



Headteacher inspectors: boundaries, identity and the potential for system leadership

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**Headteacher Inspectors: Boundaries, Identity and the Potential for System
Leadership**

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Abstract

The relationship between headteachers and inspection is complex, especially for those headteachers who inspect. Since Ofsted, the government inspection agency, started its work in 1992 there have been few headteachers inspecting schools in England. However, soon they will comprise a significant proportion of the school inspection workforce.

Knowledge and understanding about headteachers who inspect is limited, and their role in inspection is under-theorised. We do not normally hear the voice of inspectors, and even less about the headteachers amongst them and the thesis explores how a small sample of headteachers interprets their agency as inspectors.

The study is informed by, and contributes to, the literatures on the developments within the English education system, the debate about the inspection of schools, headteachers' changing roles, boundaries, identities, and system leadership.

The approach to the thesis is qualitative. The study accesses headteacher inspectors' views through 12 semi-structured interviews. Data collection and analysis spanned a five-year period which pre-dated the current drive to co-opt more headteachers as school inspectors. The analysis of the interview transcripts was through a process of induction.

Several themes emerged from this inductive analysis of the data, the key ones being: what being inspected was like for these headteachers, why they chose to inspect and their experiences of inspecting, their relations with the teachers of the schools they inspect, especially their headteachers, with other inspectors, their governors and local authorities, and what they learn by inspecting.

While the headteachers sampled vocalise the benefits of inspection and their part in it, they also express some ambivalence and this has implications for policy. The inductive analysis was then related to current developments in relation to system leadership. The key contribution of the thesis is to throw light on some of the implications of headteachers inspecting. It also raises the potential for headteacher inspectors, as a cadre, to contribute to the leadership of the English school system.

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Candidate's statement

This thesis is my own work. I undertook all the interviews, analysis and wrote the thesis. While registered as a candidate for the University's research degree, I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation. No material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

Glossary

AI	Additional Inspector. From September 2005 until August 2015 all inspectors who are not Her Majesty's Inspectors were additional inspectors. From September 2015 they are re-designated as Ofsted inspectors
ASCL	Association of School and College Leaders
CVA	Contextually Value Added (score). This is a measure of pupils' progress taking into account context. This is now simply value added which does not take into account context
CPD	Continuing professional development
DfE	Department for Education
EB	Evidence Base for an inspection
ECM	Every Child Matters
EF	Evidence forms which are completed by inspectors to record all inspection activities
Framework	The <i>common inspection framework</i> sets out the statutory basis for inspections carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) (Ofsted reference 150065).

FSM	Free School Meals
GB	Governing Body
Handbook	The <i>School Inspection Handbook</i> (Ofsted reference 150066). It provides instructions and guidance for inspectors conducting inspections under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector
HMCI	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
Inspection judgements	<p>An outstanding or grade 1 school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment</p> <p>A good or grade 2 school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupil's needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment</p> <p>A requires improvement or grade 3 school is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24</p>

months from the date of the grade 3 inspection visit

There are two categories of inadequate or grade 4 school

A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors

A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors

ISP

Inspection Service Provider. There are three ISPs covering England (south, midlands and north). The contracts have run since September 2009 and end at midnight on 31 August 2015

Key Stages

Key Stage 1: pupils from ages 5 to 7
Key Stage 2: pupils from ages 7 to 11
Key Stage 3: pupils from ages 11 to 14
Key Stage 4: students from ages 14 to 16

Key Stage 5: students from ages 17 to 19

KPI

Key Performance Indicator

LA

Local Authority

LEA

Local Education Authority

LGBT

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender

LI

Lead Inspector

LLE

Local Leaders of Education are experienced headteachers who coach or mentor new headteachers or headteachers whose schools in challenging circumstances

NAHT

National Association of Headteachers

NAS/UWT

National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers

NCTL

The National College for Teaching and Leadership. An executive agency of the Department for Education. Officially opened in 2002 it was founded on the belief that changes were needed in the way school leadership is defined and practised in a standards-based system. The College was established to provide and co-ordinate professional leadership

NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
NLE	National Leaders of Education are outstanding headteachers who work with other schools in challenging circumstances to support school improvement. Because their support will often include members of their own staff, the school of a National Leader of Education is called a National Support School
NLG	National Leaders of Governance focus on developing leadership capacity of other governing bodies. In some cases they work with National Leaders of Education. Support can be delivered face to face, by telephone or email. The expectation is to provide the equivalent of 10 days free support a year.
NOR	Number on roll. The number of pupils/students in a school
Ofsted	The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OI	Ofsted inspector is the designation for inspectors from 1 September 2015

