you are within the preconstructed” (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 44). As Smith (1987) notes, “if research cannot avoid being situated then it should take that as its beginning and build it into its methodological and theoretical strategies” (p. 91).

Foucault (1977) claims that the subject is produced in discourse. From this theoretical position, discourses discipline their good subjects in line with their truths and norms. A Foucauldian analysis should, therefore, allow the regimes of truth within discourse to become explicit and, therefore, susceptible to reform (Smith, 1987). This for me was a

caution to be reflexive about making explicit the regimes of truth that influenced how I approached my role as senior education officer, as supervisor of the Headteachers, and as critical researcher seeking to analyse the governing effects of the very discourses I was promoting.

Additional commentary: researcher/researched power relationships

The ability of practitioner researchers to derive meaning from situations in which they are immersed cannot be addressed without also considering the effects of power. As an insider researcher, I constantly remained aware that the disciplining effects of my own knowledge and professional position created power relationships with the potential to hinder the research process. It is important to emphasise that at the commencement of the research I was not line-manager to the secondary Headteachers. At that time, I had responsibility for primary schools within my local authority. It was only in the latter period of my research that my position altered. It should also be noted that the Headteachers are officers of the local authority and senior and successful individuals leading the order of 100 staff and 1000 pupils. Most of my role is collaborative with the common objective of improving schools with an interest in the personal and professional advancement of the Headteachers. My position and history are situated in discourses which produce a wide range of lenses through which I can see, from every position from classroom teacher, through Headteacher to senior education officer. This implies insight, empathy, credibility, and, as explained in the foregoing, a heightened understanding of the complications such power relationships in my local authority might pose.

Throughout the research process, I tried to remain as attentive as possible to the inevitable tensions created by interviewing and interpreting the participants about their dilemmas and practices related to an agenda that they know I am professionally and personally

committed to supporting. I was particularly alert during the interview process to any signals of discomfort, and also to listening as openly as possible to understand and affirm the Headteachers own experiences. This careful listening, mindful of the power relations which also inevitably affect my interpretations, will no doubt have carried over into my processes of data analysis, and of writing. In the end, however, I am aware, particularly from guidance from Foucault's writings, that power relations will always be at work and at some point the researcher must simply acknowledge and live with these tensions. In my case, the benefits to the participants, as well as the research, of working with Headteachers in my own local authority, outweighed the problems posed by these power relations. I acknowledge that the impact is not possible to avoid but it can with experience and vigilance be mitigated significantly.

Ethical considerations

All researchers face a variety of ethical dilemmas, but, for the insider researcher, two take on particular significance. First, there was the issue of what to tell colleagues, both before and after they participated in the research. A second ethical dilemma for the insider researcher concerned the use of incidental data arising from informal discussions and meetings and local knowledge. Hockey (1993, p. 200) suggests that being an insider “may potentially influence the whole research process - site selection, method of sampling, documentary analysis, observation techniques and the way meaning is constructed from the field data”. Endogenous data collection can also raise ethical issues around disparities in power (Trowler, 2011).

Four new Headteachers were invited to participate in the study, two of whom had been promoted within the authority and the other two appointed from positions external to the authority. I attempted to make it very clear that their participation was entirely voluntary,

and subject completely to their interest, availability and consent to the proposed procedures for the study. I also clarified that they could withdraw from the study for any reason at any time. The four Headteachers were given clear written details of the research purpose, the nature of their contribution to the data, and the way in which information was to be used. The Headteachers were made aware that anonymity would be preserved and confidentiality of the research data maintained. An underlying ethical principle is that participants have the right to know some of the research findings (Busher and James, 2012). Assurances were given that the results of the study would be disclosed. My role as practitioner researcher raised questions concerning issues of power in relation to the Headteachers involved in the study. It was emphasised to the four Headteacher participants that the research was being carried out both in relation to my professional role and for the purpose of pursuing a doctorate in education. It was underlined from the outset that participation would have no professional or career implications.

In undertaking research within my own authority, there were a number of important issues to consider. There were two key operational objectives which I wished to achieve:

- to remain working as an effective manager in the area during and after the study; and
- that the Headteachers should benefit from the work and not feel threatened by either the methods used or the outcomes.

I was acutely aware that people may not share certain information with an insider for fear of being judged (Shah, 2004). Informants might have been more willing to be candid with a detached outsider than with someone so intimately bound up with the school environment and so enmeshed in its power relations. The power imbalance between the Headteachers and the local authority could have had the potential to impact on the research. The Headteachers were aware of the significance of the attainment agenda and

the value that the local authority placed on this. The purpose was to gain insight through transparent reflections on Headteacher practice and there was the potential that this could have been compromised by the participants providing responses they thought I might have wished to hear. My experience as a Headteacher was of benefit in detecting and avoiding any such tendencies should they have become apparent.

The research was carried out in accordance with the revised *British Educational Research Association: Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (BERA, 2011) and Allen (2012) (the BERA resource on using Foucault in educational research). Following voluntary written consent, participants had the option to withdraw at any stage without having to provide a reason. Ethical issues were considered very carefully in this piece of insider research since “for the practitioner conducting the research, it is precisely the relationships - insider to insider - that pose the most significant ethical dilemmas” (Clay, 2001, p. 33). To ensure confidentiality, participants were anonymised and the school names and locations altered in this study. I checked with the Headteachers verbally at different times throughout the study to ensure their continued comfort with participation and the respective roles. I talked with them openly about our relationship and my own different roles and the tensions this presented. I validated the study transcripts with the Headteachers and the thesis discussion of their interview data to ensure their approval of the interpretations and of including the material in the finished thesis. In addition to this full thesis, it is intended that an executive summary will be produced for those Headteachers and other colleagues interested in the outcomes.

In the next chapter I provide a detailed description of the theoretical framework and methodology and the linkage with the subject of the research and the research questions. The theoretical framework is based on a number of Foucauldian concepts, through which

I examined the discourses and work practices of the Headteachers as influenced by the attainment agenda.

Chapter 6

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

...this was the proper task of a history of thought, as against a history of behaviours or representations: to define the conditions in which human beings problematise what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live. (Foucault, 1985, p. 10)

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the overall research strategy, the theoretical background and the rationale for the methodological approach that I have used to undertake this study. It details the research orientation, research design, methods of inquiry, and analysis techniques used for the purposes of this thesis. The study is informed by the concepts of Michel Foucault and employs a case study methodology.

I have structured the chapter as follows. First, I outline the principal questions that guided this research. Second, I provide a description of the Foucauldian theoretical framework and methodology I employed in conducting the research and analysing the interview material. Third, I provide reflection on the research process and conclude the chapter with a discussion of how I addressed issues concerning the quality of the research.

Objective and research questions

It is intended that this study should investigate the challenges that new Headteachers encounter in negotiating the attainment agenda in the Scottish education system and how these Headteachers are disciplined and constructed as subjects within a culture of performativity.

My research was guided by the following questions:

1. How does the attainment agenda influence the role and challenges of the newly appointed Headteacher?

This question sought to identify the multiple views of the Headteachers regarding their practices, professional and ethical issues, challenges or problematic situations in their work as school leaders in relation to the attainment agenda. The intention is to explore the power relations that create Headteachers' subjectivities and how interacting regimes of practice impact on and discipline their daily work practices.

2. What are the strategies and positions adopted by newly appointed Headteachers to negotiate the challenges of the attainment agenda?

I used this question to identify the approaches the school leaders used for managing the challenges identified in the study. These approaches are reflected in their daily work practices. In the data collection and analysis, the preferred strategies as well as the reasons why they were selected were investigated. In this context, understanding educational leadership as a discourse allows analysis of its work practices.

3. How does the impact of the attainment agenda vary between different newly appointed Headteachers?

This question sought to identify the different strategies and practices employed by the Headteachers involved in the study in dealing with the challenges of the attainment agenda and the possible reasons for these differences. This brings into play technologies of the self which are explained in more detail later in this section. The interest is in how the discourse serves to create subjects and how subjects, as active agents, create themselves (Gillies, 2013).

Research paradigm and qualitative approach

The notion of discourse as practice employed in this study is theoretically informed by the work of Michel Foucault. As we shall see, although Foucault ascribed discourses a

systematic character, he asserted that discourses are not merely to be seen as “groups of signs” but as “practices” (Foucault, 1972, p. 90). According to Foucault, discourse was to be realised through practice, and (almost all) social practice is informed by discourse.

By asserting that discourse systematically structures meaning, Foucault highlighted its relevance in producing social reality. He thus goes beyond a mere formalistic understanding of discourse. In the words of Hall (1997), discourse “constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge” (p.44). Although there may be objects independent from discourse, it is only through discourse that we come to understand them. A Foucauldian approach thus entails engaging in an investigation of discourse as practice based on the multiple realities and multiple truths of the research participants as interpreted and influenced by the researcher. It also shows how regimes of meaning become constructed and then discipline activity and identity.

The theoretical framework underlying the Foucauldian concepts and tools utilised for the purposes of my research was developed in Chapter 4 and this is supplemented in the following sections. The research seeks to identify secondary school leaders’ experiences (issues and challenges) in negotiating the demands of the attainment agenda. An exploration of the Headteachers’ varied perspectives and experiences of the pressures of performativity within their contexts is necessary. This research is premised on the epistemological assumption that knowledge is co-constructed by the researcher and participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003): thus the school leaders’ subjective experiences and perspectives constitute reality, and are meaningful and subject to interpretation.

The subjective experiences of the school leaders within their contexts will be interpreted individually and collectively in this study. The experiences of the Headteachers, as relayed in the research, and the role of the researcher, as interpreter and disseminator of

knowledge, are also assumed to be interrelated. My perspective is that knowledge is actively constructed by Headteachers as they interact with their environment for, as Denzin and Lincoln (2003) state, “we do not construct our interpretations in isolation, but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, [and] language” (p. 305). Knowledge or meaning is, therefore, contextual and negotiated within the participants’ social contexts.

A case study methodology has been used in order to explore discourse as practice using the various Foucauldian concepts of power/knowledge, disciplinary power, resistance and counter-conduct, governmentality and the ethical subject. Educationalists have emphasised the need for research on leadership that reveals the contextual details and experiences of school leaders (Eacott, 2010). A qualitative approach facilitates interaction with the participants in their settings, and with their words and perceptions, which enables researchers to obtain a rich, holistic overview and deep understanding (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This study aims to understand, in a complex and multi-layered way, the richness of the Headteacher’s lived life and its dynamics.

Why Foucault?

The focus of this chapter is on the research process, in particular the theoretical framework and the various decisions and procedures which informed the conduct of this research. I will now set out the key reasons for my decision to rely on the work of Michel Foucault to guide this project. The study has been developed around the central theme of the attainment agenda and the associated concepts of accountability and performativity. In conducting this research, it is the interaction between the internal and external school pressures that is of most interest and the ways in which this disciplines the practices of new Headteachers.

Foucault's exploration of discourse offers a novel way of looking at the systems of knowledge from which concepts emerge, are accepted and socially reinforced. Foucault's approach enables the disturbance of conventional understandings (Foucault, 1985) and is consistent with a strategy of de-familiarisation and pivotal to enabling us to think differently. Foucault's work is primarily historical analysis, which aims to explain the development of contemporary, expert-driven thought and practice on a given topic deemed problematic (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982). Foucault's approach directs analytic attention to both change and continuity; to underlying assumptions; to the problematisations to which knowledge claims are directed; to the subjectivities and relationships invoked by different ideas; and to the wider context in which ideas come into being (e.g. Foucault, 1977; 1985).

An extensive discussion of Foucauldian concepts appropriate to the subject of educational leadership is provided in Chapter 4. A Foucauldian approach can be applied to schools and Headteachers, which can be viewed as discursively created and contingent upon leadership discourse. Headteachers operate within normalising discursive regimes of leadership and self-management, regimes of practice, influenced by the systemic power of governmentality. How did the prevailing discourses gain precedence? Headteachers are disciplined and constructed as subjects within these discursive regimes. The Headteacher is largely constituted by particular accountabilities within a culture of performativity. How has such a position arisen and by what means is it perpetuated and reinforced? When I connected Foucault's philosophical positioning with my problematisation of the attainment agenda and my concern to understand how Headteacher' practices had developed, it became apparent that I needed the critical and historical theoretical framework and methodology that a Foucauldian approach provides.

Foucauldian ‘discourse analysis’

Foucault did not offer a guide to methodology that covered all the methods or every tool used in his works. What Foucault does offer is a flexible approach that can loosely be termed discourse analysis.

Foucault (1981a) observes that “any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers which they carry” (p. 123). Concepts such as leadership and management are constituted and sustained through certain discourses, and, as such, “leadership is not what it claims to be, but rather it is an effect of a discourse, a superficial surface, a mask that deflects attention from its genealogy and effects” (Lingard et al., 2003, p. 128). As Ball (1994) observes, "Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority" (p.21). Hence, this analysis examines what can and cannot be said (and thought) and in what ways discourses authorise subjects to speak (when, where, and how). Additionally, there is an interest in looking at discourses of resistance, competing narratives and power struggles. Overall, the research analyses micro-power tactics, discursive rules and versions of truth, along with resistance and contestation.

It is quite difficult to find coherent descriptions of how one might go about discourse analysis using Foucault. Perhaps the difficulty in locating concise descriptions as to how to go about doing Foucauldian discourse analysis is because there is no such thing (Graham, 2005). Poststructural theoretical approaches to discourse analysis (using Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard among others) may be found in the characteristic eschewing of claims to objectivity and truth (Graham, 2011).

Discourse analysis informed by Foucauldian theory endeavours to avoid the substitution of one truth for another, recognising that “there can be no universal truths or absolute ethical positions [and hence] ... belief in social scientific investigation as a detached, historical, utopian, truth-seeking process becomes difficult to sustain” (Wetherall, 2001, p. 384). The argument is that “the process of analysis is always interpretive, always contingent, always a version or a reading from some theoretical, epistemological or ethical standpoint” (*ibid.* p. 384). Researchers drawing on Foucauldian ideas therefore do not always speak of their research findings. They tend to use less emphatic language, recognising that truth is contingent upon the subjectivity of the reader and the vagaries of language (Graham, 2011).

There is no real way of determining objectivity in the employment of a methodology which utilises Foucauldian concepts. Given that his approach necessarily involves a level of selective discrimination, decision and choice, it cannot be viewed as truly objective. An important criticism of Foucault’s approach is that he does not offer solutions to contemporary issues. According to Foucault, his work only serves to identify the underlying collection of unspoken rules that govern the knowledge that is behind and surrounds the concept:

I have absolutely no desire to play the role of a prescriber of solutions. I think that the role of the intellectual today is not to ordain, to recommend solutions, to prophesy, because in that function he can only contribute to the functioning of a particular power situation that, in my opinion, must be criticised. (Foucault, 1994, p. 288)

Foucault sets out the information that he has unearthed from his research but he does not offer solutions or questions or answers. He views discourse as historically contingent, modifiable, institutionally supported and constrained.

While some scholars have argued that Foucault's notion of discourse is too narrowly focused on language, others have criticised it for being all-encompassing and thus too vague (Jäger, 2001). Hall (1997) argues that Foucault's overly-broad definition of discourse renders the concept difficult to operationalise. Mills (2003) also points out that Foucault does not make clear where the boundaries of discourse lie, pointing to Foucault's inconsistency in the use of the term. Although Foucault acknowledged that there might be non-discursive objects and practices, he assumed that they were not accessible to human beings as nothing was meaningful outside of discourse (Foucault, 1972).

A further criticism directed at Foucault's notions of discourse, power and subjectivity is that of neglecting human agency, including the possibility to resist and counter discourses. This position can be partly refuted by citing Foucault's assertion that resistance is inbuilt into power and the possibility to produce counter discourse (Deleuze and Foucault, 1977). Ball (1995) reminds us that "the point about theory is not that it is simply critical" and that theory in educational research should be "to engage in struggle, to reveal and undermine what is most invisible and insidious in prevailing practices" (p. 267).

In conducting my analysis, I examined individual Headteachers' challenges, strategies and meanings, related to discourses of both attainment and leadership. I was not focusing on analysing any particular discourse or text nor was I predisposed to any particular critical perspective at the outset of my research. Foucault holds the position that certain discourses should not be viewed as better than others (Foucault, 1972). This approach does not negate the possibility of critique, but instead, opens up the wider possibility of questioning all claims to truth and bringing to the fore excluded discourses (Burr, 2003).

For these reasons, and the critique provided in this section, a Foucauldian approach was considered to fit most suitably with the research aim.

Case study research design

I chose a case study design because, as a strategy of inquiry, it allows the researcher into the world of the participants. According to Thomas (2011), case study research comprises two parts: a subject and an analytical frame. In this research the subject was the Headteacher (or multiple Headteachers that were considered as within-case units comprising the case (Gerring, 2007)) and the analytical frame was the analysis of the issues and challenges associated with the attainment agenda encountered by new secondary school leaders in a Scottish local authority. I found a case study appropriate because it resonated well with the assumption of my research that a holistic perspective of the participants' experiences in their context was crucial for understanding the issues and challenges associated with the attainment agenda. The approach therefore had potential for allowing me to capture the reality, experiences, and perspectives of the Headteachers about their situations. As Yin (2003, 2009) observes, a case study constitutes an empirical inquiry, which examines a complex phenomenon in a real-life context.

In this thesis, the four individual Headteacher case studies enabled me to explore the new Headteachers' changing narratives of their views and experiences over an 18-month period related, in particular, to the attainment agenda. In presenting these narratives, I provide a minimal amount of context derived from school statistics. Other than this, I did not collect any additional data concerning the schools beyond the information provided directly by the Headteachers. I observed how they interpret, experience and implement the attainment agenda, and examined the complex relationship of school improvement

and performance within the broader phenomena of the educational environment. In addition, this research stance also sought to enter into dialogue with the theoretical framework and to contribute to its production. Therefore, the case study strategy offered an interactive examination between inductive and deductive approaches, i.e. between the conceptual tools and the empirical data, which is a central challenge for the development of the thesis.

The research site

The primary setting for this study was in the local authority in Scotland where I am currently employed. My choice of the region was influenced by familiarity and knowledge and the ease with which I would be able to interact with the new Headteachers. My decision to sample four schools was informed by the views of some scholars (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009) who contended that depth and detail in qualitative research is more important than representativeness or number of participants. The Miles and Huberman (1994) criteria for sampling in qualitative research, namely feasibility, richness of information and relevance of the sample to the conceptual framework, were particularly useful. I invited participation from new Headteachers in each of four schools, and chose to explore their experiences, because I had a developing relationship with these recent appointees, had ready on-site access, and it allowed me to delve into more depth and thereby yield rich descriptions.

Data collection methods

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the Headteachers' perspectives, beliefs, practices and experiences as they relate to the attainment agenda. In order to answer the research questions and to meet the objectives of this research, the principal data collection methods and data sources that I used in this study included semi-structured interviews and focus

group discussions. This was supplemented by observations afforded by regular professional contact and school visits. These observations were recorded as field notes in my research journal. All the new Headteachers were asked to respond to similar questions, and these responses were investigated in light of the research questions. The interview questions are provided as appendices A, B and C. The interviews and group discussions were conducted over a period of 18 months. The initial individual interviews took place in August/September 2012, the group discussions during February 2013, and the final round of individual interviews in January/February 2014. In addition, there was a final discussion with each of the Headteachers after the completion of at least two years in the post.

(i) Semi-structured interviews

Interviews provide an avenue for participants to express their opinions and interpretations of their world and are useful for exploring the participants' personal experience of the phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2007). A semi-structured interview also provides researchers with a chance to step back during the interviews and to examine the interpretations of the participants and to seek clarity or additional information during the session (Creswell, 2009). The approach allowed me as researcher to interact with the Headteachers in their environment and to discuss any new ideas that emerged during the study. I was therefore able to explore each Headteacher's experiences, opinions, feelings, knowledge, and background.

