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Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name?

Technical Appendix

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1. Introduction

This document is a technical appendix to the report *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? A Full Report of the Findings*. It provides a detailed account of the methodology used to obtain the data on which the report is based.

1.1 About the research

The research explored the prevalence and nature of the executive headteacher role, in order to inform policy and practice implications for organisations involved with leadership development, school governing boards and those appointing to the role, and the wider school landscape agenda. Research questions included:

1. What are the characteristics and distribution of executive headteachers (from here on referred to as EHTs), as compared with the profile of other headteachers (from here on referred to as HTs)?
2. What are the distinguishing features of the EHT role and implications for development, compared with 'traditional' headship?
3. What are the distinctive aspects of appointing to the EHT role as compared with traditional headship?

1.2 Methodology overview

In order to explore these research questions, the study involved the following strands of methodology:

1. Strand A: a thematic review of HT application packs (15) and EHT application packs (15).
2. Strand B: secondary analysis of School Workforce Census (SWC) data supplemented with data from Edubase.
3. Strand C: 12 in-depth case studies with a total of 33 interviews (encompassing 12 EHTs, 10 governors or similar role, and 11 heads of school (HoS) or similar role).

The study was a collaboration between the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), the National Governors' Association (NGA) and The Future Leaders Trust (TFLT).

1.3 About the technical appendix

Each of the three strands of methodology will be discussed in turn; exploring the specific aims, sampling strategy, sample characteristics and analysis we conducted. A final section describes how the three strands of data were brought together for the final report.

2. Strand A: Thematic review of application packs

2.1 Specific aims

Strand A of the methodology involved a qualitative thematic review of EHT (15) and HT (15) application packs to explore:

- distinguishing features of the EHT role (roles and responsibilities; experience and skills; qualifications)
- structures and models associated with the role (school structure; senior leadership and staffing structures; accountability structures)
- distinctive aspects of appointing to the role (reasons for appointing to the role; performance management procedures).

packs to provide variation of characteristics as far as possible including: school phase, type, region, size, level of deprivation, and performance.

2.2 Sampling strategy

We identified a sample of 19 EHT and 26 HT application packs through websearches (e.g. TES Jobs) during 2015 and early 2016. Search terms included 'headteacher' or 'principal' and 'executive headteacher' or 'executive principal', and we limited the search to recruitment of HTs and EHTs to schools in England. The sample of EHT application packs was originally collated for the purposes of a different study.¹ Subsequently, we identified a sample of HT application packs to enable comparative analysis of EHT and HT application packs for this study. We also subsequently conducted a focused search for secondary school EHT and HT application packs in an attempt to balance the distribution of the sample. Ultimately, we drew a sample of 15 EHT and 15 HT application

¹ Fellows, T (2016). *What Makes a Headteacher 'Executive'? The Role and Responsibilities of Executive Headteachers in England*. Birmingham: National Governors' Association.

2.3 Sample characteristics

Table 1 provides an overview of the sample of application packs.

Table 1. HT and EHT application packs sample characteristics²

		HT pack	EHT pack
Phase of school	Primary	8	9
	Secondary	7	2
	All-through/both	-	4
Type of school	Maintained	11	7
	Academy	4	7
	Independent		1
Region	North	7	-
	Midlands	1	2
	South	7	12
Size of school (number of pupils³)	Small (500<)	7	6
	Medium (501-999)	5	2
	Large (1000>)	2 ⁴	6

² One EHT application pack was for a large multi-academy trust (MAT) recruiting numerous EHTs to work in various, non-specified, primary and secondary academies, so the school characteristics are not always known.

³ Total number of pupils under the EHT or HT.

⁴ Number of pupils not known for one school.

		HT pack	EHT pack
Level of deprivation (% of pupils eligible for free school meals, FSM)	High ⁵ (30%>)	7	6
	Medium (11%-29%)	4	5
	Low (10%<)	4	1 ⁶
Performance (Ofsted rating and KS2/KS4 achievement)	High ⁷ (Outstanding and/or 80%>) ⁸	5	5
	Medium (Good and/or 51-79%)	6	7
	Low (Requires Improvement/ Inadequate and/or 50%<)	4	1 ⁹
Number of schools/sites/phases HT/EHT responsible for	One	15	3
	Two		10
	Three or more		2

⁵ Where the application pack is for an EHT of more than one school, this is categorised by the highest level of deprivation of the schools.

⁶ No data for three schools.

⁷ Where the application pack is for an EHT of more than one school, this is categorised by the highest level of school performance.

⁸ Categorised by whichever data indicates highest performance.

⁹ No data for two schools.