The interviewer's presence constitutes an important part of the context which unavoidably exerts an influence on the production of the story of the participants. My position as a researcher during data collection was neither invisible nor neutral but formed an inseparable part of the discourse co-constructed in collaboration with the Headteachers

in the research. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 on my role and position as researcher in this study.

Based on Merriam's (2009) recommendation I used a mix of more or less structured questions, worded flexibly to gather specific information from the Headteachers. I sought the consent of each Headteacher to digitally record each interview session. Headteachers were given the option to accept or refuse to have the sessions recorded. Recording had the advantage of collecting the verbatim accounts of the participants and provided rich information about the perspectives of the participants. It also allowed me to attend effectively to the participants and the data collection process. These interviews were subsequently transcribed in full. I also made field notes in my research journal during and following the interviews. These notes were based on my own observations and included some reflective commentary.

The main topics of the interviews were: (i) views and understandings about the attainment agenda; (ii) how the attainment agenda is reflected in practice, i.e. school aims, priorities, strategies and daily practices; and (iii) the effects and critiques of these practices, in terms of educational improvement, impact on other priorities, and institutional and professional autonomy. The interviews lasted between one and two hours. They were all digitally recorded with the consent of participants. All interviews worked quite fluidly, and in general terms all interviewees talked with apparent candour about their personal experiences.

All the Headteachers indicated that they very much appreciated the interview conversations as an opportunity to discuss and analyse their own positioning and explore possible strategies for a way forward. I felt this was partly due to my credibility as a former experienced Headteacher and also a function of my researcher role and the

unavoidable issue of my line manager interest. It was clear that increasing interactions with experienced Headteachers would yield valuable benefits for the new Headteachers.

The 18-month period over which the interviews were spread allowed me to gain some insight into the development of the new Headteachers and to determine challenges that could be categorised as short-term or transient and others which appeared to be more persistent. Of particular interest were the coping strategies they developed in relation to the pressures of the attainment agenda and the accommodations required in the broader school context, e.g. vision and strategy; whole school improvement; distributed leadership and building capacity in the staff; improving the quality of learning and teaching; wider student achievement; the issue of the attainment gap between students from the most affluent and most deprived backgrounds; professional development; and other areas of responsibility.

Following the completion of the first series of interviews, I requested that each of the Headteachers provide a brief history of their Senior Management Team experience, their approach to leadership, including their vision and strategy, and their views on the main challenges faced by the school and how they proposed to address these challenges. I wished to preface the case study analyses by giving a picture of each Headteacher and their school in their own words. These submissions did not become part of the interview conversation and did not colour my own approach to the interview process. All the Headteachers willingly provided the requested summary, although I made it clear it was entirely their choice, and their words are reproduced fully and exactly.

(ii) Focus-group discussion

The two series of individual Headteacher interviews were separated by a focus group discussion in which all four of the Headteachers participated. One of the main advantages

of focus groups is that they are a socially oriented method which can encourage people to discuss and interact with others in order to form and express opinions (Krueger 1994). Another advantage is that focus groups allow the process of reflective dialogue to be encouraged whereby respondents have the opportunity to develop points during their discussions (Litosseliti, 2003). Participants of a focus group not only provide their own views but also comment on other participants' opinions which they hear during the interview (Patton, 2002). Marshall and Rossman (2006) also mention that focus groups offer the participants a chance to explore their perspectives and to confirm or challenge each others experiences and perspectives. Participants express views that they might not express if interviewed as individuals and unanticipated lines of discussion can be pursued. The participants were Headteachers each with strong personalities and a willingness to state their views therefore there were no disadvantages related to group dominance or over-conformity. The focus-group interview lasted approximately two hours. It was digitally recorded with the consent of Headteachers.

(iii) Research Journal

My journal notes included observations specific to the Headteacher and the school, issues to monitor or reintroduce at subsequent interviews, and reflective commentary, including my views on the development of my relationship as researcher with the participant Headteachers. I recorded descriptive details of the Headteachers and schools. The notes assisted me in reflecting on the interview transcripts and the research process.

According to Schwandt (1997) field notes are a type of personal journal written "for an audience of one" (p. 115), thus they are unique to each researcher. When constructing and reviewing my notes I remained vigilant in making the distinction between observations and speculative-personal reflections (Fetterman, 1998).

Data analysis

Data analysis entails “making sense of the large amounts of data collected, and includes reducing raw data, identifying what is significant and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008, p.127). My conclusions about the issues and challenges of the attainment agenda were therefore premised on my interpretation of the Headteachers’ experiences illuminated by the interview material.

The conversations of the Headteachers were core to this research and I wanted to maintain the centrality of individual Headteacher experience whilst examining the interview transcripts. Following Cohen et al. (2007, p. 368), I aimed to generate natural units of meaning, categorise these and subsequently interpret the conversations. I firstly analysed each of the Headteacher’s interviews individually. They were analysed after all of the interviews were completed to ensure the interviews were not influenced by the analysis. I listened to the recordings several times and became familiar with the flow and dynamics of each interview. This enriched the subsequent process of transcription. After completing the full transcriptions of the interviews, I read and re-read the transcripts. During this stage, I tried to "get a sense of the whole" while taking separate notes on patterns and themes that I noticed (Creswell, 2009, p. 192). I highlighted and annotated sections of the transcripts. My analysis was interpretive as well as numerical, in that I was not simply counting the frequency of responses but also having to interpret the meaning of the responses, guided by the interview questions and informed by the research questions. I took into account the emphases given by each Headteacher and length of response on a particular topic. Foucault’s concepts also functioned as an apparatus through which to read the data. I was, however, conscious of any tendency to impose a Foucauldian

interpretation on the lived experiences of the Headteachers and guarded against such concepts overriding the participants' own worlds of meaning. This led to the identification of initial themes (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). To further facilitate the analysis, I used a coding system which identified themes broadly. In order to achieve this, I selected lengthy quotes from the Headteachers which captured the issue being discussed but also gave some sense of the individual. However, whilst the experiences of the Headteachers were as individuals, I wanted to know if there were any commonality to that experience across the group so at other times I use shorter quotes which further illustrated the issues. Coding was used on individual transcripts and these were then grouped together thematically to allow me to look for any similarities and differences in responses. The focus group discussions provided greater context and supplementary evidence in support of my analysis. Appendix 4 provides a table of the preliminary codes generated during this process.

Themes were considered under broad headings and subdivided into more specific categories correlated with the research questions. These categories principally related to the ways in which the development and practices of the Headteachers as individual subjects were influenced by the requirements of the attainment agenda in their specific school contexts. Relevant categorisations included:

- legacy issues and initial stakeholder perception
- preparation and role models
- vision and strategy
- tensions and perceived conflicting priorities
- accountability and control
- challenges and coping strategies
- management and implementation

- collegial and collaborative influences
- ethical choices and aspirations
- reflective learning and development
- emotional resilience
- risk-taking
- agency and forms of resistance

While I attempted to maintain a degree of impartiality, using the identified themes as a framework, I acknowledged that that this could not be an entirely objective process and was inevitably influenced, at least to some extent, by my own experiences and researcher positionality. These categorisations of the themes are further discussed after the examination of the interview material in detail in Chapter 7. This is in conjunction with additional consideration of the categories for the purposes of approaching a Foucauldian elaboration of the issues in Chapter 8.

Transcription and quotations

I transcribed the data as accurately as possible using the digital recordings of the interviews. In Chapters 7 and 8, the analyses chapters, I used ‘cleaned-up’ quotes excluding non-relevant utterances in order to assist with the flow for the reader and coherence of meaning of the research participants. In taking this approach, I remained as vigilant as possible in order to avoid distorting the words or meanings of the Headteachers. As Bayne (2004) writes:

The primary locus for the wielding of power by the researcher is in the transcription, interpretation and writing up of interview data where, traditionally, the messy, open oral text is ‘tamed’ and closed off by the researcher. (p. 50)

In the context of the research objectives, I was more focused on conveying the meanings contained in the transcripts. Halcomb and Davidson (2006) state that, “as an important step in data management and analysis, the process of transcription must be congruent with the methodological design and theoretical underpinnings of each investigation” (p. 42). I made every endeavour to ensure that this were the case.

Research quality

I have already outlined how my background influenced my research. My focus, however, was on the new Headteachers’ views and what emerged from the interviews as opposed to my own thinking. Following Merriam (2009), I have provided rich, thick descriptions of each case. I used the strategy of member checking by giving the transcripts to the individual Headteachers to verify and confirm and comment on the accuracy of my reports and interpretation. I also made some follow-ups through brief interviews, emails and phone calls to confirm and to make clarifications with the Headteachers where necessary. This was undertaken based on Patton’s (2002) recommendation that research were credible if the participants confirmed that reports represented their perceptions. The Headteachers confirmed this and in some cases drew my attention to those areas where they felt revision or clarification was required and I made the corrections as agreed.

I also maintained a research journal throughout the process of the research in order to track my emerging insights and questions. This allowed me to continually revisit the ways I was interpreting and judging the data. I continually cross-checked the emerging analysis against my reading of Foucauldian concepts, being careful not to over-impose these on the participants expressed meanings and interpretations.

During the research process it was necessary to scrutinise the relationship that evolved between my role as researcher and my professional position as senior education officer, and to explore any possible conflicts that emerged. This inevitably led to tension in some areas of interpretation throughout the research process. This tension had the potential to affect my interaction with the participants and subsequent interpretation of the data. I was aware of experiencing back-and-forth tensions between reading the data critically from a Foucauldian perspective and from my professional stance. I worked this through with the help of my supervisor, repeated readings of the data, and repeated writings of the analysis.

Limitations of this study

A limiting factor of this research may be the small number of participants and their location in one local authority. This was a deliberate choice, in line with the interview method chosen, which was designed to elicit rich personal data within broad contexts. Insider research could also be regarded as a limiting factor, however, this too could be viewed as a strength, as I was able to utilise insider experience in the pursuit of specialist knowledge, which should assist in providing future support for Headteachers in their early Headship experience.

Summary

This chapter has explored the theoretical context for this research study and described the methodology employed. The theories and concepts of Foucault are utilised for the analysis of Headteacher discourse based on the collated interview data. Foucault did not develop a specific method and the approach to discourse analysis and the approach adopted is based on Foucauldian tools and concepts. I have also discussed common criticisms and alleged limitations of Foucault's concept of discourse and some possible

counter-arguments. I have described the case study methodology, and explained the procedures for data collection and analysis. The research is not regarded as generalisable to other schools or Headteachers but, to some extent, should provide a guide to understanding similar contexts.

Having provided details of the theoretical framework and methodology in this chapter, I shall present the analysis of the Headteacher case studies in the following two chapters.

Chapter 7

The Formation and Practices of the Headteacher: disciplining by numbers

Educational leadership involves storied individuals, within the organisational contexts of schools as institutions for systematic teaching and learning, at particular times and places, while also recognising that there are multiple and contingent factors which come together in the creation of educational systems and schools.
(Christie and Lingard, 2001, p. 8)

General Introduction

As explained in the preceding methodology and research design chapter, this chapter takes in turn each of the four case studies – the four new Headteachers and their experiences over 18 months - encompassed by this thesis. It is the first of two significant data presentation and analysis chapters. In the next chapter a combined case studies approach utilises Foucauldian concepts to analyse how Headteacher subjectivities are constituted by particular accountabilities; performativities; standards; staff, community and other stakeholder relationships; local authority control; and Government policy. In this chapter, the emphases are on the conversations and observations emanating from the four case studies. This includes my own observations whilst visiting the schools; the struggles and self-doubt of the new Headteachers; perceived challenges and coping mechanisms; my experiences with the Headteachers; and difficult conversations for the Headteachers both internally and externally. In addition, the chapter incorporates relevant anecdotes and detailed descriptions in relation to the attainment agenda and the ways in which this plays out in the everyday practice of the Headteachers. In this discussion of each Headteacher case study, I deliberately limit the presentation to descriptive text, refraining from analysing or interpreting the material beyond a few personal observations. My purpose is to feature each Headteacher as much as possible in terms of their own

constructions of their work and its challenges. My own analysis and theorising of this material comes later, in the next chapter.

There are many strands to school improvement, such as: attainment and wider achievement; parental engagement; building partnerships within the learning community; valuing and empowering staff; self reflection and much more. Many of my conversations with Headteachers focus on communicating that raising attainment is a key priority for the local authority and the school. I have a particular responsibility for raising attainment and ensuring that practices of the Headteachers are aligned to this objective. My own position in relation to this study has been described in Chapter 5 headed: *Positioning the research: my multiple roles as researcher*.

Introducing the case studies

The individual case studies involved four new Headteachers based in four secondary schools located in one local authority within Scotland. In order to answer the research questions and to meet the objectives of this research, I used semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. This was supplemented by observations from regular professional contact and school visits. All the Headteachers were asked to respond to similar questions, and these responses were investigated in light of the research questions. The interview questions are provided as appendices A, B and C. The interviews and group discussions were conducted over a period of 18 months. The initial individual interviews took place in August/September 2012, the group discussions during February 2013, and the final round of individual interviews in January/February 2014.

All the Headteachers were relatively new to the Headteacher role. Importantly, this meant that the direct pressures of coping with the attainment agenda in the leading role were

being experienced mainly for the first time. To ensure confidentiality I will refer to the new Headteachers and their respective schools using pseudonyms as follows:

Robert: MacAlpin High School
John: Bruce Gate Secondary School
William: Balliol Academy
George: Stewart High School

I have decided to refer to the Headteachers as male although this may not reflect the gender of each of the Headteachers in the case studies. Gender is not an issue I have addressed in this thesis. While gender as well, as other social positions, can be considered an important issue for educational work and leadership, it was not a primary concern for this study and its focus on the attainment agenda and the related challenges for new Headteachers. The empirical work and my analysis therefore did not seek to include gender issues.

In the following, I take each of the Headteachers in turn with the aim of providing a rich description of their thoughts, feelings and aspirations during the early period of their Headship. This is based partly on responses to interview questions, other conversations I have had as senior education officer, and my own observations as researcher.

Case Study 1: MacAlpin High School

MacAlpin High School is a six-year comprehensive school. At the time of writing, staffing consisted of the Headteacher, two Depute Headteachers (following the preferred local authority model) and a further 84 teaching staff and 24 support staff. There were approximately 1,100 pupils, mainly the intake from the 6 feeder primary schools in the cluster. Over the past 15 years, the school had been at the lower end of its 20 comparator schools in all measures in the STACS data: (*Standard Grade* and equivalent (at age 16 years), *Highers* (at age 17 years) and *Advanced Highers* (at age 18 years)). There had been a recent improvement in attainment levels although the school continued to sit well

below most of its comparators. Improving the reputation of the school continues to be a high priority for the Headteacher and the local authority.

Robert: Headteacher of MacAlpin High School

As described in the preceding chapter, I requested that each of the four Headteachers provided a brief history of their Senior Management Team experience, their approach to leadership, including their vision and strategy, and their views on the main challenges faced by the school and how they proposed to address these challenges. The following is Robert's description of himself and his school, replicated fully in his own words, but anonymised in order to preserve confidentiality.

I am currently Headteacher of MacAlpin High School. I have been a member of a Senior Management Team in schools since 2006. I was an Associate Senior Management Team member before becoming Depute Headteacher in 2007. I was appointed to my first Headteacher post in 2010. I then took up an acting Headteacher position in January 2012 before moving to my current post in a new local authority during August 2012. In providing strong, effective and strategic leadership I have been able to improve the attainment and achievement of young people in all of the schools in which I have worked. I have significant experience in leading authority work streams and this has given me a whole Council perspective in securing improvement in educational outcomes for young people. I have been involved in curriculum development at a national level.

I believe the key to achieving success is creating the right conditions in schools to allow staff to deliver positive outcomes. Improvement methodology and using change tools have impacted greatly on the culture within my schools. While preparing for Headship I undertook the *Scottish Qualification for Headship* (SQH) and Columba 1400 Headteacher Leadership Academy. I am a leader in pursuit of excellence which involves a whole range of leadership styles. In my Headteacher posts, I have demonstrated my commitment to empowering teams across the school. My priorities are to continue to improve attainment at all levels. I believe this can be achieved by developing learning and teaching approaches that inspire all of our learners: entailing a clear focus on support for all our young people to take their place in a modern world. Partnership working is the key to meeting the needs of all our learners and this continues to be top priority. The main challenges are continuing to change the culture in the school and building leadership capacity to improve the quality of learning and teaching.

Reflections, conversations and practices

Initial interview and visits

On first visiting MacAlpin High following Robert's appointment, I noticed that the foyer had been freshly painted and had significantly improved in appearance. The wall displays contained themes on skills development and the promotion of the most recent student successes. Additional displays highlighted attainment, school expectations, positive behaviour strategies and explanations of *Curriculum for Excellence* for students and parents. These had not been evident prior to Robert arriving at the school. Robert had rearranged the Headteacher's room making his desk the most noticeable object when the door opened. If his door were open, he had a clear view of the senior management corridor. It gave the obvious impression that Robert liked to know what was going on in the school. The layout of his room had changed since I had seen it previously while visiting the former Headteacher. Now it included photographs of award ceremonies, year groups of pupils, and the work of students from the Art and Design department. Any visitor would be aware that whatever was going on in the school, involving either staff or pupils, appeared important to Robert. The members of the Senior Management Team that I encountered were engaged with pupils in their offices. All the pupils I passed from the front entrance to the Headteacher's office were wearing school dress code. When I asked Robert, he advised me that a strong school identity was important to him. One of the first things he did after taking up post was to communicate (via letters and the school website) to pupils, parents and staff, the importance of a school dress code.

At our first interview Robert presented himself to me as a very confident individual who seemed to have clear ideas of how to generate success. His apparent self-assurance may have been partly based on his experiences following his previous appointments as Headteacher in a smaller school and a very short time thereafter his secondment to a

school that had received a very weak prior inspection report from *Education Scotland*. Robert's secondment was intended to be an important element of the improvement strategy. These experiences may have given him confidence in approaching his new appointment and the conviction that he could be a successful Headteacher at MacAlpin High. He informed me that his initial and seconded Headteacher positions had been very challenging with considerable pressure for school improvement. From our first conversation, after he assumed the Headteacher role, Robert appeared convinced that he had the ability and experience to improve performance at MacAlpin High School. This was probably due to his perception of the similar needs in his prior posts which he alluded to as "demanding".

Robert communicated his belief that his previous Headteacher experience would be of considerable benefit in providing increased clarity on the appropriate strategies to adopt in his new Headship post. Although McAlpin High was much larger than any of his former schools, Robert's initial view was that "the only difference is more staff, but the principle is the same". He did not acknowledge any dependency on changing the existing staff culture and their aspirations as professionals nor did he communicate an awareness of the current level of student expectation or its importance. Robert evidently had reached some optimistic conclusions without any detailed knowledge of the staff and students of his new school.

Robert disclosed to me that when he first arrived at McAlpin High, he did not interview all the staff, although this had been his approach at his previous schools. In his own terms he declared, "I just went straight in". We discussed his reasons for this which seemed to revolve around a desire to make as swift an impact as possible, dispensing with a process he felt had been of minimal benefit in his former roles. I suggested that promoted staff

might have anticipated an early individual meeting, with their new Headteacher providing them with an opportunity to discuss departmental strengths and areas for improvement. He said he was keen to circulate within the school and acquaint himself with and be visible to both students and staff but, “the problems I have had to solve in the first few weeks have stopped me getting out into the classes”. Robert acknowledged that this may have been a consequence of his now operating in a much larger school with a multiplicity of complicating issues. This he perceived created a need for “fire-fighting” but more likely, he concluded that this was the way that the school had been operating under the previous incumbent. This was borne out by anecdotal evidence from the senior staff during earlier discussions.

Prior to Robert’s arrival, the senior management had described the operation of the school as constantly dealing with behavioural issues at the expense of developing any clear strategic direction. Robert described “fire-fighting experiences” as: dealing with disruption in classes; emergency parental meetings; upset or angry staff; union representatives requiring urgent meetings; and many more issues rendering senior staff with little time to dedicate to broader strategic issues such as raising attainment, curriculum development, collaboration, wider achievement, and skills progression. The previous Headteacher had apparently insisted that he met personally with any parents arriving at the school voicing problems or complaints. Conversely, Robert felt that he had to create opportunities to concentrate on the broader school priorities. He therefore ensured that he only met with parents if the issues demanded. Consequently, the majority of parental issues were now addressed by the Depute Headteachers and appropriate pastoral staff. I observed a frustration in Robert as he explained how he struggled to devote time to the development and implementation of higher-level school strategies.

The relentless need to concentrate on day-to-day operational issues appeared to be detracting from his efforts to pursue his overall vision for the school.

Within his first few months in post, a particular conversation he said he had with his line manager at the time, revealed that he was of the opinion that this was “not the school he had been sold”. On assuming the appointment of Headteacher, he had been astonished that the school’s results were as poor against the comparator schools. Indeed, the school’s record of student outcomes sat at the bottom of the 20 comparator schools in STACS (*Standard Tables and Charts*). After several weeks in the post, he was convinced that the staff and students had low expectations of attainment and achievement and did not appear to realise that the school was not performing well against other schools of similar profile. The previous Headteacher had, Robert believed, been well-liked by staff, students and parents but had not discussed the school’s performance openly and transparently with the whole staff. As Robert recalled, this had caused great concern to him prior to his first meeting with the staff. The enormity of the role was becoming real for Robert as he admitted to a degree of tension and confusion concerning setting the most appropriate improvement strategies.

During the initial research interview, Robert described the first in-service day at the school following his arrival. Robert addressed the staff and decided to disclose the school performance as given to him by the local authority performance officer. This included the difficult task of detailing to the whole staff complement the poor past performance and the recently received results under the SQA examinations. These results had not shown any improvement. These are Robert’s words at the initial interview:

I looked and watched on the first day and was very careful with the words chosen. I think this school was used to being told it was wonderful. For the first time they were shown the box plots (from STACS). They seemed surprised, but this is what it took to tell them that they had to raise their

game. This is the culture here. There appeared to be a lack of leadership at every level and no understanding of what was required of a leader. Lack of ambition has had the most detrimental effect on this school.

It was clear according to Robert that the staff found it very hard to accept the comparator statistics and that the school's attainment problems had not been shared with all staff by the previous Headteacher. Robert expressed his disappointment and concern at this lack of communication. He had worries about creating a crisis of trust with the staff. He questioned their commitment to professional learning as a key priority for building capacity and improving the quality of learning and teaching. Robert identified poor quality teaching in many subject areas:

There was a general lack of robust quality assurance and a senior leadership team with nobody knowing who was responsible for what.

Coming to a new local authority he explained during the interview that he did not realise at first how things operated. He was, however, immediately made aware of the expectations of the local authority and the challenge to improve. He was informed of the support the authority was willing to provide by the then senior officer for secondary schools. I was a senior education officer for primary schools when Robert and I had our first conversations and not his line manager at that time. I had also been a secondary Headteacher and had experienced the challenges of attempting radical improvement in a school in a similar initial position to McAlpin High. He was keen to discuss the strategies I had used for school improvement during our conversations.

When asked during his first interview about the greatest hurdles and challenges for the school, his first thoughts concerned the *Curriculum for Excellence* strategy:

The hows of learning and teaching *Curriculum for Excellence* are crucial as an understanding of these will raise the level of student achievement. I know it is attainment, attainment, attainment here. I had a visit from the Chief Executive and I understand that this is a very attainment-driven authority.

This was a strategic elaboration of his position during our earlier informal conversations when Robert was clear that:

For me it was right into raising attainment. In doing that it has uncovered a mass of problems.

Robert discussed the relationships within his inherited Senior Management Team. He emphasised his concerns about difficulties with the Depute Headteachers and what he judged to be a lack of prioritisation of raising attainment by the Principal Teachers Curriculum group. He expressed a worry that the staff may be trying to hide things from him and were “not willing to tell me what was going on”. This appeared to be the most difficult issue for him to overcome. He indicated he was having problems working effectively with the existing Depute Headteachers. Robert seemed keen to share these issues with me and readily admitted:

I need someone with a good knowledge of *Curriculum for Excellence*, someone I can trust and who knows how to raise attainment. I feel the school is in a mess and everything I touch has to be sorted.

In his previous post, Robert had experienced what he described as a very integrated and high-performing senior leadership team. Within a short space of time in this new post at MacAlpin High he had concluded that there had been “a lack of strategy, direction and purpose in leadership”. He appeared disgruntled with the senior team which he believed “did not gel”. Referring again to a lack of team spirit within the senior leadership team, Robert voiced his frustration at their inability to work together and show staff “a united front”. Importantly, he felt unable to trust his Depute Headteachers to work together as a cohesive unit. Even in the early stages he referred to a former colleague who he believed would make a great contribution to the school. He clearly wished for a team that he could trust.

Robert admitted to an anxiety that the local authority would “put him under too much pressure too soon”. After all, the school was the lowest amongst its comparators. How long would he be given to turn the school around? Robert had extreme reservations concerning his ability to remedy the senior management problems. He was insistent that without satisfactory resolution of these issues it would be difficult to improve school performance. He referred to continuing disappointment in various areas:

Expectations from some staff, union influence, the poor quality of learning and teaching, staff wanting to carry on doing what they have always done and a lack of understanding of accountability - staff have not been challenged. This situation needs to change.

When asked about the main priorities he had identified in order to advance the attainment agenda, Robert highlighted the following areas:

- He felt it was crucial to identify the departments which had “not delivered in terms of exam results” and work to improve performance.
- He expressed an intention to implement “a more focused tracking and monitoring system which will impact on attainment”.
- There needed to be more “pace and challenge in the classroom”.
- His vision was to “create a culture of learning and success”.
- A particular problem to remedy was “to ensure that the Principal Teachers Curriculum had a clear focus on quality improvement in the school”.
- More should be done to develop all staff as leaders.
- There was a need to increase staff capacity in self-evaluation.
- Staff should “work more together” for the benefit of student learning.
- There was an urgent requirement to “enhance the quality of the learning experience in the classroom”.

Robert added that his views may change as the months progressed. He appeared to have clarity of thought concerning his priorities. He did not have to think for any length of time which gave me confidence as a senior education officer that he had already thought through the issues. He did state that there were a variety of constraints including: parental buy-in; the culture of the Principal Teachers Curriculum; staffing imbalance; the lack of strategy in curriculum development; and his feeling that “everything I touch has to be fixed”.

Six months later at the group interview

Robert explained that he was now constantly aware of the pressure from the local authority to improve attainment in the school:

I feel I am being monitored to death compared with what I was used to in my last post. This authority model does not lend itself to risk-taking in terms of leaving the Headteacher to get on with things.

Contradicting his above assertion to an extent, Robert conceded that “we as Headteachers must have targets just like any other business”. Robert was acknowledging that the local authority should have input into target setting yet not to the extent of monitoring too closely how the schools are achieving their targets.

During the joint interview with the group, Robert appeared more confident with the shift in culture in his school:

If I look now at how my leaders are performing in comparison to how they were when I first got there, I believe I have done a good job in empowering them and challenging them to the limit. For example, at the first Principal Teachers’ meeting nobody spoke. Now they know that when they are meeting they must bring something to the agenda and contribute so in that respect, for me, that is a measure of success in terms of moving the school forward and all of that will impact on the quality of the learning and teaching and in turn raise attainment.

Robert had also examined the student intake in S1 and conducted an analysis of why students within the catchment area were not choosing to attend McAlpin High. He

communicated that staff were quite shocked when he shared the statistics for children, within the catchment, who were choosing not to come to McAlpin. He had plans to work with the cluster primary Headteachers, visit the primary schools during parent evenings, and invite parents and prospective students into the school. In addition, he favoured “putting on taster classes and themed interdisciplinary learning on a Friday afternoon and inviting catchment children to attend”.

Robert was very confident during the group interview that the examination results would improve considerably as a result of the interventions put in place and the increased focus on monitoring and tracking student attainment.

Interview after a further 12 months

I visited Robert at the end of his first year following the examination results. Unfortunately, these showed a further decline. At this time, I was still a senior education officer for primary schools. He expressed how devastated and extremely upset he was at the perceived lack of progress in attainment for the school. Robert was extremely distraught and frustrated during the interview. He was searching for reasons for the poor performance given the effort he believed that had been put into improving student attainment. He concluded that the poor quality of some of the teaching and learning in the classrooms was a major factor and was now having the biggest impact on poor attainment. Robert also expressed his frustration at the poor performance evidenced by a number of specific departments. He re-expressed his belief that he had been “led up the garden path” by the local authority for not giving a full enough picture of the real state of affairs when he took up post. All the attainment data had, however, been available to him from STACS both prior to and during the appointment process. In addition, he clearly felt he had some trust issues with his staff:

I will be much more aware and not just believe the staff and what they say regarding the tracking targets of the pupils in future ...I will need to see the evidence for what they are telling me. I am now more aware of the scale of the job.

Robert reflected that he desperately needed buy-in from his staff in order to achieve the desired improvements in attainment. This thought progressed to consideration of how he was motivating the staff to create a culture of improvement and translating this to parents and students. Robert recognised that there was a fine balance between winning the hearts and minds of the staff whilst ensuring that staff take on board what he described as “transformational change”. He felt the difficult conversations he had with Principal Teachers Curriculum, following the first exam data meetings under his tenure, resulted in some annoyance and conflict on his part. He was all too aware that the staff had not been subject to such an intense scrutiny of results under the previous Headteacher. In his opinion, the emphasis on improvement had not been part of the previous culture at MacAlpin High and this legacy was hindering improvement. Although clearly annoyed with the results, he was insistent that he had not lost his enthusiasm and retained the fervent belief that MacAlpin High had a bright future.

Final discussion after at least two years in the post

During our final meeting, Robert and I discussed the strategies and practices which he felt had impacted positively on the school improvement. After two years under Robert’s leadership, improvement in attainment in relation to *Higher* results had been marginal however the decline in overall results had been halted. Robert was disappointed that the rise in attainment levels had not been more marked. He had concentrated on strategies for strengthening the quality of learning and teaching and instilling high expectations in staff, students and parents. He was adamant that cultural change was key to the practice of improving attainment allied with the continual tracking and checking of progress and

performance by the management team. Depute Headteachers and Principal Teachers Curriculum had been made aware of the importance of a culture of high expectation. This applied to both staff and students.

Robert now worked in collaboration with three other Headteachers with the aim of effecting greater improvement across all four schools. This new approach by the local authority had been alluded to by Robert at the group interview when he stated that “I want to learn from colleagues” as he had felt “quite alone” and wanted “greater collaboration with his peers”.

When asked what practices he felt had impacted on raising attainment, Robert indicated those practices which considered the most important in the longer term:

- Self-evaluation in the sense of knowing the school strengths and areas for improvement are key starting points. This, he believes is important from the classroom through to Headteacher level. Robert advocated a “whole school self-evaluation culture”.
- The quality of learning and teaching – “the quality of the learning in the classroom is critical, we are working hard to get the commitment of staff to become reflective practitioners in terms of evaluating their own classroom practice. We are having to go back to basics”.
- The monitoring and tracking progress, he believes, must be robust and understood by all staff. “Being critical of our monitoring and tracking system and how it is being used to effect improvement is an essential improvement strategy for this school”.
- Robert also spoke of the “much more strategic approach” which he believed had been taken by the school over the last 18 months and “a reduction in the number of improvement priorities” with a concentration on “what counts”.

- Professional learning, he believed had to impact on the identified priorities of the school, the *School Improvement Plan* and the quality of the learning for pupils.

Robert emphasised that he had aligned his practices in accordance with the attainment agenda and the expectations of the local authority. These developing practices have emanated from his perceptions of how to raise attainment in the school. He believed that communicating the need for improvement in attainment was a key priority to enable staff to understand and work together to achieve the necessary goals. Robert also expressed his reservations about the constraints on broader development and achievement given the improvement in attainment, in terms of examination results, had such a high priority for the school. In the period from the initial interview, I had noticed, however, that he appeared to have a strengthening belief that attainment was paramount. Robert now rationalised changes in practice in terms of the attainment agenda and the improvements required at McAlpin High. The normalising influence of a performativity culture, and its impact on the formation of the Headteacher as ethical subject, are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Case Study 2: Bruce Gate Secondary School

Bruce Gate Secondary School is a new purpose-built construction with enhanced facilities and modern equipment. Staffing consists of the Headteacher, two Depute Headteachers (following the local authority model) and a further 19 staff in promoted posts. There are a total of 80 teaching staff and a further 21 support staff. There are 970 pupils, mainly from the five feeder primary schools in the cluster. Bruce Gate also attracts pupils from outside its catchment. When children's scores are measured in S1, the school intake is normally placed in the lowest three scoring schools in the local authority. However, over the past few years, Bruce Gate has achieved SQA results in the top quarter of schools in

the authority. The school had also performed much better than its comparators in all measures (*Standard Grade* and equivalent, *Highers* and *Advanced Highers*) over the past three years. The culture is one of high expectation and achievement. Morale of students and staff is good, as evidenced from regular survey analyses, and the environment very positive with an impressive level of student involvement and commitment. Bruce Gate had developed strong relationships with local employers who provide work-placement opportunities and host career talks and seminars. Positive destinations for school leavers had been consistently above 90%. Although the school is classed as a successful school by the local authority, due to the attainment compared to comparators, the local authority school reviews and the community engagement, the challenge will be to maintain this level of performance.

John: Headteacher of Bruce Gate Secondary School

The following is John's description of himself and his school, replicated fully in his own words, but anonymised in order to preserve confidentiality. It provides a brief history of his Senior Management Team experience, his approach to leadership, including his vision and strategy, and his views on the main challenges faced by the school and how he proposed to address these challenges.

I am currently Headteacher of Bruce Gate Secondary. I joined the school to begin my teaching career a few years after it was originally founded. I was appointed to the post of Principal Teacher Curriculum responsible for the social subjects and English faculties in 2001 and from there was promoted to Depute Headteacher in 2005 before becoming Acting Headteacher. I was then appointed to my current substantive post in 2012. There have been very significant improvements in attainment, achievement and school ethos during my time as Depute and then Headteacher, and these are recognised by the local community and across the local authority. The school is top of its comparator grouping and is one of the top performing schools in the authority.

As a Depute Headteacher my leadership preparation included having a forward-thinking and inspirational Headteacher who empowered and

encouraged my ambition and talents. I also undertook the *Scottish Qualification for Headship*, which supported the development and enhancement of my professional understanding, knowledge and skills. My leadership style is democratic and inclusive. I am firmly committed to distributive leadership and to empowering staff so that there is a genuinely collaborative approach and a whole-school commitment to continuous improvement. My overriding priority was, and is, to ensure a clear focus on attainment as the means to improve life chances for all young people. Encouraging a positive “can-do” ethos and high expectations of staff and students at a time of ever-present change is, for me, the key challenge. My vision is for all students at my school to achieve positive destinations and to be able to take their place as responsible and effective contributors in our society.

Reflections, conversations and practices

Initial interview and visits

On arrival at Bruce Gate, I immediately noticed the entrance foyer as being busy, friendly and inviting. The walls showed school awards, pupil awards, newspaper articles involving pupil successes and a display detailing the charity contributions by the pupils. I could see an evaluation notice board stating “You said so we did”. Office staff are friendly and individuals from the community are attending a swimming class, several mums have brought their children, aged from babies to 4 years, to the crèche. There are two office receptions, one for the school and the other for the community.

The school was founded in 1978 based on a culture of community building and support. The architecture won an award at the time and was one of only two community schools in the local authority. It seemed that John has sought to retain these values and it is clear he considers all aspects of school life as valuable. He joined the school a couple of years after it was built and has a thorough knowledge of the community and how the school has changed over the years. John explained that the school had enjoyed a good reputation in the community until a period in the early 2000s when the attainment declined along with student behaviour and its standing locally. John had been promoted to acting Depute

Headteacher before a new Headteacher took over the school in late 2007 with the remit to improve attainment urgently.

Although John acknowledged that raising attainment has a high priority, he is clearly of the view that meeting the needs of all pupils is paramount and raising attainment is part of that. John has been in the school for many years before becoming Headteacher and told me that he had never anticipated achieving the position of Headteacher. John had been an acting Depute Headteacher for two years before gaining the substantive position of Depute Headteacher in 2008. John said that he had not considered *Scottish Qualification for Headship* as a pathway to Headship, or that even a Headteacher position was a tenable objective for him. He began to believe that he had the capability after encouragement from the previous Headteacher. One early concern that John expressed was his consciousness of the impact of his new post on his long-term relationships with many colleagues in the school:

As a Depute Headteacher, the friction wasn't as pronounced but on assuming the Headteacher position, staff I had worked with for years viewed me as something different from a colleague and friend.

John, however, believed that his years as Principal Teacher and Depute Headteacher contributed to his preparation for his Headteacher role. His Depute responsibilities included “key areas of quality assurance, curriculum development, monitoring and tracking attainment and timetabling”. He also mentioned the relationship with his previous Headteacher who actively encouraged and expected him to be involved in “high-level decision making”. During his Depute Headship, John completed the SQH, after great encouragement from his Headteacher, which he claimed “helped shape and articulate” his values.

During my initial interview, John expressed his anxieties concerning maintaining and improving attainment. Prior to his appointment Bruce Gate's student performances in examination results had radically improved over the space of a few years. Over this time the school had moved from the bottom of its 20 comparator schools to the top in most measures under the *Standard Tables and Charts* (STACS) data. John expressed some apprehension regarding the pressure on him to continue to raise attainment in the school.

He stated that:

There needs to be an understanding at authority level that, while I am firmly committed to removing any and all barriers to learning, that there is perhaps a ceiling on attainment. We can and will strive for further improvement, but there may come a point when even better results are not possible.

This comment highlights John's anxiety centred around the ability to keep improving attainment and, in my opinion, the typical worries experienced by a new Headteacher.

John's office displayed a list of staff on postgraduate courses and development posts for staff within the school, which he continually updates. This evidenced to me his ongoing commitment to the professional learning of staff as forming a key component of improving performance. He expressed a passion for building capacity in the staff and encouraging leadership at every level. John believed that moving to a new building in 2009 has contributed to a greater culture of improvement and enhanced expectation. He indicated his view that the staff and students were very proud of their new school and are active in ensuring it is well looked after. During my visits to Bruce Gate, I was made aware that John had done much to create a welcoming atmosphere. Student achievements are displayed in the entrance foyer: there for all visitors to peruse. In fact, it seemed clear from my initial impressions that students and individual expression are a central concern of this school. The Pupil Council meeting notes are visible, with information on requests for improvements from students and how the school has tried to address these issues.

John let me read the staff and student satisfaction surveys which were very positive. I was able to walk round the school where I encountered a palpable sense of purpose and a very clear focus on the quality of the teaching and learning experience within the classrooms. There was generic feedback to staff on the quality of the learning and teaching experienced during classroom visits by senior staff. This was subjected to regular analysis and, John told me, underpins the professional learning programme in the school.

When John became acting Headteacher, prior to his formal appointment, his early reaction, after a short time in the role, concerned the amount of “stuff” he had to deal with which was not strategic. He said he expected to be able to focus on the strategic direction of the school and determine how to effect continuous improvement. Instead, everyone seemed to want a piece of his time. He “didn’t realise all the things a Headteacher had to deal with and how lonely the job could be”. During the past few years, *Curriculum for Excellence* had necessitated a focus on curriculum development within the *Broad General Education* and the *Senior Phase*. This had required close consultation with students, staff and parents for John and his senior team. Inevitably this had led to many changes and John believed that the management of these changes had had a positive impact on improvement. John felt he had worked well and benefited from the partner school arrangements. There are now four schools working together in each hub, providing peer support at all levels, including two of the other Headteacher case studies in the same hub as John.