2.4 Analysis

During December 2015 to early February 2016, we analysed the content of the EHT and HT application packs, using a standard review template, to record:

- background about the school(s) structure
- recruitment specification (pay, appointing arrangements, reasons why post is available, qualifications)
- roles, responsibilities, experience and skills relating to:
 - strategic leadership
 - operational day-to-day leadership
 - leadership of staff
 - teaching, learning and curriculum
 - using data to monitor, evaluate and improve
 - community engagement and partnerships
 - interpersonal skills.

Using the standard template for each pack, we then compared the content across all packs for each theme outlined above to identify the distinctive aspects of EHT application packs.

We also used word frequency software to explore any differences in the terminology or prevalence of particular words used in HT and EHT application packs. These were created using the standard review templates for each pack with any researcher comments removed. We then collated the text into a single MS Word document (one for EHTs and for HTs) and used the software to break down the text by word frequency. Using Wordle, we created a 'word cloud' based on all words that were mentioned at least 50 times across all of the packs. The programme

automatically excludes common words such as 'and' and 'the'. Additional manual sifting removed what we classified as extraneous words such as 'high', 'work' and 'ensure'.

We also explored the advertised pay in HT and EHT application packs (where pay was stated). Table 2 and 3, below, display results. From the limited data available, the figures suggest that the pay range offered to EHT posts is slightly higher than for HT posts. This may relate to EHTs having a wider remit (including more pupils and/or more schools). However, these are a small number of cases, and a definitive pay pattern is not clear.

Table 2. HT pay in application packs

Mean of salary range ¹⁰	Pupil numbers
£98,692	1154
£87,063	1703
£84,337	508
£78,938	833
£68,146	615
£68,146	240
£65,726	477
£63,751	235
£62,693	402
£58,787	230
£58,242	882
£56,947	155

Table 3. EHT pay in application packs

Mean of salary range	Pupil numbers
£130,000	1502
£101,193	1218
£98,488	1260
£82,899	1546
£74,762	817
£74,710	88
£63,320	435
£61,778	352

¹⁰ Calculated by adding the bottom of the pay range offered with the top of the pay range offered and then dividing by two. Where pay was indicated in application packs by giving a range of points on the leadership scale, a mean salary was calculated in the same way using the leadership scale 2015 (<https://www.atl.org.uk/pay/pay-scales/teachers-maintained-England-Wales.asp>).

3. Strand B: Secondary analysis of School Workforce Census

3.1 Specific aims

Strand B of the methodology involved secondary analysis of School Workforce Census (SWC) data on EHTs and HTs to explore:

- the characteristics of EHTs in terms of who they are (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, qualifications)
- the distribution of EHTs in terms of where they work, and including length of time in post, phase (primary/secondary), school type (academy, maintained, other), region and pay
- how EHT characteristics and distribution compare with those of other HTs
- how EHT characteristics and distribution have changed over time.

3.2 SWC application

In January 2016, we submitted an application to the Department for Education requesting anonymised SWC data on EHTs and HTs for 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 on the following variables:

- Gender
- Ethnic Code
- QT Status and Route
- Start Date
- Pay Framework
- Origin
- Date of Birth
- Disability
- Post
- End Date
- Role Identifier
- Destination

- FTE Hours p/w
- Qualification Code
- Contract/Service Agreement Type
- Class of Degree
- School Identifier (e.g. URN/LAEstab)
- Teacher Identifier (anonymised reference number for linking across multiple years)

3.3 Analysis

We conducted analysis on the SWC dataset received in March 2016. The dataset comprised the following distribution of HTs and EHTs.

Table 4. Number and percentage of HTs and EHTs in the SWC by year

Census Year	HT		EHT	
	N	%	N	%
2010	20,951	99.1%	180	0.9%
2011	20,492	98.8%	254	1.2%
2012	20,563	98.3%	359	1.7%
2013	20,630	97.8%	474	2.2%
2014	20,560	97.1%	621	2.9%

We linked the SWC data to school characteristics from Edubase using the Unique Reference Number (URN) provided, and calculated basic frequencies and descriptive statistics for a number of variables, for both HT and EHTs, and for each year of the Census. Variables on HTs and

EHTs included age, ethnicity, qualification, disability, qualified teacher status (QTS), QTS route, years in post, contract agreement type, origin (that is, previous post) and gender. Additional school characteristics included school type, phase of education, region, urban/rural indicator and trust/federation indicator. We conducted further analysis, using cross tabulations and significance testing, to explore differences between EHTs and HTs and changes in the EHT characteristics and distribution over time.