In spite of Bruce Gate being positioned generally at the top of its comparator schools, John continued to be anxious about attainment. He said that he was still worried about his own performance and how it is perceived by the local authority, and whether the next set

of school results would be as good as he thought they needed to be. He was also concerned that the school's performance may have a natural ceiling limiting further progress. John's biggest area of self-doubt was his ability to continue to improve the school. He was very much aware that if attainment were good, it gave him more time to concentrate on other elements, such as: life skills; employer engagement; and community relations.

Six months later at the group interview

John seemed more relaxed during this interview and referred to his enjoyment of his new role. He did, however, continue to appear pressured to continue to improve the attainment in the school. He acknowledged that this had to be a priority while ensuring that opportunities for broader achievement was available to all students. He made the point that he often worried about what he should focus on as priorities and how to develop the multitude of elements within a school without detracting from attainment. I felt that over time, John's confidence should continue to increase - I had already noticed a significant change from the initial interview. He was very confident in the group interview, keen to offer his thoughts and did not hold back on discussing what he felt had been difficult during his first six months. The main points of discussion revolved around the amount of time he had to spend on very mundane staff issues and how he felt more confident with the attainment of the students due the results achieved in their recent examinations.

Interview after a further 12 months

I met John immediately after the examination results has been released. As I entered his office, I could see the delight and relief on his face. He was full of enthusiasm and keen to discuss all the areas of improvement. I asked him how he thought these had been achieved given his previous concerns of a possible "plateau effect". John reflected on how worried he had been that the previous trend of improvements would not continue

once he took over as Headteacher. He said that the best part of the results was when he addressed the staff on the first day back after the summer break, allowing him to thank them for their commitment and hard work throughout the year. It was clear to me that this was very important to John. Building good relationships with staff seemed to underpin strong motivation. I asked him how important his relationship with the staff was to him. He stated categorically that whole-staff understanding of and contribution to school improvement was critical to the direction of the school. More importantly, he talked of the need to bring staff on board and communicate his thinking clearly to everyone. This, he said, was not always that simple.

John was very focused on performance data and appeared to enjoy discussing the data analysis with me. He reflected on progress and improvement. He discussed his expectation that the Principal Teachers Curriculum work together and partner the departments and staff with high achieving departments from within the school and with their partner schools. He wanted to discuss how to analyse the results further, to a greater granular level and acquire the same information from the other local authority schools in order to determine where best practice existed. He expressed his belief that his understanding of performance would be a factor in determining what needed to improve. During the interview he also contemplated some new ideas on developing *Broad General Education* and working with community partners to access wider student achievement. Overall, in my interpretation, John showed a greater sense of confidence in his work and role.

Final discussion after at least two years in the post

I met with John immediately after the next set of SQA examination results. Again the school's examination results continued to improve. At the final meeting John and I

discussed the strategies and practices which he felt had impacted positively on the school improvement:

- John felt it was vital to “always focus on attainment as a clear strategy”.
- It was necessary to “be transparent with all staff” and have regular attainment discussions with whole departments on tracking student attainment.
- John was making strenuous efforts to encourage professional learning at all levels and empower staff where possible.
- He communicated that quality improvement should be “a top priority” for the Principal Teachers Curriculum team in the school.
- John was focused on building a strong senior team who provided a clear strategic direction translated to all staff.
- He said it was clearly important to “create a culture of aspiration” shared among staff, students and parents.
- John was aware of the benefits of building a strong working relationship with fellow Headteachers, “especially in your hub group”.
- He was seeking to generate “high expectations” in the quality of the learning in the classroom for all students.
- John saw good public relations within the community and with the local authority as key priorities.

John appeared very comfortable in his role as Headteacher. Attainment had continued to rise and the school appeared to have a very good reputation in the community. There were more children applying to the school from outside the catchment area. The school had achieved several awards within the local authority for attainment, achievement and teamwork. The journey for Bruce Gate has been about changing the culture to one of high quality learning and teaching in combination with high expectations. As borne out by

various surveys and continual feedback, the reputation of the school had improved greatly within the community over the last few years.

From the interviews, John was able to reveal his worries about continuing the improvement in the school when he took over as Headteacher. This, he agreed, had shaped his practice in the school. John's view was that his practice in his school was influenced by the expectation of high attainment from the local authority and he also believed that this was a priority of his own. John reflected that raising attainment was only part of the local authority expectations of a Headteacher but a prominent strategic priority. John said he was very much aware that improving attainment and positive destinations for all school children was part of the local authority corporate plan. He agreed that his practice did reflect all his values and was heavily influenced by local authority priorities and expectations.

Case Study 3: Balliol Academy

Balliol Academy staff consists of the Headteacher, two Depute Headteachers (again following the local authority model) 85 teaching staff and a further 24 support staff. There are 1134 pupils mainly from the four feeder primary schools in the cluster. It also attracts pupils from outside its catchment which is required in order to maintain capacity. The school had performed less well than its comparators in all measures (*Standard Grade* and equivalent, *Highers* and *Advanced Highers*) over the past five years. The school had developed a strong relationship with parents with a thriving Parent Council. Positive destinations for school leavers had been consistently above 90% faring well in this area amongst the local authority secondary schools.

William: Headteacher of Balliol Academy

The following is William's description of himself and his school, replicated fully in his own words, but anonymised in order to preserve confidentiality. It provides a brief history of his Senior Management Team experience, his approach to leadership, including his vision and strategy, and his views on the main challenges faced by the school and how he proposed to address these challenges.

I did not complete the *Scottish Qualification for Headship*. This is partly because my previous Headteacher was not committed to SQH. I believe, however, that good preparation for Headship was the experience of a broad variety of tasks in my six-year role as Depute Headteacher. This included two years in charge of Quality Assurance and involvement with a leadership forum on collaborative leadership. The learning process accelerated when I became the senior Depute Headteacher, giving me the opportunity to develop further skills. This included additional learning from the experience of shadowing the Headteacher in my previous school. I had no prior direct experience as a Headteacher or acting Headteacher. I came into my new role from a Guidance background. I did not have a lot of prior exposure to attainment analyses and self evaluation. There was minimal focus on this in my previous authority. My Head of Service and the Headteacher adopted a very different culture. There has been a very steep learning curve for me here. I rely on the support from the other Headteachers and Quality Assurance Officers. I have the disadvantage of being a new Headteacher who came from a much different environment.

During my tenure as Headteacher, attainment and achievement have started to show an improvement, however further improvement is required. This has been achieved not only within the framework of *Curriculum for Excellence* values and principles, but by a slow but steady change in culture in how we both support and develop students, but more importantly that we encourage high aspirations in both pupils and staff. The staff in the school are firmly committed to *Curriculum for Excellence* and see this as the driver for change leading to increasing achievement and attainment for all. I am a firm believer in distributed leadership whilst also empowering staff to embrace, pursue and innovate. We will do this by focusing this session on what we stand for and value as a school, and exploring our basic educational philosophy and 2020 vision for learning and teaching. My priorities are to improve the levels of attainment within the school by providing the best possible educational experience for every single young person. Relationships within a school are the key to this and must be foremost in how we develop as a community, ensuring that the best interests of young people are at the heart of every decision. Significant challenges face us, including budgetary constraints and staffing structures, but we are determined to ensure high quality learning and teaching is a key focus.

Reflections, conversations and practices

Initial interview and visits

On transferring schools to take up his new Headteacher post at Balliol Academy, William quickly became aware that the school had enjoyed a good reputation in its locale. Balliol had a very cohesive and well-motivated staff and a supportive Parent Council. At our first interview, William described the school as a “very good school”. When I asked what he meant by that he said that the examination results were very good.

As a guidance and support specialist in his previous school, William was part of a senior management team comprising a Headteacher and four Depute Headteachers. This was quite different to the new authority model of Headteacher and two Depute Headteachers. He explained that the new environment of working with only two Depute Headteachers “required a time for adjustment”. William communicated to me that he found it extremely challenging to move from one local authority to another, and to learn how this other operated with differing priorities and emphases. In his first few weeks he said he had found it “very difficult to know where to start” and was “still not really sure of the expectations of people within the authority”.

On entering the school for the initial interview, first impressions were of a welcoming and purposeful environment. The entrance for the public was not the same as for the students so I was not able to get a feel for student interaction. The Headteacher’s office was large and during the interview several staff knocked and came straight in, some students also came to the door. William was very keen to discuss attainment and school improvement in general. He alluded to his feeling of isolation in his new post and an apprehension concerning the lack of team spirit in his Senior Management Team. William proffered his views on the attainment agenda:

The Headteacher in my previous school impacted hugely on me with his strongly held opinions and very strident views on the attainment agenda, which he felt was not the purpose of the school. He believed it was a desirable consequence of getting all the other bits right. I do agree with that and it now presents me with a number of challenges. It is a longer term thing to improve attainment. You cannot do this overnight – it will take time to get this in place.

Six months later at the group interview

William had chosen to take an extended period in order to assess Balliol Academy:

I cannot make an informed impact on the school until I know the people I am working with and their particular strengths and that is what I am setting out to achieve.

During the discussion he expressed a desire for radical change and indeed he was able to articulate clear plans. Implementing his intended transformation, however, had proved much more difficult:

I am worried that I have not communicated my expectations to the staff effectively and given a clear outline of my vision for the school. I can be quite hard on myself. I know I am spending too much time in my office or out at meetings. You have to get that balance. It is important the impression you give at the start. Slightly unrealistic but it is niggling me a little bit at the moment.

He went on to describe his enjoyment of the greater individual autonomy he had at Balliol Academy but expressed frustration at the lack of senior staff support, joint decision-making and participation. William initially believed his task was one of “moving a good school into a very good and then excellent category”. After discussions with his local authority the reality was that Balliol Academy’s attainment was well below its comparator school base. William had met with the local authority performance officer who had helped him decipher the previous attainment analysis. The staff, William reflected, had laboured under the misapprehension that Balliol was doing much better. William had also initially subscribed to the view that the position was more favourable:

Staff are very hard-working and we have a good bunch of Principal Teachers Curriculum who are keen to drive things forward. Staff said there

is an excitement in the air – just a slight bit of change. There are a lot of ingredients that are right. We have the ingredients but not the final product. Actually making an impact on a school like this is quite difficult as it is a good school trying to do better.

After the meeting with the local authority performance officer, William had agreed that “there was scant scrutiny of departmental performance and a general atmosphere of complacency”. We had an early discussion of the hard facts and it was clear that William was very anxious about the school he had taken on. William also admitted that when asked what data he relied upon to make decisions on the direction and progress of the school he confirmed that he “did not do that well”.

In his previous school, William had not been involved directly in raising attainment. The incumbent Headteacher had retained this function exclusively. William was unaware of his previous local authority having such a strong focus on attainment. He expressed some concerns about the new local authority requiring attainment to be such an overriding priority. Arriving at an attainment-driven culture had been a cause of increasing pressure and anxiety for William. It seemed that, upon greater reflection, he perhaps could have had a fuller preparation for Headship had his previous Headteacher shared the responsibilities for raising attainment within the senior team. William reflected that:

I feel I am being monitored much more rigorously compared with what I was used to in my last post. Between the Quality Improvement visits and the attainment visits, at least I feel I am developing my ability to manage that. I think I am becoming a different person from what I was before as I am increasing my monitoring and challenging my leadership style to do more monitoring. I need to get back to letting my staff be more creative. But I am answerable to my next QA (quality assurance) visit.

In spite of this, William was enjoying his new role and was very enthusiastic. William felt he was “adjusting to it” when referring to the intense focus of the authority on raising attainment and the rigorous approach to quality assurance. William did reveal he had trouble prioritising the challenges for Balliol Academy. Initially it was difficult for him

to see the “lie of the land”. He saw the raising of attainment as a “longer term thing.” He was not of the opinion that raising attainment had to be an immediate and sustained priority contrary to the message from the local authority. William believed that “getting pupil support right” would have a knock-on positive effect on attainment. William was previously a Depute Headteacher Support and expressed to me his belief that the well-being of the pupils and staff was, in his mind, the most important thing.

William seemed to enjoy the group interview and the discussion on attainment strategies and practices the Headteachers had thought about or employed. He added that this discussion had proved valuable to him and that further collaboration with other Headteachers would serve as a worthwhile learning experience.

Interview after a further 12 months

I met with William shortly after the beginning of the new term and just after the examination results had been released. William confided that he had felt under considerable pressure to improve attainment and was very anxious prior to the examination results being known. This is a pressure he said he “has not experienced before”. The results in the school had not improved and the school was in line with or below comparator schools in all measures of student outcomes. He was worried that he had taken too long to assess the school without putting in measures to improve attainment. He displayed reservations concerning the push on attainment by the local authority, “If I were a Headteacher in another authority would attainment have the same priority? I don’t know”. William thought he would have benefited from more extensive induction training when he first came to the local authority in his new role of Headteacher. He seemed at this point to be expressing his lack of confidence concerning how to take forward raising attainment in the school:

There is a challenge but where is the support from the local authority? Even analysing the statistics what are we really looking for? It is not my strength and that is why I am nervous about it. How do I satisfy the authority?

William seemed to be experiencing a lot of tension during the interview. He appeared very anxious about the pressures of the attainment agenda and expressed difficulties with the balance between autonomy, support and challenge.

Just prior to our meeting, the previous Depute Headteacher had retired and William had been able to make a new appointment to the post. According to William, the new appointee was proving a trustworthy and talented addition to the Senior Management Team (SMT), however, time he again asserted “is not on my side”. William was clearly enthused by his appointment. We discussed what practices he would introduce to improve attainment. At this stage he was not able to articulate clearly but he had already spent time with the staff and the senior team on identifying improvement strategies which had then been agreed.

Final discussion after at least two years in the post

Within two months after the 12-month interview, *Education Scotland* had arrived to undertake an inspection of the school. The inspection report concluded that attainment had to improve. William agreed that the report had given him a clear mandate to advance the priority of the attainment agenda with the staff, students and parents. He agreed that his practices and priorities would be altered accordingly and an action plan written up. The inspection had, William acknowledged, identified two departments where there were significant problems. One in particular, prior to the inspection, had already been identified but the staff therein had difficulty agreeing with the Senior Management Team that improvements had to be made. William reflected that many of the staff were very

disappointed with the comments made in the *Education Scotland* report. William confirmed that:

Practices within Balliol are now much more concentrated on advancing attainment. This is now a greater driver.

William was clear that he still required guidance on improvement strategy and implementation. He suggested that the policy of collaboration with the other secondary Headteachers, as implemented by the local authority, would be of benefit.

The August SQA results just prior to the interview after two years in post and ten months following the *Education Scotland* inspection, showed only marginal improvement in student attainment. At this point, a Quality Improvement Officer from the local authority was assigned to the school to assist staff with raising attainment and, in particular, helping the school to focus on self-evaluation and monitoring and tracking attainment. William felt ambivalent about the assistance from the authority:

Sometimes in an attempt to support and help, actually this can lead to a feeling of helplessness, or a feeling of being out of control of your own school.

Although William cited increasing positive changes in culture and aspiration, he still worried that these might take some time before producing tangible results. These new approaches, he believed would reap better results, but after a protracted period of planning, as opposed to implementation, it was proving difficult to establish new practices.

William was not able to determine the most effective practices “as the strategies had still to show impact”. This was especially in relation to working with the Principal Teachers Curriculum on self-evaluation. He asserted that “this process is helping to identify areas for improvement”. In addition, “there is greater attention to tracking progress and communicating with pupils on their own performance and how they might improve

within each of their subjects”. He described the following practices which he believed should lead to improvement in attainment:

- William advocated “clear and transparent communication with all staff” on the actual school attainment relevant to comparator schools.
- He expressed strong opinions concerning empowering staff in the classroom to deal with improvement in student performance and “not passing it on to someone else”.
- He wanted pupil support staff to have greater communication with the classroom teachers and Principal Teachers Curriculum.
- He felt there was a need for training and improvement in staff ability in self-evaluation.
- William wanted to ensure that all staff had a “good understanding of performance data”.
- He intended to implement more frequent and rigorous monitoring of the improvement plan.

William again stated that coming to a different local authority, where he felt there was a greater emphasis on attainment, had not been easy. This difficulty, however, he acknowledged may have been more a consequence of the transition to the Headteacher role which had focused his mind on attainment rather than the change in local authority. Overall during the first year of William’s Headship role, he said he was determined to assess the needs of the school before effecting any changes. During this time, he indicated that his practices were not constrained by the attainment agenda. William had continued with his whole school assessment as planned without changing focus. He was aware of the need to improve attainment as discussed with the local authority and felt he now had the correct strategy in place in order to achieve this.

Case Study 4: Stewart High School

Stewart High School Staff consists of the Headteacher, two Depute Headteachers, 80 teaching staff and a further 20 support staff. There are 882 pupils, mainly from the four feeder primary schools in the cluster. The pupil numbers have undergone recent decline but are set to increase significantly due to the amount of new build homes within the catchment. Stewart High was normally placed in the lowest three of the local authority secondary schools in terms of examination results. However, the school attainment was continuing to improve together with the reputation of the school. The school performed in line with its comparators in all measures (*Standard Grade* and equivalent, *Highers* and *Advanced Highers*). According to staff feedback, morale had improved since the arrival of the new Headteacher in the last two years. The school had developed strong relationships with local employers who provided work-placement opportunities and hosted career talks and seminars. Positive destinations for school leavers had been consistently above 90%.

George: Headteacher of Stewart High School

The following is George's description of himself and his school, replicated fully in his own words, but anonymised in order to preserve confidentiality. It provides a brief history of his Senior Management Team experience, his approach to leadership, including his vision and strategy, and his views on the main challenges faced by the school and how he proposed to address these challenges.

I am currently Headteacher of Stewart High School and have now been in the post since the beginning of 2012, following a three month acting position. Four years as Depute Headteacher at another local secondary school proved a challenging yet highly rewarding first experience at senior management level and certainly redirected my professional development from an emphasis on an often self-focused task orientated agenda to a more strategic and relationship driven focus.

My enduring educational philosophy, which is exemplified through my professional actions, values and abilities have at their heart the implicit aim of improving teaching and learning and ensuring that every child has a life enhancing and quality educational experience. I strongly believe in personal responsibility and the need for a solid underlying emphasis on individual teacher autonomy which is supported by an effective framework of accountability and teamwork. As Headteacher, building a strong community focus to maximise our youngsters' life chances is integral to my overall responsibilities. I believe that if we wish to see the strong foundations required to maximise attainment and achievement then our school culture must be one that both challenges and supports the intellectual, emotional and social wellbeing of all our learners. As such, I set realistically high expectations through my own actions and values and, through an inherently collegiate management style, I consciously promote the importance of people being valued, empowered and supported.

My leadership preparation included the *Scottish Qualification for Headship* and a Masters Degree in Education. Both, without doubt, have increased my confidence, wider understanding and the personal knowledge base that is certainly required to undertake my professional responsibilities successfully.

My priorities for the future continue to be based around the values and principles embedded within *Curriculum for Excellence* with priorities and challenges identified not only through the school context but at local and national level. Fundamentally, I believe schools matter and therefore we must continue to promote the highest achievements in our learners no matter their self expectations or perceived abilities.

Reflections, conversations and practices

Initial interview and visits

George was a former Depute Headteacher within the authority. He had completed the *Scottish Qualification for Headship* and a Masters degree in Education and worked closely with his existing Headteacher. Both he agreed “without doubt have increased my confidence, wider understanding and the personal knowledge base that is certainly required to undertake my professional responsibilities successfully”. George had also been engaged in various authority work groups and built a strong reputation. When a secondary Headteacher retired, George was appointed in an acting Headteacher role. This

provided him with the opportunity to establish how suited he felt he was to the role of Headteacher and led to his appointment at Stewart High.

During the initial stages following his appointment, George confirmed that he concentrated on visibility around the school and community and building relationships with the staff. Stewart High attainment had been mainly in line with or below its comparator schools prior to his arrival. George communicated his opinion on possible reasons for the previous poor performance of the school:

A culture of challenge was missing, dealing too much with discipline rather than the quality of learning and teaching.

He believed that improving the quality of learning and teaching would be the principal element of the strategy in dealing with the challenge of improving attainment. He commented on his initial problems with the existing Senior Management Team and influencing them to work at a strategic level. He also recognised the importance of developing the trust of the Depute Headteachers. In our initial meetings, George referred to:

The enormity of the task of raising attainment in Stewart High: the Principal Teachers Curriculum need to be part of the cultural change, the message has to be blunt....

George believed one of his greatest challenges in his school was the “laissez faire attitude of the teachers”. In mitigation, he acknowledged that the staff had not been afforded an overview of school attainment in terms of comparator schools before he arrived at the school:

The Principal Teachers Curriculum are being challenged now. Their core business is the quality of learning and teaching as a major driver of improvement and attainment.

George readily confirmed that he viewed his primary purpose to be “the raising attainment at Stewart High”. His concentration was on building capacity in the staff at all

levels. He was keen to ensure that staff were in no doubt that improving attainment is the business of the school and all staff are aware of this. According to George, there was a greatly increased whole-staff involvement in professional learning and an enhancement of student expectations “even at this early stage”. George was acutely aware of the need for strong communication with staff, pupils and parents. He viewed this as a prerequisite to building a culture of success within Stewart High. He recognised the “direction from the authority” and the implications for the balance between autonomy and control and responsibility. George aimed to succeed in developing a positive whole-school culture where all staff had explicit responsibilities concerning their role in improving pupil attainment.

On entering the school for the first interview, I noticed quite a difference from my previous visits. The displays were of how the school was aiming to improve the *Broad General Education*, with a large display described as a “learning wall”. This allowed parents, pupils and visitors to experience the expected progression in learning for pupils in Stewart High. George had already discussed with me, in my role as senior education officer, asking how he could build an improved relationship with the PPP Company who had the responsibility to ensure the school was in good condition. George had obviously progressed this project as there had been an agreed schedule for painting corridors and classrooms and for improvement in appearance in general. George’s office had the new *School Improvement Plan* on the wall and the office staff referred to him by his Christian name, which was in contrast to the previous Headteacher who had discouraged the use of first name terms.

Six months later at the group interview

George seemed very enthusiastic at the interview and was very confident in his contribution to the discussion. When asked how he would know he was doing a good job he responded:

I am into the ethos and I feel that the school is happy and there is genuine warmth in the school. This then allows relationships to build. I am seeing staff and pupils interacting well and seeing pupils wanting to participate in classes and get involved. My initial gut feeling is that this is really important.

Perhaps this approach and view stemmed from his Pupil Support background? When one of the others mentioned attainment, he added:

Yes, attainment, positive destinations and so on are important but I need the gut feel that the temperature in the school is very important and a lot of it leads on to attainment.

When discussing the monitoring of the schools' performance by the local authority, George was of the opinion that:

We do not want the monitoring to be a checking-up but rather sitting down and having a good discussion about the curriculum. It should be helpful and supportive.

The rest of the group agreed that the most helpful meetings were where they could collaborate with each other (as they were doing during this discussion), and increase peer review and meaningful interaction. George added that he worried that the Quality Improvement Officer did not know the school well. The whole interview group appeared very keen to work together to effect improvement – a greater collective approach. George asked for greater collaboration. When he was first appointed to his Headteacher role he said he felt “a loneliness hit me, one you do not appreciate”. George also talked of the need to move from “operational to strategic” and to “toughen up”. He wanted to be able to trust others as you have to realise that you cannot do it all yourself, therefore delegation was necessary.

The improvement in attainment, evidenced by the SQA examination results, had been a great boost for George and the whole school. He said that they had focused on raising the profile of the importance of the quality of the learning experience in the classroom and encouraged “risk-taking” with teachers. He spoke of combining classroom observation procedures with the new raising attainment strategies which they had advanced in partnership with the local authority’s Psychological Services to encourage or even force staff to review their teaching practices. George admitted that “raising attainment was without doubt high on everyone’s agenda”.

Interview after a further 12 months

I met George shortly after the SQA examination results were released. Stewart High’s results had shown a significant improvement. He said he was delighted and relieved at the same time. In the last six months he had been able to appoint a new Depute Headteacher who he felt had made a clear contribution to the monitoring and tracking of attainment in the school. New procedures had been put in place to set targets and monitor how the students were achieving these targets. At the end of the previous session, his other Depute Headteacher had moved to a promoted post and George had recently appointed a Principal Teacher Curriculum from within the school to an acting Depute Headteacher. He was happy with the appointment and said he was looking forward to working with the new Senior Management Team.

Final discussion after at least two years in the post

I met George after the next set of SQA examination results were released. Again the school continued to show improvement in attainment. In the interview George stated:

I have realised over the last 18 months that I am not the one who needs to deliver improvements in teaching and learning or the curriculum – it is my teachers who do that. So if I want to improve attainment I must gain the

support of my teaching colleagues where I need to create strong positive relationships. I and my Senior Management Team set the tone for the school by ensuring that we enable opportunities for leadership at all levels. This has been a slow ship to turn but I am trying to encourage more challenging conversations with teachers than was the case in the first few months.

George's view on the local authority surveillance role was that:

Monitoring by the local authority often sets my priorities but sometimes conflicts. I am very aware of what is expected although I am often concerned both professionally and personally that I am missing key developments and worry that the pace of change is not as fast as the local authority expects. This increases stress levels for everyone. I am generally comfortable enough with the accountability that I and all schools face. I was aware of this before I applied for the job and although it may be more intense than first expected it is not a surprise.

George seemed very aware of the principal factors on which he was judged. He felt that parents had a very strong voice as well as local Councillors and their opinions could be used to judge the general worth of the school. However, he added that:

Judgement at staff level is often less analytical and is formed on the basis of how I support or I am perceived to support staff with their daily interaction, my relationships with them and my willingness to listen to their concerns. Improving pupil attainment and positive destination statistics are key from a national and local authority perspective.

I asked George to indicate the practices that in his opinion had made the most significant differences to improvements in attainment. His response was as follows:

- George believed that the Headteacher should have “a high profile around the school”.
- He thought it was important to develop a “whole school community culture” where all have explicit responsibilities about their role in improving pupil attainment.
- George felt strongly that the role of Principal Teachers Curriculum and senior management was “to support and challenge everyone in the classroom” both staff and pupils.
- He said there was a need for a systematic approach to reviewing the classroom experience for the pupil.

- He was of the clear view that all staff should have a “collective responsibility to improve attainment” and their role was in achieving that.
- George wanted to ensure “high expectations” and a consistent approach by all staff and learners.
- It was necessary to improve tracking and monitoring to impact on attainment and be integral to teaching and learning practices.
- He thought there should be better access and use of performance data to ensure that more staff had a clear understanding.
- George wanted to advance “sharing good practice” across the school and with partner schools.
- He advocated whole-school policies which link classroom practice with professional learning and review.
- He believed in the strength of a validated self-evaluation approach within the school and with partner schools as part of the local authority Quality Improvement model.
- George felt there should be greater focus on curriculum structure and development, offering “smarter choices” and more relevant progression routes for pupils.
- He was aware that the school would benefit from improving pupil engagement and wanted more effort in this area.
- He was also conscious of the requirement for greater emphasis on post-school destinations.

I observed George’s tensions when he discussed expectations of raising attainment and what he described as the importance of having a “happy school”. Through the three interviews, I observed that George had not changed his view on the importance of the “temperature of the school”. Aware that raising attainment was a key priority of his local authority, George focused on strategies such as improving pupil engagement and improved quality of learning and teaching, which were aligned with his own values in order to underpin improved attainment.

In summary: common themes and differences

There were a number of common issues and concerns expressed by the Headteachers. There were also some notable differences. The impact of the attainment agenda on these new school leaders was found to be context specific, i.e. at least partly related to inherited school performance and school narrative (Ball, 2003b). Perhaps unsurprisingly, inherited poor performance appeared to correlate with the Headteacher perception of low staff morale, motivation and professionalism. The consequences of this for the quality of teaching and learning led to a claimed need for changes and reorganisation, by some of the Headteachers, before progress in raising attainment could be achieved. Negative commentary was much less prevalent from the Headteachers who inherited the higher attaining schools. Whilst there were many commonalities, given the wide variations in inherited school performance, there were also distinct differences in the development of the roles and practices of the new Headteachers.

All of the Headteachers indicated that they felt under considerable pressure to raise attainment. There was a general apprehension concerning the high expectations of the local authority and the possible actions in the event of failure against attainment targets. All noted that they would value increased support from the local authority. The Headteachers commented on the conflict between short-term attainment targets and creating a longer-term cultural change to engender sustainable improvement. The discourse of accountability and performativity was perceived by some to be pervasive and constraining. There were common concerns about the pressure to concentrate on other areas such as curriculum, wider achievement and inclusion while at the same time maintaining momentum for improvements in attainment. There was a consensus amongst the Headteachers that support for families and vulnerable groups should be maintained

and developed. Whilst the Headteachers acknowledged that issues of school and community were important and needed to be addressed, some of them felt that the heightening parental and other external stakeholder expectations generated additional pressures.

There was a general recognition of the importance of motivating staff and engaging their commitment to the changes necessary in order to improve attainment. Communication and the sharing of rich data were considered fundamental. This correlated with a belief in the central importance of the quality of teaching and learning. All the Headteachers agreed upon the need for rigorous tracking and monitoring procedures covering departments, staff and individual student performance. They also seemed to agree that these methods needed to be embraced by all staff. The Headteachers acknowledged the importance of establishing a bond of trust and a strong working relationship within the Senior Management Team.

The Headteachers were enthusiastic about greater collaboration and interaction with each other and valued the sharing of ideas and the learning mechanisms that such collaboration had the potential to provide. Each stressed the importance of having a clear strategy and vision for their schools and the need for this to be communicated to all staff. The importance of staff buy-in could not be underestimated. It was agreed that it was essential to build capacity in the staff in terms of leadership and professional development and to generate continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. The Headteachers were of the common view that whole-school high expectations of attainment were an essential component for their schools to be successful.

Many of the differences were more issues of emphases rather than major variances in practices. The pressures of attainment might manifest themselves in a requirement for

greater support and direction from the local authority (including the assignment of a Quality Improvement Officer); a heightened demand for collaboration and the potential for school to school partnership; an increase in staff involvement and motivation to achieve, or frustration with colleagues and the adoption of a more insular approach; and a concentration on the minutiae of performance statistics at the expense of a broader strategic approach. There was an issue for some concerning the balance between local authority control and individual school autonomy. Inevitably poor attainment entailed increased local authority intervention and surveillance and reduced autonomy.

Approaching Foucault and the attainment agenda

In the next chapter, the combined interview transcripts from these case studies are examined from a Foucauldian perspective. This is intended to complement the material of this chapter and relates in part to the observations and conversations described in the foregoing. In order to apply Foucauldian concepts, it was necessary to return to the transcripts and the analysis of the themes as discussed in Chapter 6. It was also essential to maintain my focus on the research questions. In Foucauldian terms, discipline and power are relational and part of the intention of this study is to seek a more nuanced understanding of Headteacher development. The study is designed to investigate the normalising influence of the attainment agenda on the role and practices of the Headteacher, and the formation of the Headteacher as an ethical subject within a culture of performativity. This does not however negate the concept of agency and the possibility for resistance.

Chapter 4 situates Foucault within the framework of school leadership based on the Foucauldian concepts of discourse, power/knowledge, governmentality (systemic), disciplinary power (school level), and ethics (individual). The Foucauldian tools best

suiting to my research questions predominantly emanate from *Discipline and Punish* (1977) although, in Chapter 4, I make reference to a number of additional important publications, e.g. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), *Power/Knowledge* (1980), and the second volume of the *History of Sexuality* (1985). Scheurich and McKenzie (2005) describe *Discipline and Punish* as “literally a panoply of critical tools and ideas that can be used....” (p. 856). Using Foucault, I revisited the research questions, the transcripts, the underlying themes and the categories described on pages 106 and 107 of Chapter 6. I found that the thematic categories could be condensed and directly related to one or several of six issues accessible to the Foucauldian analysis I was endeavouring to conduct. These issues, together with the relevant categories in parentheses, were as follows:

1. The initial positioning of new Headteachers in the context of school performance and inherited narrative (Categories: legacy issues and initial stakeholder perception; preparation and role models);
2. The influences of the attainment agenda and the ways in which new Headteachers incorporate the attainment discourse in the description of their daily work and practices (Categories: legacy issues and initial stakeholder perception; preparation and role models; vision and strategy; accountability and control; collegial and collaborative influences; reflective learning and development);
3. The ways in which the new Headteachers position themselves relative to the attainment discourse and the perceived challenges (Categories: preparation and role models; vision and strategy; challenges and coping strategies; management and implementation; collegial and collaborative influences; emotional resilience);
4. The impact of the attainment discourse on leadership practices, aspirations and identities (Categories: vision and strategy; tensions and perceived conflicting priorities; ethical choices and aspirations; reflective learning and development);
5. The tensions arising between the attainment discourse and other discourses of teaching and leadership and broader school achievement (Categories: tensions and

perceived conflicting priorities; accountability and control; challenges and coping strategies; ethical choices and aspirations; risk-taking); and

6. The means by which new Headteachers resist the demands of the attainment agenda and evidence of counter-discourse (Categories: ethical choices and aspirations; agency and forms of resistance; emotional resilience; risk-taking).

It will be noted that several of the thematic categories are relevant to more than one of the identified issues and are therefore repeated where most appropriate. Chapter 8 takes each of these six issues in turn in a Foucauldian examination of the interview material.

Chapter 8

Foucault and the Attainment Agenda: disciplining the Headteacher

We are entering the age of the infinite examination and of compulsory objectification. (Foucault, 1977, p, 189)

General Introduction

This chapter interrogates the interview transcripts generated by the four case studies from a Foucauldian perspective. A substantial amount of interview material has already been presented and discussed in Chapter 7, detailing rich conversations and observations. Headteacher biographies and descriptions of the schools, including history and environment, were also provided in Chapter 7. Here I draw on these contextualisations of the case studies and incorporate reflections on some additional relevant observations. The purpose and contents of this chapter can be described briefly as a Foucauldian examination of the combined case study material. Each case study includes an account of a Headteacher's perspective on the influence of the attainment agenda on practice and their lived school life. By means of selective extracts, I endeavour to demonstrate the pervasive impact of the attainment agenda. My approach is categorised in terms of broad issues, related to the research questions. The analytic process through which I identified these issues is explained in Chapter 6 headed *Theoretical Framework and Methodology* and further developed in Chapter 7.

My focus in this chapter is on exploring how the role and practices of the new Headteacher are influenced by the inherited levels of school performance and shaped by the associated school narrative. To understand how educational systems come into being from a Foucauldian perspective, it is important to study the relationship between the

subject and truth, i.e. how subjects become constituted through discourses taken as truth, as an ongoing activity. Thus it is of critical importance to analyse how schools are produced, named and categorised, both from an internal and external perspective, and how Headteachers understand and make sense of their schools and roles. The inherited environment also has an important influence on the positioning of the new Headteacher and represents a significant indicator of subsequent practices.

In the following, I use Foucault's notions of docile bodies and panopticism to explore how the Headteacher is constituted by particular accountabilities within a culture of performativity. I examine how the practices of the individual Headteacher merge within disciplinary regimes that treat Headteachers as both objects and instruments of the exercising of disciplinary power under the panoptic gaze of the Government, local authority, staff, students, the community and other stakeholders. It is through this analysis that it becomes possible to see how each of the four Headteachers is differently situated within discourses of attainment, as well as illustrating the creation of multiple subjectivities through disciplinary processes.

Introducing the thematic discussion

The following sections take as their focus the presentation and discussion of the interview material generated by the case studies of the four new Headteachers. The research participants and school contexts were described in detail in Chapter 7.

As explained in Chapter 7, key issues were identified from the case study interview material, using the research questions and Foucauldian concepts. These issues were as follows:

- The initial positioning of new Headteachers in the context of school performance and inherited narrative;

- The influences of the attainment agenda and the ways in which new Headteachers incorporate the attainment discourse in the descriptions of their daily work and practices;
- The ways in which the new Headteachers position themselves relative to the attainment discourse and the perceived challenges;
- The impact of the attainment discourse on leadership practices, aspirations and identities;
- The tensions arising between the attainment discourse and other discourses of teaching and leadership and broader school achievement; and
- The means by which new Headteachers resist the demands of the attainment agenda and evidence of counter-discourse.

In the analysis and discussions across the case studies in the following sections, I draw on these various recurrent themes in order to highlight the most important factors influencing the individual Headteachers in relation to the attainment agenda. I interpret material from the Headteacher conversations in Foucauldian terms grouped under each of the identified issues. My intention is to demonstrate how these interpretations relate to the theoretical framework of this study with the objective of answering the overarching research questions. The issues that I have identified are inter-related and inter-dependent which makes it neither possible nor desirable to present the material in neat categories, however, I will use the headings to structure and frame the analysis of the evidence.

The allocation under the categorisations is inevitably contingent on the emphases made by the Headteachers, given a combination of themes is usually present in the dialogue generated from each of the interviews. There are obviously many other aspects of school leadership and the analysis seeks to explore the relative weightings of these against the pressures of accountability and performativity associated with the attainment agenda.

1. The initial positioning of new Headteachers in the context of school performance and inherited narrative

For the new Headteacher, leadership has a beginning and a context. It becomes imbued with the existing school narrative and identity. I first consider the views of John, the Headteacher of Bruce Gate Secondary School. I then juxtapose this with the comments of another case study Headteacher, Robert of MacAlpin High School, who inherited a school with a significantly different history and environment. This should demonstrate how important the initial situational dimension of leadership is to the developing role and practices of the Headteacher. School leaders take disparate actions due to the different histories and particularities of each school, the influence of the local community, and the interests of other stakeholders.

John, the Headteacher of Bruce Gate Secondary School, inherited a school where examination performance was good and the climate could be described as positive. It is acknowledged that Bruce Gate had performed much better than its comparators in all measures during the recent past. Over the past three years, the school had achieved results in the top quarter of schools in the authority. As a previous Depute Headteacher, John felt he had already made a significant contribution to that success and he appeared to present himself as though he were immersed in the positive aspects of existing school narrative. The school introduction and Headteacher biography provided in the previous chapter illustrates aspects of that success. John emphasised this by stating:

There have been very significant improvements in attainment, achievement and school culture during my time as Depute and then Headteacher, and these are recognised by the local community and across the local authority. Bruce Gate is top of its comparator grouping and is one of the top performing schools in the authority. Underpinning this has been raising expectations of students and staff and reinforcing this regularly, in classes, at assemblies, and at staff meetings. Building an inclusive learning community with a positive and aspirational culture, supporting and celebrating success, all of these are the key aspects of my role.

This is a positional discourse; it is a discourse of success because there are others that are unsuccessful or are less successful. It is a comparative discourse, in which the Headteacher makes explicit the advantaged positioning in the social space. School data is strategically placed and compared with other schools, making them appear successful. Ranking systems provide parents, communities, and policymakers with information that facilitates comparison among schools.

To understand this discourse, it is important to consider the school's pathway, since discourse is accumulated historically. It is not that the school has a blank self-identity waiting every year for test scores and enrolment numbers to determine school self-assessment. On the contrary, there are complex and multiple socio-historical conditionings that intertwine in creating school identity. In other words, the school narrative has its specific setting of production, which involves its own historicity. Headteachers playfully and creatively rework these supposedly neutral judgements and classifications within the game of truth, adjusting them tactically to their narratives and historical dispositions of a successful school.

This discourse reproduces and fits comfortably with the prevailing policy discourse of 'schools can make a difference', ignoring broader contextual inequities. Importantly, while the Government keeps steering at a distance, this scheme shifts responsibility from the Government to local authorities and on to the schools. Therefore, failure is construed as an institutional and/or individual malfunction, rather than a product intertwined with its social conditions. Whitty et al. (1998) calls this the: "devolution of the blame" (p.113). It obscures the responsibility of Government policy and intervention, and of other factors, such as local governance, unequal school resources and students' social and ethnic backgrounds.