In the analysis presented in the final report, we excluded a number of variables (e.g. pay, ethnicity, disability, route into teaching, length of time in post, origin and destination) as either the data was not recorded in a manner suitable for analysis, or it showed no noteworthy findings.

Limitations in the EHT and HT comparative analysis

As Table 4 (above) shows, the proportion of EHTs is small and therefore quantitative analysis was limited. Indeed, the Department for Education had recently examined the number of EHTs recorded in the SWC and found that they were not well represented in the data. This is likely to be because, prior to the 2015 SWC, there was no consistent or widely accepted definition of the EHT job title and because the term can be used to refer to different roles. The role is also sometimes interpreted as being outside of the scope of the school workforce data collection (e.g. if the role is within a central leadership team of a multi-academy trust (MAT), as part of the management tier above the school-based workforce). Indeed, analysis of the schools that are missing from the SWC data that we received for this analysis (that is, not reporting a HT or EHT), indicates a

higher proportion of sponsor-led academies missing from the data. This is also consistent with the notion that these may be schools with a shared EHT. This under-representation of EHTs in the sample may skew comparisons with HTs.

In addition, different titles may be used for the EHT role (e.g. Executive Director) and headteachers performing an EHT role may go by the title of 'headteacher'. The codebook guidance accompanying the SWC requires headteachers to select an appropriate title from the options of 'headteacher' or 'executive headteacher'. According to the DfE, this guidance applied for the 2010-2014 Census. Therefore, the SWC data analysed in this study is based on all respective records for headteacher and executive headteacher (that is, there is no data missing due to spelling errors in the title used or title variations that have not been analysed).

Executive headteacher arrangements may also be temporary – occurring for short periods through the academic year – and so may not be recorded because the EHT was not in place at the time of the Census (November), or because the EHT was not considered a permanent member of the school staff.

Limitations in analysis of number of schools per EHT

There was no reliable data available from the SWC to enable analysis of the number of schools per EHT as the data is based on individual records. That is, each individual should only appear in the Census once, in relation to one school.

Consequently, we analysed Edubase data from February 2016 to explore the types of schools EHTs work in. After cleaning, we identified a sample of 628 EHTs, that is, schools with 'executive headteacher' (or other similar title e.g. 'executive principal') in the 'headteacher preferred job title' cell of Edubase.

This analysis indicated that 52 per cent of EHTs are named headteacher of one school; 40 per cent of EHTs are named headteacher of two schools; and eight per cent of EHTs are named headteacher of three or more schools. This finding should also be treated with caution given the issues already mentioned about variation in the EHT role and use of the term, and given that Edubase only captures information on EHTs if they identify themselves as such in the 'headteacher' category.

Limitations in 'over-time' analysis

As a measure of the origin of EHTs, we conducted analysis exploring the proportion of EHTs in 2014 who had been HTs in 2010. While 70 per cent of EHTs had previously been HTs and ten per cent were already EHTs in 2010, a remaining 20 per cent were not included in the data on HTs and EHTs in 2010. This might be because:

- They were not part of the school workforce in 2010, that is, they were still in training, or in a different career.
- They had a different role within the school workforce in 2010, that is, they might have been teachers or senior leaders below the head of school (HoS) role (we only have data on HoS).

- They might have already been EHTs, but not recognised by the school as part of the school-based workforce (e.g. if the school was part of a large MAT).

Therefore, we do not know the exact origin of 20 per cent of existing EHTs, as the information on prior posts in the SWC is not detailed enough for such analysis.

We also analysed EHT turnover, compared with that of HTs, between 2011 and 2014. This showed that around 58 per cent of 2014 heads worked in the same school in 2011, with very little difference between EHTs and HTs. Note: for the purpose of this calculation, we considered sponsor-led academies to be different schools from their predecessors, and converter academies and their predecessors to be the same schools. This may be relevant in the relatively unlikely case that the HT/EHT of the predecessor school stays on as HT/EHT in the new sponsor-led academy. Although we used 2011 (rather than 2010) as the starting point for the analysis of EHT turnover, the analysis presents the same limitations as those mentioned above, with the additional caveat that an EHT with multiple schools might have been reported under different schools in different years.

4. Strand C: Case studies with EHTs

4.1 Specific aims

Strand C of the methodology involved in-depth case studies with 12 EHTs, their HoS or equivalent and their chair of governors, or other governor involved in the interview process for the EHT, to explore:

- motivations for pursuing executive headship
- the distinguishing features of the EHT role (including the leadership structures and models associated with the role, what the role entails, the competencies required and the facilitators and challenges to the role)
- the distinguishing features of appointing to the EHT role (including why and how governors make the decision to appoint an EHT and the governance and performance management arrangements of EHTs).