School narratives tactically remove, exclude, and reassemble information in order to reaffirm a historical notion of school quality. Schools rework prevailing regimes of truth in creative and sophisticated ways. These truths circulate as scientific, rational, and neutral. They constitute and constrain the understanding of the self. Headteachers have to confront risks individually, within a state of equal inequality (using Foucault's term), meaning a setting of constant competition, made-up necessarily of differences. The school identity is built on the basis of external evaluations and comparison against the others. These others represent a school threat that puts the school's future at risk (Ball, 2003a). This is partly a discourse of competition, the rationale of overcoming the other.

Gewirtz (2002) argues that schools are constituted through a discursive fabrication of success and failure, placing schools within a hierarchical understanding, then valuing them according to their ability to compete within markets and show favourable outcomes. School classifications, according to the author, instead of neutrally judging school management, produce the successful and failing school. Applying Foucault's (1977) language, the rankings operate so as to keep Headteachers in "a state of conscious and permanent visibility" (p. 201), as in the panopticon, and the criteria of judgment used by the rankings amount to "the universal reign of the normative" (p. 304). Success and failure are two sides of the same coin that enable market competition to function. In other words, successful schools are so, at least partly, because of failing schools. The successful and failing contrast is demonstrated by comparing Bruce Gate Secondary with MacAlpin High. The latter school is struggling with low levels of attainment. Robert, the Headteacher of MacAlpin High, had various explanations for the school's perceived inherited and continuing failings:

The main priorities in the context of the attainment agenda are identifying the departments who do and do not deliver and putting strategies in place. Incompetency is an ongoing issue. How the tracking and monitoring system is impacting needs to be reviewed. There is a big focus on the tracking. Pairing up Principal Teachers Curriculum and getting them to understand their respective roles is a challenge.

Robert appears to be strongly constrained by the need to improve attainment and envisages diverse strategies in order to improve performance outcomes, aiming particularly to change the school categorisation of failing school to performing school:

I need someone who I can trust and who has the abilities and knows how to raise attainment. There is the issue of Self Evaluation but I am not touching that this year. I need a disciplined system with a sound management structure. The lack of ambition has the most detrimental effect on this school. Some staff have no expectations. There is Union influence and the quality of learning and teaching is a problem. Staff want to do what they have always done. There is a lack of understanding of accountability. Why am I asking these questions? Is it because I can? Staff have not been challenged and there is a lack of expertise in taking forward learning and teaching.

In addition, the sense of insecure positioning is linked to a feeling of distrust towards school staff, together with a profound desire to augment power technologies. Robert, as Headteacher of MacAlpin High, is concerned about teachers' performance and of finding new ways to assess teachers, and aligning staff to attainment policies.

There is a problem with the Principal Teachers Curriculum who felt the school was doing well. I shared the HMIe and the attainment data with them. I need to be aware of being high profile in the community, they loved the previous HT but I had to come along and get the attainment job done. Elected members need to be kept on side. Number one on the agenda is to make this school a better place. Parental expectations must be heightened and we must improve PR with the primaries.

Robert seems to try desperately to reconcile contradictory perspectives in order to understand the school. The arrival of a new Headteacher into any school requires a delicate balance of respect for the previous Headteacher combined with a new enthusiasm and vision for the school. In this sense, the work and style of the previous Headteacher can function as a mode of subjection. New Headteachers present a divided self that

confronts multiple and contradictory discourses. As Kenway (1990) notes, power/knowledge: "divides people from themselves and others" (p.174). The subjection of the Headteacher as a docile body and as the producer of docile bodies is intrinsic to the school under disciplinary regimes. Robert is in the position of being subject to a number of disciplinary techniques through surveillance from students, parents, the community, and the local authority, as well as being a mechanism of surveillance over others. It is partly through such relations of power that the Headteacher is constructed and maintained under scrutiny and scrutinises others. Governmentality operates in both an upwards and downwards direction (Foucault 1991a).

2. The influences of the attainment agenda and the ways in which new Headteachers incorporate the attainment discourse in the description of their daily work and practices

The pressures of the attainment agenda and performativity measurement are examples of disciplinary practices that attempt to control the actions of Headteachers. Part of the significance and difficulty of this lies in the Headteacher's definition of a successful role or, in Foucauldian terms his *telos*: the ideal or ultimate goal to which he aspires. Consistency of Headteacher *telos* with the requirements of the attainment agenda is rationalised in comments made by John, the Headteacher of Bruce Gate Secondary:

You asked me how I know I am doing a good job in a successful school. I think this is when you come back to attainment again. That is my number one. If the attainment is not good, I would be questioning what I was doing. Within reason, given that there are other issues, that is the single biggest thing and underpinning that is all sorts of day to day things that you are doing. There are two angles on this, firstly it is the strongest message coming across from the authority, but also that I generally believe it is the key to the success of the kids and that will be their passport to choices for the future. I genuinely believe that not just because people are telling me that you have to get your results up and that will make the difference. Culture is important but it correlates with success.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Foucault argues that power should be analysed through techniques of hierarchical surveillance, control and normalisation. The attainment agenda priority of the local authority and the surveillance exercised through Quality Improvement visits and measures of performativity are accepted by the Headteacher as a major determinant of daily practice. John acknowledges that “there are other issues”. The attainment discourse includes and excludes, foregrounds and backgrounds, and renders some things important and others invisible. It is a very highly privileged discourse. It is evident, however, that many Headteachers also view prioritisation of attainment as an ethical choice and the key to a successful future for the pupils. Here Foucault’s notions of ethics and technologies of the self can be used to understand how it is possible for Headteachers to contest and respond to the proliferation of practices that can serve to discipline and normalise them under notions of governmentality (Foucault, 1985). Foucault’s conception of ethics is concerned with the relationship one has with oneself and processes of self-formation in response to a range of prescribed codes of action. The discourse and practices of attainment exemplified by John at Bruce Gate appear to be in harmony with the formation of the Headteacher’s ethical self. This contrasts with the more conflicted and pressured situation of William, the Headteacher of Balliol Academy:

I was Depute Headteacher for six years. As a Depute, the role model of my previous Headteacher impacted on me hugely. He felt attainment was not the main purpose of the school. It was a desirable consequence of getting all the other bits right, the relationships, values, etc. and that is absolutely right. I do agree that it now presents me with a number of challenges...It is maybe about how we challenge, is it about firing out docs and demanding things back and getting back data? I have a lot of this. I think I am becoming a different person from what I was before. I am increasing my monitoring and changing my leadership style to do more monitoring.

The identity of the school leader is very much shaped and formed by the attainment agenda and the desire for this to be seen as a major and successful part of the school narrative. The performativity culture as a disciplinary system within Scottish schools

creates what in Foucauldian terms would be referred to as regimes of truth and these conditions position Headteachers and influence their professional identities and practices. Headteachers adopt practices, participate in technologies of the self, and are normalised in accordance with the attainment agenda. The question is, as Tennant (1998) suggests: to what extent are the identities produced empowering or limiting?

3. How new Headteachers position themselves relative to the attainment discourse and the perceived challenges

The positioning of the Headteachers in relation to the attainment agenda appears consistent with its foregrounding in their daily work practices including the ethical dimension. This is illustrated by the comments of George, the Headteacher of Stewart High School:

My job is to raise attainment. It is a dramatic challenge. Everything I do has attainment as the core focus. Attainment needs to be addressed first as it builds self-esteem in pupils and staff. There is a significant challenge here and not enough time was spent on this... I am conscious of the enormity of the task and the understanding that raising attainment is about improving life chances. The focus on short-term success in a school means we are judged on short-term outcomes. I have to look at a longer picture. I will have to build on improved attainment.

The Headteacher accepts accountability for attainment almost without qualification with its associated levels of local authority surveillance and assessment. Technologies of hierarchical observation, judgement normalised to the views of Government and the local authority by processes of self-evaluation and quality assurance, and the inspection itself become, for many Headteachers, the conditions which mould their professional identities and practices. Are professional and ethical choices genuinely being exercised by the Headteacher which coincidentally reflect the will of Government and the local authority? Is that coincidence so surprising given that no one would be expected to disagree with the concepts of attainment, effectiveness and improvement? The reality may be that

Government and the local authority achieve their goals through disciplined self-management, a means by which the self appears to exercise behavioural agency, however, it is a performance that has already been shaped discursively.

In the following quote John, the Bruce Gate Headteacher, describes how performativity and measurability are a major element of the culture of the school. This involves assessment of both staff and pupils, with departments being identified as strong or weak performers and responsibility devolved to both staff and students as John demonstrates:

The results showed us that our approach to tracking and monitoring was working. They also showed us that there were some significant differences between subject areas and these needed to be addressed. The results were better than we had anticipated, and this showed me that certain actions (coursing, mentoring etc.) could make a real difference. However, the down-side of this is that it takes away the responsibility of students themselves. To make the improvements in attainment sustainable, we now need to think hard about how we can build more independent and resilient learners. To this end we are introducing a Skills Academy period for S1 and S2 to give a weekly focus on learning to learn. This will work its way through the year groups so that ultimately every student is developing their learning skills.

This emphasises how the attainment discourse becomes manifest within the machinery of schooling and across staff and pupils. As Rose (1996) argues, in Foucauldian terms, accountability policies discipline schools in self-reproducing ways, at a micro-daily-level, constituting individuals as enterprising selves. In addition to the construction of staff and pupils as objects for the attention of leadership, and in order to determine the reputed effectiveness of leadership and management, the discourse constructs school outcomes in specific ways: measurable; quantifiable; and material. Students are objectified as talented, borderline, underachieving, and irredeemable. Different affordances and opportunities are offered to different groups which may well lead to inequitable life chances. As external policy focuses on different metrics of performance, these changes are reflected in variations of emphases within the schools to focus on different sorts of students.

Therefore, while attention to a value-added indicator may make the contribution of all students significant, a specific grade indicator does not.

4. The impact of the attainment discourse on leadership practices, aspirations and identities

From the following it might be concluded that the accountability regime can have a saturating effect on Headteachers' and teachers' thinking, as they endeavour to shape the performative school. George, the Stewart High Headteacher, appears to describe the impact of the pervasive aspects of the performativity culture:

The attainment in the school has to start in the classroom: although I have effective teachers, I am not sure that they understand their place in improving attainment. How it all fits together as a school must be addressed. Staff access to the data must be a lot more direct. All teachers need to get the message. If the children are to prosper and succeed, then the attainment must be improved. It is the responsibility of every teacher in the school. The Principal Teachers Curriculum are part of the cultural change. The message has to be blunt. This is what the figures are telling us. The challenge is the laissez-faire attitude of the teachers, teaching to the middle level. Teachers need to meet the needs of all of the children. When they start complaining about behaviour, they lay themselves bare to the quality of learning in the classroom. The Principal Teachers Curriculum are being challenged now and their core business is learning and teaching. Everyone should take responsibility for raising attainment. A cultural change is happening.

In Foucauldian terms, for Headteachers the pressures of the regime of numbers defines a whole field of new realities and the pertinent space within which they must act. Schooling as a process is rendered into an input-output calculation. Sophisticated modern systems enable the tracking of student performance, the mapping of actuals in relation to targets, and the calculation of point-scores and value-added. This permeates through the hierarchical school system with all participants, including the students, held accountable under the surveillance of the Headteacher and Senior Management Team. The aspiration is that a positive school culture should be generated from the high expectations of student attainment and that this should lead to a spiral of success.

It seems clear that Robert, as MacAlpin High Headteacher, regards the emphasis on attainment as an ethical part of the self and fully justified in terms of hard staff decisions and the best interests of the pupils:

My priorities are to continue to improve attainment at all levels, develop learning and teaching approaches that inspire all of our learners with a clear focus on support for all our young people to take their place in a modern world.... Pupils need to achieve their potential using all the data available to us. It is my job as the head of the school to ensure they do achieve their potential. I think my role is to set the vision and the direction of the school by my commitment to attainment. Every discussion I am having is about every pupil being pushed and how we ensure we are doing our best for every young person in the school.

5. The tensions arising between the attainment discourse and other discourses of teaching and leadership and broader school achievement

John, the Headteacher of Bruce Gate, identifies some of the stresses associated with a performance culture, reservations concerning the possible reaction of the local authority to disappointing results, and expresses the view that the inequity of the attainment gap should entail a change in strategy:

For most of the session the focus on attainment is fine as it is what we are all about anyway. However, at certain points, it is very stressful particularly when we analyse data and it looks like our results might not match earlier expectations. The actual SQA results period is certainly a time of very high-level stress. A supportive approach from the local authority is important – working with me to identify how we can improve, rather than operating a blame culture. Developing a more collaborative approach to improvement should also help all of us across the authority. Focusing more on closing the gap would be more helpful rather than always trying to raise the bar.

The room for manoeuvre by the school and local authority, except in relation to greater collaboration and support, would appear to be limited. Targets reflecting Government and, therefore, local authority priorities, set the criteria for assessment of school achievement. The system has invoked and set the standard under which the *School Improvement Plan* is evaluated. The effect is to normalise the model of the strategic

planning process. Only a change in Government policy, devolved to local authority level, could alter that position. The political rhetoric surrounding the closing of the attainment gap is not translated into performance criteria ranking with other imposed measures of attainment. Under the current criteria, schools can achieve greater measurable improvement in the short-term by focusing on pupils performing at the margins than by concentrating resources on implementing specific strategies to narrow the gap between higher and lower performing pupils. In March 2015, however, the Scottish Government introduced the *Education (Scotland) Bill 2015* to the Scottish parliament, which proposes new laws requiring local authorities to plan and deliver education services in a way which is designed to narrow the attainment gap (defined as the difference in school attainment between students from the 20% most affluent and the 20% most disadvantaged backgrounds). If these proposals are enacted it may change the emphasis in the way John suggests, however, this will then become another aspect of disciplining the Headteacher.

William, the Balliol Academy Headteacher, has a desire for a more supportive surveillance and monitoring structure as well as increased autonomy to self-manage and self-validate:

I will have to find short term solutions to give me those results but at what cost elsewhere as I would look at a much longer term strategy... I feel a bit under pressure especially under attainment...It is not that this has not been a focus but developing staff and getting to the point where they need to be doing their job differently has been a priority. They need to be challenging themselves and know what self-evaluation is and that kind of thing. How to prioritise is important....I want to be able to strengthen the structures, plans and processes and then turn my attention to inspiring staff to raise the aspirations of our young people – that's what will really raise attainment. Being honest I still feel the local authority surveillance inhibits progression to an extent.

It could be argued that greater self-management moves the emphasis of school leadership towards managerialism, performativity, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. The increasing use of self-evaluation can also be seen as a highly effective technology for

reinforcing the panoptical power of the local authority and inspection regime as a disciplinary system. This Headteacher, however, is looking to combine this increase in devolved powers with a more benign and supportive monitoring structure.

In the following quote George, the Headteacher of Stewart High School, indicates some conflicts in beliefs and values and the compromises entailed by the prominence of the attainment agenda. He also praises the merits of a more open, honest, collegiate and collaborative approach:

I feel a personal as well as a professional pressure on me to continue to improve attainment in an ever more challenging environment....I am being held back from longer-term change as I have these short term attainment targets to deal with. This is stressful to me...Yes attainment, positive destinations and so on are very important but I have the gut feel that the temperature in that school is very important and a lot of it leads on to attainment. So much is put on the results. You are judged on this....The surveillance often sets my priorities but sometimes conflicts with my own priorities and those of the school. I am very aware of what is expected although am often concerned both professionally and personally that I am missing key developments....I think we need a better balance of autonomy and responsibility. There should be increased collaboration between the secondaries giving us a clear voice and authority on agreed strategy. Within that framework you then go and do what suits your school.

It is clear that George feels that the pressures of focusing on what actually makes an impact in terms of attainment puts him in potential conflict with his own beliefs and values. This suggests his view that the increased use of targets, in accordance with managerialist policy, has moved the dominant educational discourse from principles and values, to efficiency and productivity. The terrain of ethics that the Headteacher must engage with on a regular basis is constantly moving. George recognises the continual need for self reflection and adjustment to these varying and sometimes competing concerns. Further compromises are created through demands of accountability and performativity for John of Bruce Gate:

Is my autonomy constrained by accountability, performativity and attainment? Yes, hugely is the one-word answer. It makes you more averse

to taking risks. There are times that for individual kids in the school, you might think that what might be more appropriate for you is never mind these exams, but something else instead, however, currently because we need to get every possible exam result I cannot go down that route. We are very exposed when taking risks, very scary, no steer in what to do. I think that is a problem as you are making these decisions but, apart from casual conversation with the Head of Service, you are left to it. We think we are doing the right thing regarding the new *Curriculum for Excellence*.

As this demonstrates, within educational leadership discourse, examination, assessment and evaluation have become dominant concepts and, as a result, they assume central importance in disciplining the practices of the Headteacher. The risk aversion he refers to here suggests that, for at least a small group of pupils, the sole pursuit of examination success is not in their best interests. John appears initially to identify risk aversion negatively by perceiving that risk avoidance represents a barrier to more innovative ways of promoting what may be in at least some of the students' best interests. He then rationalises his position in relation to the pressures of the attainment agenda and the "need to get every possible exam result". John's seems to believe he resolves his ethical tension in terms of the response to the demands of *Curriculum for Excellence*. His ethical self however appears to rest on contradiction, i.e. the attainment agenda causes him to compromise on a more enlightened approach but that is justified by CfE and its attainment disciplines.

John's additional comments illustrate that there is further tension arising from budgetary constraints and the competing demands of the attainment and inclusion agendas:

I am also very aware of the inclusion agenda and the need to ensure we are meeting the needs of all our young people. I am very conscious of being able to demonstrate this clearly and of the need to ensure that structures and supports are in place to this end. Being able to manage the ever-diminishing budget has become a real factor in my leadership. There is a constant need to balance the attainment and inclusion agenda with budgetary constraints. This causes many tensions and has led to me having to make difficult and uncomfortable decisions. You look at the social issues and the families. We have spent a lot of time looking at this. It does impact

on what happens in the school. There are a lot of issues with the families that we have to pick up in school. Every school has different issues but for us we have a significant number of pupils with social issues. It has got to have an impact on what you do in school and the approaches you take and the support you put in place. I suspect the solution is you do have to look at the differences and act in the best interests of your students.

In addition to the constraints of the attainment and inclusion agenda, budgetary and resource pressures appear to exclude issues of social equity and family and community care. Headteachers and their schools are powerfully disciplined by discourses of attainment, dictating their daily practices, and measures of student academic success. It can be argued that accountability and managerial policies do not respond appropriately to the social demands of students from disadvantaged areas, frustrating schools' efforts to meet pupils' emotional and learning needs.

6. The means by which new Headteachers resist the demands of the attainment agenda

Headteachers regulate their behaviour and work practices according to criteria and expectations set by the staff, students and local community. These technologies of the self by which they act upon themselves in relation to the languages, criteria and techniques available to them are crucial to their formation as subjects. This opens up a space for contestation and resistance that allows Headteachers to counter, to an extent, some of the constraining elements of the attainment agenda. Various aspects of this counter conduct emerged in the interview data and excerpts and associated observations will form the remainder of this section.

At Stewart High, George believes there are wider issues which need to be addressed concerning accountability and autonomy and the local role of staff and community:

All external accountabilities have a tendency to bite. Apart from staff and community, these other accountabilities can sometimes be seen as a tick

box: exam presentation: senior phase: curriculum changes, etc. HMIe worries me about how I can translate their expectations into planning in the school. This may not match what I have recognised as a need of this school and community. It panics me that autonomy is being diluted...Public opinion constrains my role and the short-term need to achieve results. I think I and my staff and parents know best for the community.

George negotiates his way through the tensions between the different discourses (what is prescribed by the local authority, his own telos as an ethical subject, expectations of the staff, students and community). As Foucault (2002b) points out, “power is exercised over subjects, only insofar as they are free” (p. 342), that is, individuals are placed in circumstances in which they have various possibilities to act, and are open to certain modes of conduct (or counter-conduct) or behaviours. It is in these spaces that individuals are constituted as particular subjects. George is not simply implementing the models espoused by the school inspectorate and local authority but engaging with the needs of the community that sometimes may sit at odds with the directions and expectations of other external bodies.

John, the Headteacher of Bruce Gate, clearly has some reservations about the concept of continuous improvement in attainment. He states that this may either be a function of student ability, social factors or staffing and resourcing issues:

There needs to be an understanding at authority level that, while I am firmly committed to removing any and all barriers to learning, that there is perhaps a ceiling on attainment. We can, and will strive for constant improvement, but there may come a point when even better results are not possible. This is down to a variety of factors, including the inherent ability of the pupils, parental support, external influences on the pupils etc. Other factors, which are to a great extent also outside my control are financial – specifically staffing and resources. It has been challenging finding suitably experienced teachers in some areas and clearly this will impact on attainment.

This runs counter to the policy of continuous school improvement and effectiveness promulgated by Government, school inspectorate and the local authority. Increasing accountabilities and an escalating emphasis on performativity may entail increasing

forms of resistance from school leaders to the intense compliance structures and pressures of constantly improving attainment. If this is the case then leadership could be thought of as a disruptive practice, a form of counter-conduct that also allows for more context-based or situated understandings of leadership practice (Niesche, 2013). As John states:

I am still concerned about the measures of attainment currently used as wider achievement does not feature highly. This focus can lead to us taking actions which may improve our figures, but will not necessarily be in the best interests of the students. Attainment is clearly the only game in town - or at least it is the clear front-runner. I am generally happy with this as I believe that high attainment is the route to positive futures for our young people, as long as there is recognition that attainment must go hand in hand with achievement.

This again illustrates that the focus tends to narrow to those issues which are susceptible to measurement with other areas of education being ignored or manipulated and broader areas of achievement denied recognition. The negative effect in other areas of decision making and the potential damage to professional integrity is exemplified in the following quote from William at Balliol Academy:

You are trying to curb your instinct as attainment is the top priority in this authority. It is a pressure I have not experienced before. It also makes it difficult to look at other measures. Lower end pupils are a problem, the area of pupil support for me is really important this year. I have to resist flying off in all different directions.....where my key skills lie, I feel my strengths lie in relationships and I am concerned that this is coming secondary now in my leadership style.

In addition, there are other aspects of surveillance imposing different and wider criteria on the Headteacher leading to a resistance against the narrower constraints of the performance culture. The following comments from John of Bruce Gate illustrate these broader aspects:

The Parent Council has been much more interested in the more obvious manifestations of what they consider a good school – results, uniform, behaviour, awards, and support. However, as I said previously I do not believe that these are disconnected from the attainment agenda so it is possible- indeed desirable – to focus on all these things. The key way, for me, to tie all of these accountabilities together has been through our school values (Integrity, Respect, Inclusion, Compassion, and Aspiration) –

through sharing and living these, I believe all our stakeholders should be satisfied.

This suggests that this Headteacher does feel comfortable to adopt practices to accommodate broader stakeholder interests beyond those strictly dictated by attainment agenda. Through these practices, in addition to those associated with the pursuit of performativity, it can be seen how Headteachers are influenced as subjects who are also influenced by the day-to-day resistances that they employ to act and lead more authentically for the needs of their schools, students and other stakeholders. The ability to resist is inherent within the dynamic quality of the relation of acting agents. Of course, if time and resources are diverted from the pursuit of the attainment agenda, then such counter conduct may pose a risk to the Headteacher. The consequences of taking any action that may reduce performance in terms of student attainment merits careful consideration by the Headteacher.

New Headteachers and the narrative of school identity

Part of the aim of this chapter is to examine the inherited narrative of school identity and how this impacts on and is influenced by new Headteachers. In order to gain greater insight into these narratives it is necessary to study how schools, with different performance and socio-economic positioning, produce and make sense of their institutional identity (Ball et al., 2011). Within a school flow narratives about the institution's meaning within the field. These are shared, struggled and negotiated over time by all staff, pupils, the community and other stakeholders and impacted by dissemination of public information and the views and actions of external bodies and authorities.

Importantly, the narrative of school identity will have an influence on new Headteachers. Staff attitudes and student and parental expectations are contingent aspects of this narrative. The development of a new Headteacher's role and practices will correlate to an extent with the initial attainment levels of the school and staff, student, community and market perception at the date of appointment (Ball, 2003b). Discursive rules circulate within educational markets that constitute and discipline school institutions in particular ways (Foucault 1980, 1981c) through school categorisation, divisions and public dissemination. Official school classifications position and subjectivise Headteachers to compete within the marketplace by "the power of rational classification" (Foucault, 1981c, p.34).

In addition to the Scottish comparator table rankings, examination performance is publicly available and unofficial league tables are often constructed by the media. This information produces regimes of truth around defining a school as good or bad, efficient or inefficient, successful or failing. These artefacts work as power technologies that label, sort and differentiate schools as rational and objective truths, claimed as benefiting education. They place institutions within a standardised competing environment, telling them who they are and what they are capable of being. Rose (1992) suggests that these power technologies entail deep effects:

.....defining categories and explanatory schemes according to which we think ourselves, the criteria and norms we use to judge ourselves, the practices through which we act upon ourselves and one another in order to make us particular kinds of being. (p.161)

According to the data analysis, all four case studies show how prevailing accountability and market discourses are reproduced and exercised within schools. Youdell (2011) argues that categorisation is a core disciplinary technology, which must be carefully analysed in order to understand the constitution of the subject. Policy discourses work as

productive power that constitutes a particular meaning for schooling and specifies the differences among them based on a competitive environment. Headteachers are situated within these discursive formations that constitute, discipline and constrain them, although they also play the game of truth, producing, contesting and moving prevailing discourses and rules. Schools are subjectivised and recognised through hierarchically ranked identities, according to who is above and who is beneath them.

In this way, Headteachers employ a positional discourse, based on a matrix of competition and comparison with the others. This is the reach of the economy into more of the social, bringing into play its techniques, values, and sensitivities. Market technologies discipline Headteachers through competition, standardisation, and classification accepting and naturalising school hierarchies and inequities. From a Foucauldian perspective, it is important to study the relationship between the subject and truth, i.e. how subjects are constituted through purported regimes of truth, as an ongoing activity.

By means of the disseminated and available comparable data, power relations are obscured and the whole technological apparatus of school assessment is understood as disinterested and transparent. According to Gewirtz (2002), these discourses of performativity and markets construct schools as a success or as a failure, thereby strongly affecting school morale. The interviews of this study at the same time afford new insights into ways in which Headteachers and their schools strategically play, debate, replace and move scores, classifications and rankings. They undertake these strategies in order to generate successes, conserve a historical sense of positioning, as well as to justify or separate themselves from low performance indicators. Headteachers are both disciplined by market technologies, but also actively committed to make sense of a complex scenario involving hegemonic policy categories, the particular institutional historicity, personal

beliefs and commitments, and the practical and material conditions in which they and their staff work.

The interview conversations illustrated ways in which the Headteachers scrutinised, talked, explained and attempted to master themselves in very different ways within the games of truth. The new Headteachers used their inherited positions to exercise technologies of the self, by adopting and reforming school narratives as a way to understand and make sense of the school and their individual practices within the school. The production of a school identity is an enduring and dynamic activity, transmitted, circulated, negotiated, and re-created within institutional historical discursive formations. Following Foucault (1997), Headteachers seem compelled to know, understand and explain themselves politically. They appear eager to produce and tell truths, as a vital and ethical necessity for school recognition, survival, and for the maintenance of school self-existence. Nonetheless, these struggles remain unresolved, and sustain ongoing tension. Public information and categorisations stimulate schools to compare themselves based on a culture of competition, focusing on quantifiable data, rather than necessarily stimulating innovative thinking and quality improvements in teaching and learning. As exemplified by the foregoing case studies, the inherited school narrative and associated performance-related information and school categorisation have a significant influence on the strategy and practices adopted by the new Headteacher.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have endeavoured to demonstrate how the Headteachers are positioned differently in the power regimes within school leadership and management. In doing so, I have given examples of the developing roles and work practices of the differently situated Headteachers. Discourses and contexts of schooling have played an influential

role in the docility of the four new Headteachers, who arguably have already been disciplined by their long experience of the school system. The impact of the attainment agenda on these new school leaders was clearly linked to their school contexts: the histories; routines; staff relationships; and how the Headteacher in turn became related to these contexts. In particular, I have explored how the inherited narrative of school identity has an important influence on the development of the new Headteacher. It generates a positional discourse that may result in the school being defined in terms of success or failure. This discourse is accumulated historically and is often framed in terms of comparison and competition. Differences in the roles and practices of the new Headteachers were identified across the four case studies at least partly contingent on the inherited narrative.

The interview conversations from the case studies were presented and discussed under key issues related to the research questions. Using a Foucauldian perspective, it has become possible to see how each of the four Headteachers becomes differently positioned within discourses of attainment. Headteachers are disciplined by various means and significantly by accountability to a specific, externally-created set of judgment criteria. Practices such as *Devolved School Management* claim to be democratic and participatory, while in fact they result in more effective technologies of control. The pressures of the attainment agenda and performativity measurement are examples of disciplinary practices that control the actions of Headteachers. I have attempted to demonstrate how power operates on and through the Headteachers under the constraints of the attainment agenda.

I have also attempted to explore the ways that new Headteachers practice technologies of the self: the self-forming activities by which Headteachers transform themselves into ethical subjects. For each Headteacher there are different modes of subjection. One of the

most significant aspects is the concept of leadership itself and what it means to be a good Headteacher (Foucault's concept of telos). At least some Headteachers can be seen to view prioritisation of attainment as an ethical choice. The terrain of ethics that each Headteacher must engage with on a regular basis is constantly shifting and involves varying and often competing concerns. Here Foucault's notion of counter-conduct has proved useful, not as a concept of resistance against forms of domination, but rather as ways of working in the spaces of freedom in the accountability and attainment logic which constitutes such a significant aspect of governmentality and disciplinary practices. According to Christie and Lingard (2001), leadership is a dynamic process where forces that are conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational, play out in complex social situations.

Finally, it should be noted that, despite the pressures of the attainment agenda, the Headteachers dealt conscientiously with many competing priorities and maintained a high level of professionalism. It should be emphasised that all of the Headteachers consistently demonstrated, through their actions, as well as their words, a deep commitment to the educational opportunities of their students.

Chapter 9

Discussions and Implications

....how to keep someone under surveillance, how to control his conduct, his behaviour, his aptitudes, how to improve his performance, multiply his capacities, how to put him where he is most useful: that is discipline in my sense.
(Foucault, 1981c, p 192)

Reflections on the research questions

The objective of this study was to investigate the challenges that new Headteachers encounter in negotiating the attainment agenda in the Scottish education system and how these Headteachers are disciplined and constructed as subjects within a culture of performativity. There are many other influences on the role and practices of the Headteacher some of which are in conflict. A number of these have been discussed but this has in no way been comprehensive and the main focus has remained the significant influence of the attainment agenda. As we have seen, this is manifest through a complicated network of power relations. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the attainment agenda influence the role and challenges of the newly appointed Headteacher?
2. What determines the strategies and positions adopted by newly appointed Headteachers to negotiate the challenges of the attainment agenda?
3. How does the impact of the attainment agenda vary between different newly appointed Headteachers?

In conducting my research, I have sought to identify the multiple views of the Headteachers regarding their practices, professional and ethical issues, challenges and

problematic situations in their work as school leaders in relation to the attainment agenda. This involved a Foucauldian exploration of the power relations that create Headteachers' subjectivities and how interacting regimes of practice impact on and discipline their daily lives. I have attempted to identify the approaches that school leaders use for managing the challenges identified in the study. In the data collection and analysis, the preferred strategies, as well as the reasons why they were selected, were investigated. I examined the different strategies and practices employed by the Headteachers involved in the study in dealing with the challenges of the attainment agenda and the possible reasons for any disclosed variation in practice. The specific areas discussed included:

- The initial positioning of the new Headteacher in the context of school performance and inherited narrative;
- The influences of the attainment agenda and the ways in which the new Headteacher incorporated the attainment discourse in the descriptions of daily work and practices;
- How the Headteacher positioned himself relative to the attainment discourse and the perceived challenges;
- The impact of the attainment discourse on leadership practices, aspirations and identities;
- The tensions arising between the attainment discourse and other discourses of teaching and leadership and broader school achievement; and
- The means by which the new Headteacher resisted the demands of the attainment agenda and evidence of counter-discourse.

In this chapter, I provide a review of the chapters and the structure of the thesis and summarise the key points arising from the study as they relate to the research questions.

I discuss the insights and critical questions emerging and the implications for policy and practice. I conclude the chapter with my views on the contribution of this study and recommendations for further research.

Summary of approach

In this thesis I have chosen to focus on issues of subjectivity and the ways in which Headteachers are constituted as subjects under the influence of the attainment agenda. In particular, by employing Foucauldian concepts, I have examined the work practices of the Headteachers and highlighted the important role these practices have in forming particular subjectivities. I have argued that it is necessary to explore the way that Headteachers are constituted as subjects through their work practices under the powerful influence of the attainment agenda. Headteachers are normalised by discourses of performativity that promote particular types of behaviours and characteristics. In response to this, I have attempted to show not only how such discourses operate to discipline and normalise the Headteachers' practices, but also how they contested and responded to such powerful and potentially restricting discourses. Through a combination of a case study method, and employing Foucauldian concepts of disciplinary power, governmentality, and ethics, I have attempted to demonstrate the pervasive influence of the attainment agenda.

Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that the performance accountability culture appeared in a variety of forms, each of which had its own influence on the work of the Headteacher. The most salient elements of the performance accountability culture were the escalating attainment-driven agenda of Government, the local authority, the school inspection regime and the sophistication of new virtual school assessments. These were compounded by the public availability of the inspection results and unofficial league

tables, and tensions between the Headteacher's need to fulfil the mandates of the accountability culture and his desire for the best learning and teaching experience and most appropriate outcomes for his students. Consequently, it was necessary to counteract negative perceptions of their schools, prevent criticism from stakeholders, gain community support, and maintain the schools' public 'transparency'. Foucault's (1977) concept of disciplinary power through surveillance provides a useful model for understanding how ranking systems and publications of schools' outputs can, in effect, police the schools on an uninterrupted basis. Each Headteacher in this study knew that his school's performance was always being observed and measured against that of others. As Foucault (1977) argued, "It is the fact of constantly being seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection" (p. 187).

In the opening chapter, *Research Context and Purpose*, I outlined the main aims and arguments of this thesis. I introduced the *attainment agenda*. I endeavoured to make the case that all institutions, within the educational networks, including Government, local authorities and schools, are entangled in performative activities dedicated to improve results.

Chapter 2, headed *Education Policy and the Attainment Agenda*, first considered developments in education policy in post-devolutionary Scotland. The chapter moved on to discuss accountability and performativity in the context of the attainment agenda with particular reference to the targets and standards under the Scottish education system.

In the third chapter, *Framing School Leadership*, I investigated the various theories of leadership and examined developments in the discourse of leadership. My approach was then to view school leadership as a field of related discourses correlated with the policy and pedagogical discourses surrounding the attainment agenda in Scotland.

Chapter 4 examined *Foucault and Educational Leadership* and the ways in which Foucauldian concepts could be applied in order to understand the impact of the attainment agenda on Headteacher practices. I sought to explain how Headteachers are constructed as subjects through school leadership and management discourses but also have the ability to resist these discourses.

In *Positioning the research: my multiple roles as researcher* (Chapter 5), I concluded that it was critical that the implications of power relationships were kept to the fore by me at all stages of the research. I explored and reflected upon the interpretation of the attainment agenda and how this may be influenced by my own views and experiences.

Chapter 6 provided a detailed description of the theoretical framework and methodology and the linkage with the subject of the research and the research questions. I explained my reasons for using Foucault and criticisms and potential limitations.

Chapter 7, *The Formation and Practices of the Headteacher: disciplining by numbers*, was the first of two significant data presentation and analysis chapters. The emphases were on the conversations and observations emanating from the four case studies.

Foucault and the Attainment Agenda: Disciplining the Headteacher (Chapter 8) formed the second data analysis chapter. This chapter interrogated the interview data generated by the four case studies from a Foucauldian perspective. The impact of the attainment agenda on the new Headteachers and their practices was found to be context specific, particularly with regard to legacy issues.

Issues of Early Headship

Throughout the study I have illustrated the many different ways in which the Headteachers' subjectivities are created through a range of discourses, power relations and work practices. The case studies have demonstrated that the Headteachers' leadership in the four schools studied is a shifting and flexible phenomenon as influenced by the multiple discourses of the attainment agenda. Leadership, according to Christie and Lingard (2001) is a dynamic process where forces that are conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational, play out in complex social situations. The data generated from the interviews, interrogated using Foucauldian concepts, identified the dominant issues arising from the significant influence of the attainment agenda. All the Headteachers felt under considerable pressure to raise attainment. Most of this pressure emanated from the local authority as a direct result of Government education policy and measurable attainment targets. This highly constrained the practices of the Headteacher and encouraged an aversion to risk. There were common concerns about the pressure to concentrate on other areas such as curriculum, wider achievement and inclusion while at the same time maintaining momentum for improvements in attainment.

All but one of the Headteachers completed a Headship preparation programme (SQH). There was, however, some sense of not really learning fully about Headship until assuming the role. Consideration must be given, then, to what this implies about preparation for Headship and development of and support of Headteachers in their early years in post. This is a particular challenge for those responsible for Headship preparation programmes as it is difficult to simulate the experience of having overall responsibility for the leadership of a school. The Headteachers in this study felt they were making a difference in the lives of young people. Amongst the rewarding aspects of the job, those mentioned most frequently were the ability to influence things for the better, thus

improving learning and opportunities for young people. This was a strong motivation for all the Headteachers.

Issues inherited from their predecessors were amongst the key challenges faced by Headteachers in their early days in post. One important problem highlighted by Headteachers in this research was the difficulty of establishing a relationship with their new management team. This was particularly true when they had to deal with a senior team that contained a Depute Headteacher who had been unsuccessful in applying for the post. Having been appointed over an existing internal candidate brought a further problematic area the new Headteacher had to negotiate. He was required to navigate his way through existing loyalties whilst simultaneously building his own relationships with his new team. The legacy of working with a senior team, usually appointed by the previous Headteacher, and taking account of their existing working practices was mentioned by all of the participants. What emerged as a key feature in dealing with this successfully was the importance of establishing relationships and managing the realignment of the existing team under the leadership of the new Headteacher. The data indicated that the Headteacher's interpersonal skills were important in the handling of this situation, as well as some sensitivity as to where the school was in terms of its development.

Important conflicts emerging from the data related to personnel issues. Often these were related to difficult matters of staff competence, quality and motivation. This was further complicated if matters had been allowed to develop under an apparently respected predecessor. Understanding the history of the school and where it was in terms of its own development featured as a substantive issue for the Headteachers. This provided the context in which new Headteachers were required to operate. All of the Headteachers

commented on the need to get to know their new school, appreciate where it was currently, and importantly gain an understanding and appreciation of its inherited narrative in terms of school performance and staff, student, community and other stakeholder perception. These legacy issues, combined with differences in experience prior to assuming Headship, and compounded by varying personal attributes and professional competencies, resulted in differences in the experienced impact of the attainment agenda. Initial coping strategies varied amongst the new Headteachers between: a temporary diversion to organisational issues; expressing dissatisfaction with the inherited senior team; and simply tackling the issues from the date of appointment.