4.2 Sampling strategy

We drew the case-study sample from the Edubase sample of 628 EHTs in February 2016. Drawing the sample from Edubase means that it is likely that the sampling missed a number of EHTs that are operating in the central teams of MATs and consequently not recorded in Edubase or the SWC. The sampling frame constructed focused on EHT models with responsibility for more than one school/phase/site, and covered other cases (e.g. EHTs of a single school and EHTs of four schools or more). We selected a case-study sample of 40 EHTs on the basis of: the number of schools under the EHT, phase of school/s (primary, secondary and mixed), and type of school (maintained or academy), and refined this through further selection on the basis of achieving variation in other characteristics including region; percentage of pupils eligible for FSM; collaborative status (e.g. federation, single academy trust, multi-academy

trust); and size of MAT (small, medium and large in terms of the number of academies in the Trust). As the Edubase sample produced relatively few examples of EHTs responsible for four or more schools, TFLT were able to use their network of school leaders to identify and recruit further examples of this EHT structure.

The research teams at NFER, NGA and TFLT then sent emails to EHTs with information about the study, and inviting them to participate. As required, we followed up these emails with phone calls to recruit participants and arrange interview appointments. The EHT generally mediated initial contact with the HoS and governors to arrange separate interview appointments.

4.3 Case-study interviews

During April and early May 2016, we conducted individual telephone interviews with EHTs, HoS and governors. These lasted between 30 minutes and one hour and interviewees received an overview of the question areas prior to the interview appointment. Interviews were semi-structured and covered the following broad areas:

- progression to, and the rationale for, executive headship
- what the role entails and how it is structured (as compared with the role of 'standalone' headteacher)
- the factors that challenge or facilitate the role
- the skills and qualities needed for the role.

We asked interviewees to provide a copy of their organisational structure to aid the research team in understanding the specific context for each case study, and received such diagrams for two of the case studies (E

and G). We also completed pre-interview checklists to ensure that we had as much key information as possible prior to the interview. We updated these checklists subsequently to serve as an overview of the main characteristics of the case study. Where interviewees gave permission, we also recorded interviews to aid note-taking.

4.4 Case-study sample characteristics

Table 5 overleaf provides an overview of the characteristics of the achieved case-study sample.

4.5 Analysis

We used a standard, structured MS Word template to summarise the interviews. This covered the main thematic areas outlined above. We added verbatim quotes to exemplify particular points and produced case-study overviews for each of the 12 cases, providing information on the different contexts and structures associated with the EHT role. We also coded and categorised interview data within each thematic area to analyse both the nature and prevalence of different responses.

Table 5. Case-study sample characteristics

Case study ID.	No. of schools under EHT ¹¹	No. of which EHT accountable	Phase of school/s	Type of school/s	Region	Federation/Trust/other	Role title of interviewees
A	1	1	All-through	Academy	N East	Single-Academy Trust	EHT; Head of Academy; Chair of Governors
B	1	1	All-through	Maintained	London	None	EHT; HoS
C	2	2	Primary	Maintained	W Midlands	Federation	EHT; HoS; Chair of Governors
D	4	4	Mixed	Academy	S West	MAT	EHT; HoS; Chair of Trust Board
E	2	2	Secondary	Maintained	N East	None	EHT; Assistant HT- Teaching & Learning
F	2	2	Mixed	Maintained	N East	Federation	EHT; HoS; Chair of Governors
G	3	3	Primary	Academy	E Midlands	MAT	Executive Principal; Leader of School; Chair of Directors
H	3	3	Primary	Academy	London	MAT	EHT; HoS; CEO
I	3	3	Mixed	Maintained	S East	Federation	EHT; Chair of Governors
J	9	3	Primary	Academy	S West	MAT	EHT; Head of Teaching and Learning; Member of the Strategic Management Committee
K	5	5	Primary	Academy	London	MAT	EHT; Head of Academy; Chair of Governors for two schools, on Trust Board
L	5	0	Mixed	Academy	S East	MAT	EHT; HT; Chair of Governors and MAT

¹¹ Not including temporary and consultancy involvement with other schools.

5. Producing the report

We structured the final report around the themes which emerged across the three strands of data collection. We mapped these themes for the analysis to the original research questions and the various sources of data, as highlighted in the overview matrix below (Table 6).