Attainment: multiple influences and discourses

The Government promulgates school targets, aspirations, categories, and systems of differentiation, generating a competing rationale and performative activity. More profoundly, Government and school inspectorate assessments and classifications produce truths about the meaning and value of schools, influencing Headteachers, staff and students.

The research provides evidence of the extensive and pervasive forms of Government power. The Government sets the rules of the game, controlling at a distance, through policy technologies, such as school assessment, classifications, and sanctions. Policy discourses also play a key role as they make meaning of schooling, establishing notions of the desirable and undesirable school. As Rose (1992) states: “governing in a liberal-democratic way means governing through the freedom and aspirations of subjects rather than in spite of them” (p.147). Hence modern governmentality, involves the conduct of conduct and, continuing in Foucauldian terms, it forms individuals' rationality for conducting their freedom within a neoliberal era. Various strategies to demonstrate

successful outcomes are implemented in order to compete in the educational field. Moreover, local institutions not only aim to meet Government targets, and reflect current policies, but also continue to generate new performative technologies, employing and reproducing the available policy repertoire. This is the powerful effect of governmentality (Foucault, 1991a) that works through dispersed networks, embracing diverse spheres, within and beyond the frontiers of educational institutions. This implies a process of ethical and social transformation that flows within and beyond the education sector. The state, as Newman (2005) points out, continues to have a crucial role of metagovernance, setting the rules of the game within which networks operate and steering the overall process of coordination.

Power in the case studies works neither as a sovereign power, in a top-down way, nor as the neoliberal conception of devolved power. In Foucault's words:

power is also organised as a multiple, automatic and anonymous power; for although surveillance rests on individuals, its functioning is that of a network of relationships from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally; this network holds the whole together and traverses it in its entirety with effects of power that derive from one another: supervisors perpetually supervised. (2006, p.127)

Power is pervasive, mobile and reproductive; it flows and concentrates within these different microspheres. It is produced and organised in multiple and anonymous ways, coming from diverse points as a “polymorphous technique of subjugation” (Foucault, 1980, p.96). Hence, daily performance practices are not an enactment of a repressive power, directed against the will of a person, thereby implying a binary relation between dominated and subordinated; rather, power is (re)productive and multiple, working as self-government. The Headteacher is therefore not merely compliant in his role and practices in relation to the challenges posed by the attainment agenda, rather he becomes

part of the discourse which endorses and promotes it as an appropriate measure of school effectiveness and in the best interests of the students.

Attainment and wider achievement

Attainment and achievement can be defined separately, as complementary components of strategy. Attainment is the formal recognition of achievement evaluated against specified standards, generally performance in national examinations. Unlike the narrower concept of attainment, achievement is a process of striving towards a sense of personal success and achieving as highly as possible in the broader sense. Achievement is a multifaceted concept and as such must be nurtured through a range of projects, opportunities and approaches. Importantly, the performance indicators of the attainment agenda are not decided by Headteachers and teachers; they are determined externally and require educators to manage their activities by reference to them.

The emphasis placed on standards, attainment and accountability continues, albeit that *Curriculum for Excellence* (SEED, 2004a) is intended to recognise the importance of wider achievement, as should current school inspections. While *Insight*, the Scottish Government's new benchmarking tool, has provision for the incorporation of broader achievement measures, it is still unclear as to the weighting these will be given.

Performance accountability, inspection regimes, school choice, public reporting of outcomes, and constant local authority surveillance, determine many of the Headteacher's behaviours through the exercise of disciplinary power. External accountability, supported by legislation, monitored by the inspectorate, and reinforced by public and media rankings, threatens to make internal accountability systems redundant and meaningless. Since the subject of disciplinary power is always the object of the public's

gaze, it is not surprising that the subject attempts to control the way in which he is seen by conforming to the official externally-driven attainment agenda.

The attainment agenda: other tensions and contradictions

Reed et al. (2001) claimed that in a high-stakes examination culture, "[Headteachers] are being forced to operate in ways that are often counter to what they know to be best practices" (p. 21). As an officer of a local authority with a specific brief to raise attainment in accordance with the external measures imposed, I realise I am both influenced by and also reinforce the attainment discourse.

Overall governance technologies generate pervasive and extensive effects entailing an ethical transformation of how schooling and teaching is understood and practiced. An aim of this study has been to interrogate the expected outcomes of accountability policies within the educational landscape. Key leading questions are: Do accountability policies encourage school staff to continuously improve the quality of education? Do these policies motivate schools to innovate, be creative, and generate flexible curriculum provision? Do educational institutions manage themselves autonomously?

I argue that, on the whole, performative demands must increase the quality of teaching and learning if attainment is set to improve continuously. On the negative side, there is the potential to move towards more mechanical and homogeneous teaching methods, rather than the enriching diverse and innovative learning experiences possibly associated with the recognition of broader achievement. School targets and Headteacher motivations are strongly influenced by attainment policies. Improving examination outcomes represents an overriding priority. Performance targets are manipulated and reformulated within games of truth, thereby producing different school narratives.

Identified micro-policies involve the reproduction, multiplication, and intensification of performance policies working at the local authority and school level. A variety of managerial devices are being used, such as target-setting, monitoring, and evaluation systems. Not only are school results meticulously guided and controlled, but also school everyday routines and procedures. In other words, not only are indirect tactics employed, but also direct, top-down, explicit and most obvious power strategies for pushing Headteachers and their schools to do things in certain ways. This means that the Government not only employs a panoptical control at a distance, but also a mixed conception of power involving disciplinary and sovereign power.

Educational equity and the attainment gap

The attainment gap is defined as the difference in attainment between students from the most affluent areas and those from the most deprived. The research exploration suggests that local authorities' social justice aims refer mainly to improving school quality standards and performance outcomes in underprivileged areas, resulting in a narrowing of the attainment gap. In this manner, the concern for quality performance co-opts the concern for equity. Relational social justice, referring to the norms and regulations among institutions and between individuals (Gewirtz, 2002), is a dimension little thought about in critical ways. It can be argued that accountability and managerial policies do not respond to the complex and distinctive nature of learning and teaching processes within disadvantaged areas, hindering, rather than supporting, teachers' efforts to meet pupils' emotional and learning needs. Reform is inspired by principles of homogenisation, standardisation, control, and targets, in cases where schools facing challenging circumstances actually need differentiation, more identification, flexibility, and contextualised responses. Headteachers and their schools are powerfully disciplined by

policy targets, normative pressures and discourses of attainment, dictating their daily practices, routines and measures of student success.

Implications for policy and practice

In Chapters 7 and 8, the two principal data analysis chapters, the new Headteachers indicated various areas where changes of practice and increased support would be of value. The Headteachers adopted a variety of strategies to negotiate the attainment agenda with varying degrees of success and could benefit from assistance on number of levels.

Headteachers were enthusiastic about greater collaboration and interaction with each other and valued the sharing of ideas and the learning mechanisms that such collaboration had the potential to provide. Broader school-to-school partnerships, or hub arrangements involving small groups of secondary schools, were also considered useful. Local authorities could, therefore assist with the implementation of a policy of collaboration between schools and across subject areas. This should be focused on building capacity in staff at all levels by means of a coordinated and systematic approach appropriate to the needs and circumstances of each school.

Headteachers could also work more collaboratively on improvement strategies by participating in Validated Self-Evaluation exercises (as described in Chapter 7) both in their school and across schools. This should encourage a culture of collective responsibility among the Headteacher group, underpinning the importance of collaborative development. Progress on collaboration plans would be assessed regularly to establish evidence of measurable and continual improvement.

All participants agreed that greater assistance and direction from the local authority would be valued. This included help with systems, such as tracking and monitoring of student

performance, and a more active role in training and professional development. The local authority could, therefore, provide resources and training to Headteachers and staff to ensure that they can operate clear tracking and monitoring of progression to allow interventions to take place timeously. In order to gauge effectiveness, there would be clear agreed targets based on accurate data and school benchmarking.

The local authority could organise a rigorous induction programme for new Headteachers. This should be tailored to the individual needs of the Headteacher and the school. Part of post-induction professional development could be assessed and achieved through collaborative participation and the collegiate input of more experienced Headteachers. A key issue for the four new Headteachers was the need to understand the complexities of their own school in more nuanced terms, and to adopt practices accordingly. This induction programme should also assist with progress on some of the broader capacities: improving strategic leadership and vision; building people skills; motivating staff and enhancing development; stakeholder and community relationships; and improving communication skills. These practices, together with those described in the following paragraph, could form part of the *Extended Induction* element of the new *Specialist Qualification for Headship*, to be available from 2016. It would also be instructive to engage leaders critically in analysing the discourse of attainment and how it disciplines and positions people (Headteachers, senior management, staff and students) and the strategies used to embrace that discourse or to resist its excesses.

As discussed in the *Methodology Chapter 6*, the new Headteachers greatly appreciated the conversations during the interview process partly due, it seemed, to their recognition of my former Headteacher role and ability to understand and respond on their issues. They also agreed that the collaborative nature of the focus group gave them a valuable

opportunity to share and interact. The provision of coaches or mentors should prove very useful for the new Headteachers. Advice and support from experienced and established Headteachers should enhance the confidence and development of the new Headteachers. This could be a prerequisite of the induction phase. Additional consideration could be given as to how this might be made available for an extended period, within operational and budgetary constraints. Organised work-shadowing of a senior Headteacher, prior to appointment, should also prove useful for aspiring Headteachers.

While the local authority can assist with new Headteacher support and development, adherence to anything other than Government policy on attainment is not a realistic option. Prior to implementation, policy analysis should involve a detailed examination of the extent to which accountability measures are properly designed, and likely to support, long-term improvement in teaching and learning for all. The current focus in many countries, including Scotland, on standardised examinations and tests, used for the purposes of national and international comparisons, has led to the exclusion of other educational objectives. Perhaps this situation would now benefit from a wholesale policy review?

There has been greater concentration recently by the Scottish Government in tackling the attainment gap. Provision has been included under the terms of the new *Education (Scotland) Bill 2015*. The Bill proposes new laws for Scottish Ministers and local authorities to plan and deliver education services in a way which is designed to narrow the attainment gap. Responsibility for delivering on the Government's proposed attainment gap strategy will no doubt permeate through local authorities and to Headteachers and their schools. The enactment of such laws without a transparent combined strategy for tackling the related socio-economic issues of deprivation appears

to be highly questionable. Social inequalities cannot be remedied by schools alone (*Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland, 2015*).

A potential for revision to current attainment measures arises from the positive Government response to the Report from the *Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce* (2014). Amongst other things, the Report recommended that young people of all abilities should have the opportunity to follow industry relevant vocational pathways alongside academic studies. In the interests of improving life chances for all students, which would appear consistent with stated Government policy, it would be appropriate to broaden the attainment agenda to reflect this. *Curriculum for Excellence* (SEED, 2004a) is intended to recognise the importance of wider achievement, as should current school inspections. There is also an explicit reference to positive student destinations as a measure of school performance under *Insight*, the Scottish Government's new benchmarking tool, although again the weighting is indeterminate. Again, this an opportunity to improve life chances for all.

Suggestions for future research

As this study has shown, the attainment and accountability culture has profound impact on Headteachers' work practices on a day-to-day basis. Because the legislative and policy environment continues to move rapidly in the direction of greater performance accountability, more research is necessary to maintain an updated account of how accountability reforms influence the work of Headteachers. This study was largely based on the stories of existing Headteachers and highlighted the significance of their early days in post, suggesting that Headship preparation and the induction process are crucial. To further explore this area, it would be useful to have future studies of new Headteachers as they take up post, tracking their progress and experience over a period of time to

provide additional data to support Headteacher development. This research focused on a small group of Headteachers. It would therefore be beneficial to extend the study across a wider pool of Headteachers to ascertain the extent to which the experiences outlined here are common in early Headship. It would also help to examine the impact of different approaches to Headteacher preparation, induction and the ongoing support framework. Additionally, it would be useful to assess the improvements that result from advancing a more collaborative culture both in terms of professional development and school performance.

The current study was restricted to Headteachers. Interviews of teachers, for example, would enable the researcher to glean their perceptions of the behaviour of their Headteachers in response to performance accountability. Such research would contribute to a deeper and more rounded picture of the influence of performance accountability on the work of new Headteachers. It would also be worthwhile researching the dissonance between the way Headteachers actually spend their time and the way they believe they should be spending their time.

In conclusion

There appears to have been limited research on the experiences of early Headship in Scotland which has included an in-depth exploration of the pressures of the attainment agenda on Headteacher' development. The principal objective of this study is to make a research-based contribution to practice. In addition to providing insight into new Headteachers' experiences, the outcomes of this research have a clear professional and practical significance. If one is looking to enhance understanding of the complexities that face new Headteachers then this thesis can be seen as a useful contribution to the field. This research project also enables Headteachers as well as policy makers to examine

critically the real work that Headteachers do and to develop new ways of assisting Headteachers to do what is a very demanding yet also rewarding job. The perspective on the work practices and subject positioning of Headteachers could have valuable implications for other Headteachers, their schools, and the best interests of their students.

The back-drop to the research was the influence of national policies and the impact of the performativity and accountability agenda on the role of Headteacher. By explicitly discussing some of the early challenges facing new Headteachers this research will contribute to the discussion related to the concerns on how best to support newly appointed Headteachers. I have sought ways of understanding what it is they do on a day to day basis, to examine their work practices, with the purpose of problematising Headteachers' work. I have tried to demonstrate the complexity of their job and their subject positioning in relation to the constraints of the attainment agenda. As explained in previous chapters a Foucauldian analysis does not of itself suggest solutions to problems or conflicts. It raises questions and issues of concern. I have described a normative relationship between power and leadership. In this thesis, I have sought to illustrate how important context is in their subject positioning. This is exemplified by the influence of the inherited narrative of school identity and performance.

The aim of this study was to identify the influence of the attainment agenda in early Headship and the strategies that individual Headteachers used to negotiate the tensions arising from the external measures to which they were subjected under this agenda. At least in part, these strategies allowed them to pursue what mattered most in terms of their sense of values and in the interests of their schools while complying with Government and local authority policy. This study should add to the understanding of early Headship

experiences, which will have professional application in assisting others in their journey to Headship and beyond.

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Appendix A
Headteacher Interview Questions
First Interview August/September of Academic Year 2012/13

Pre interview

1. Discussion about the definition of the attainment agenda
2. Clarify the focus on the attainment agenda on HT behaviour and leadership
3. Outline of the interview process

Interview questions

1. How have you prepared for your HT role? – CPD, previous roles, specific preparation after appointment and before starting the role
2. What did you think you wanted to achieve in the first few weeks of your new role?
3. What problems did you encounter in the first two weeks of appointment?
4. What are the key challenges you have identified? What do you perceive to be the greatest hurdles and challenges for yourself and for the school? Have you considered, at this stage, how you propose to deal with these challenges/hurdles?
5. How has the attainment agenda impacted on how you propose to take your school forward?
6. What do you think are your main priorities to take your school forward within the attainment agenda? (We will revisit these at Xmas and in May)
7. What do you feel your constraints are?
8. Consider the external accountabilities e.g. Scottish Government, Local Authority, Parent Body, Elected Members, Pupils, Education Scotland..... How are these external accountabilities impacting on how you have chosen to lead your school at the start of your new role? How will you translate these external accountabilities into internal accountabilities within the school? Do you see these accountability expectations as reasonable and compatible with your own commitments to education?
9. Given the focus on the attainment agenda, what, do you feel is the emotional impact/stress placed upon you?

10. How would you like the local authority to support you in meeting the challenges of the attainment agenda?
11. At this time, what are your views on the supports you would like to help you realise the expectations of a successful Headteacher?

Appendix B
Second Interview Questions: Group Interview
February of Academic Year 2012/2013

1. What are your views concerning the Headteacher's role in general? This might include constraints, challenges, positive aspects and opportunities for action.
2. How do you see your role as Headteacher in the current context of your own school?
3. How do you know when you are doing a good job and the ways in which this will make the school successful?
4. What type of Headteacher would you like to be and how do you perceive the barriers to attaining your ideals? How will you try to overcome these?
5. How do you manage your emotional involvement in relation to your role as Headteacher?
6. What data do you rely upon to make decisions about the direction and progress of the school?
7. What do you see to be the most important aspects of your school's performance? How might your answer differ if this question focused on expectations of local authority, parents, staff, students, employers and the community?
8. In what ways do you believe your autonomy is constrained by accountability, performativity and attainment requirements?
9. How do you think competing stakeholder accountabilities influence your role?
10. How does your awareness of being keenly monitored influence your actions and your role in monitoring the actions of others?
11. What are your reference points in determining the appropriate role for a Headteacher? This might include: *Standard for Headship*, CPD, influences of peer group, previous experience as depute head, stakeholder feedback, etc.
12. What kinds of ethical decisions do you make including an outline of the factors you take into account in reaching these decisions? Ethics incorporates your own standards and the moral considerations which you bring to the role.
13. What opportunities do you have for individual agency? Do you perceive risk-taking or seeking more radical approaches to be an integral part of the role?
14. How comfortable are you with the concept of distributed school leadership? In what ways have you sought to promote this within your school?
15. What aspects of the role make you less comfortable and how do you adapt to these (whether these aspects are constraining or allow for autonomous action)?

Appendix C
Headteacher Interview Questions
January/February of Academic Year 2013/2014

1. In your opinion what practices have made the most significant differences to school improvement and student attainment?
2. How would you say your practices have changed and developed over the last 18 months?
3. What impact did the August 2013 results have on your approach to raising attainment and how did this translate in practical terms?
4. How has the perception of surveillance from the local authority and HMIe impacted on the practices you employ?
5. What do you believe to be the principal factors on which you are judged and how does this influence your approach to leadership?
6. What type of Headteacher would you like to be now and have your aspirations altered from when you commenced in the role?

Appendix D
Data Analysis: preliminary codes

Code	Theme	Code	Theme
<i>li</i>	<i>legacy issues</i>	<i>sei</i>	<i>socio-economic issues</i>
<i>se</i>	<i>student expectations</i>	<i>lam</i>	<i>local authority monitoring</i>
<i>sp</i>	<i>stakeholder perceptions</i>	<i>com</i>	<i>communication</i>
<i>mat</i>	<i>monitoring and tracking</i>	<i>dat</i>	<i>performance data analysis</i>
<i>aut</i>	<i>autonomy</i>	<i>smt</i>	<i>senior management team</i>
<i>lt</i>	<i>learning and teaching</i>	<i>pai</i>	<i>planning and implementing</i>
<i>pi</i>	<i>parental involvement</i>	<i>rnk</i>	<i>rankings and comparisons</i>
<i>bur</i>	<i>bureaucracy</i>	<i>las</i>	<i>local authority support</i>
<i>si</i>	<i>staff issues</i>	<i>sip</i>	<i>school improvement plan</i>
<i>pol</i>	<i>policy influences</i>	<i>dsm</i>	<i>devolved school management</i>
<i>ba</i>	<i>broader achievement</i>	<i>eth</i>	<i>ethical issues</i>
<i>npim</i>	<i>new-post initial mindset</i>	<i>prod</i>	<i>professional development</i>
<i>qp</i>	<i>qualifications/preparation</i>	<i>ca</i>	<i>confidence and abilities</i>
<i>cs</i>	<i>coping strategies</i>	<i>pr</i>	<i>presentation/results</i>
<i>sm</i>	<i>school morale</i>	<i>rc</i>	<i>reservations/cynicism</i>
<i>res</i>	<i>resources</i>	<i>pd</i>	<i>positive destinations</i>
<i>vs</i>	<i>vulnerable students</i>	<i>sc</i>	<i>school curriculum</i>
<i>vt</i>	<i>visibility and transparency</i>	<i>schc</i>	<i>school culture</i>
<i>dl</i>	<i>distributed leadership</i>	<i>sse</i>	<i>school self-evaluation</i>
<i>sin</i>	<i>school inspection</i>	<i>jp</i>	<i>job performance</i>
<i>ag</i>	<i>attainment gap</i>	<i>ei</i>	<i>emotional issues</i>