Table 6. Report and analysis overview matrix

Report section	Research questions	Strand A – Application packs	Strand B – SWC and Edubase	Strand C – Case studies	Key areas we explored in packs and interviews
Who are the EHTs in England? (how many, gender, age, which schools, where, qualifications, experience, motivations)	RQ1: What are the characteristics and distribution of EHTs as compared with the profile of HTs?	Qualifications; experiences; pay	Charts displaying differences between EHTs and HTs; and EHT profile over time	EHT motivations; qualifications and skills required	i. Strategic management and leadership
Why have an EHT and how do they work? (strategic purpose and recruiting EHTs; distinctive features of the role; structures EHTs work in)	RQ2: What are the distinguishing features of the EHT role and implications for development, compared with traditional headship? RQ3: What are the distinctive aspects of appointing to the role as compared with traditional headship?	Reasons why post is available; appointing arrangement/processes Roles and responsibilities across thematic areas	Link to school size/number of schools they look after Types of school and collaborative arrangements	Rationale for EHT and distinctive contribution Leadership structures, governance and performance management arrangements (including structure charts) Role and responsibilities	ii. Operational management and leadership iii. Recruiting, training and managing staff iv. Teaching and learning, and curriculum v. Using data to monitor, evaluate and improve vi. Community engagement and partnerships
Facilitators, challenges and the future development of the EHT role (factors that challenge and facilitate the EHT role; distinctive skills of EHTs; training and development needs)	RQ2: What are the distinguishing features of the EHT role and implications for development, compared with traditional headship? RQ3: What are the distinctive aspects of appointing to the role as compared with traditional headship?	Skills required	Implications for future number and distribution of EHTs	Facilitating factors and challenges Competencies, personal qualities and skills required to fulfil the role	vii. Interpersonal and communication skills viii. Qualifications and experience

Outputs suite

A Full Report of the Findings

The full report of findings, including key messages and recommendations for policy and practice, why executive headteachers (EHTs) matter, the distinctive characteristics and distribution of EHTs, the circumstances under which schools appoint an EHT, and the facilitating factors, challenges, and development of the EHT role.

How to cite this publication:

Lord, P., Wespieser, K., Harland, J., Fellows, T. and Theobald, K. (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? A Full Report of the Findings*. Slough, Birmingham and London: NFER, NGA and TFLT.

Executive Summary

A two-page concise summary of the full report.

How to cite this publication:

Theobald, K. and Lord, P. (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? Executive Summary*. Slough, Birmingham and London: NFER, NGA and TFLT.

Technical Appendix

The technical appendix provides a detailed account of the methodology used to obtain the data on which the full report is based.

How to cite this publication:

Harland, J. and Bernardinelli, D. (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? Technical Appendix*. Slough: NFER

Literature Review

The literature review encapsulates existing research on the EHT position in England. It covers three main areas: the history of EHTs in England; the skills, qualities and motivations identified in EHTs; and the governance and school structures associated with EHTs.

How to cite this publication:

Fellows, T. and Odell, E. (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? A Review of the Literature*. Birmingham and London: NGA and TFLT.

Case Study Compendium

The compendium provides an overview of each of the 12 case studies that were conducted as part of the research. Each case study includes a description of the setting, the purpose of appointing an EHT, the focus of the EHT role, qualifications of the EHT and replicable features.

How to cite this publication:

Wespieser, K. (Ed) (2016). *Executive Headteachers: What's in a Name? Case Study Compendium*. Slough: NFER.

Infographic Poster

The infographic poster – included in the full report - displays quantitative data about the distinctive characteristics and distribution of EHTs.

All outputs are available from the following websites:

www.nfer.ac.uk

www.nga.org.uk

www.future-leaders.org.uk

About the organisations who carried out this research



The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is the UK's largest independent provider of research, assessment and information services for education, training and children's services. Our purpose is to provide independent evidence which improves education and training for children and young people.

The research team at NFER for this project included: Daniele Bernardinelli, Ben Durbin, Jennie Harland, Pippa Lord and Karen Wespiesser.

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The National Governors' Association (NGA) is an independent charity representing and supporting governors, trustees and clerks in maintained schools and academies in England. The NGA's goal is to improve the wellbeing of children and young people by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards and promoting high standards. We do this by providing information, guidance, research, advice and training. We also work closely with, and lobby, UK government and educational bodies, and are the only campaigning national membership organisation for school governors and trustees.

The research team at NGA for this project included: Ellie Cotgrave and Tom Fellows.

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The Future Leaders Trust's mission is to give children equal opportunities in life, regardless of background, by developing a network of exceptional school leaders. We run a range of leadership development programmes, providing a progression pathway from middle leadership right through to system leadership. All of the programmes are informed by evidence and the expertise of leaders within and beyond education. They all support participants to develop more effective leadership behaviours, so they can drive improvement in schools and multi-academy trusts and help close the attainment gap.

The research team at TFLT for this project included: Evan Odell, Katy Theobald and Rosaria Votta.

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