PANDA	A previous measure of standards, replaced by RAISEonline (see below)
Parent View	An online questionnaire launched in October 2011 that allows parents and carers to give their views on their child's school
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
PIB	Pre-inspection briefing; this has not been required since September 2012
Pupils	Children in primary schools or to the age of 11
Serving practitioner	Inspector currently working in a school
PQSI	Professional Qualification for School Inspectors
Phases	There are four school phases: the Early Years (EY), primary (key stages 1 and 2), secondary (key stages 3 and 4) and post 16 (sixth form)
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RAISEonline	Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through School Self Evaluation (also known as a RoL)
RGI	Registered Inspector; The designation for lead inspectors up to 2005

Safeguarding	<i>'Inspecting safeguarding in maintained schools and academies'</i> (Ofsted reference 140143). A briefing paper to support inspectors in reviewing school's safeguarding arrangements when carrying out section 5 inspections
SATs	Standardised Assessment Tests
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SCC	Schools Causing Concern. Two categories: special measures and serious weaknesses. The former is the most serious because inspectors judge the school is showing inadequate capacity to improve
SCITT	School centred initial teacher training
SIP	School Improvement Partner: all schools had a SIP but this initiative is no longer in place
SMSC	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors make judgements on this provision, a requirement of the statutory framework underpinning Section 5 inspections
SMT	Senior Management Team, sometimes senior leadership team (SLT)

SLE	Specialist Leaders of Education are experienced middle or senior leaders with a specialism (for example, mathematics or behaviour)
SSAT	Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (the Schools Network) Ltd
SSE	School self-evaluation
Students	Children in secondary schools, from the age of 11 to 18
Teaching & leadership advisers	Work regionally to help teachers and schools work together
TES	<i>Times Educational Supplement</i>
TI	Team Inspector
TSC	A body representing all Teaching Schools and working with system leaders across England promoting an inclusive school-led system
WALT	'What are we learning today'?
WILF	'What I am looking for'

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Headteachers as inspectors

In England headteachers are increasingly called upon to take the role of inspector. As I discuss later there is a substantial body of literature that considered the role of inspection within the English school system and while these have examined the phenomenon of Ofsted inspections, there has not been a strong focus on the body of inspectors. We know little about what school inspectors think about their work, and even less about the headteachers amongst them. Yet it is important to know their views since soon headteacher inspectors will form the largest cadre of the school inspector workforce. This study provides insights about the inspectors and focuses on the headteachers amongst them and so breaks new ground.

The context to the study is the developments within the English education system following the Education Reform Act of 1988. These include the concepts of accountability and performativity, as well as the debates about the impact of inspection on schools and the leadership of the system.

The literatures on boundaries and identities were used to ground the work of headteacher inspectors. Literature on system leadership was also used to provide a context to their work and to draw inferences about future possibilities regarding their deployment within the wider system.

The findings of the study emerged from the inductive analysis of the data derived from the transcribed transcripts from 12 semi-structured interviews with headteacher inspectors.

Headteachers who inspect are referred to as 'serving practitioners'. A 'serving practitioner' is currently defined by Ofsted as a person who has taught or had direct leadership and management of teaching in a school within the two years immediately prior to carrying out inspections. Almost all serving practitioner inspectors are headteachers, and these are the focus of this research.

This chapter outlines the principle of inspection and the inspectorate's part in it, drawing out the complex interaction between headship and inspection. For readers who may be less familiar with school inspections in England I include a brief explanation of the format of school inspections as appendix [i]. The chapter explains the rationale for the research and my own position as a researcher and manager of inspectors, but not a headteacher. Finally, the chapter notes the study's aim, objectives and questions and outlines the contents of each of the subsequent chapters.

1.1. The inspection of schools

This section seeks to establish the role and purpose of school inspections in England. I locate inspection within the discourse of power-knowledge and discipline (Foucault 1963; 1977; 1979; 1980; 1990). As Perryman argued:

'Performativity becomes the mechanism in which schools demonstrate, through documentation and pedagogy that they have been normalised, and inspection, through surveillance and panoptic techniques, examines this process.' (2009: 616)

It is possible to identify three features of inspection as a mode of governing (Clarke and Ozga, 2011). First, it involves direct observation of sites and practices where inspectors are empowered and required to enter the school and observe what takes place. Second, it is a form of qualitative evaluation involving the exercise of judgement, thereby raising questions about knowledge and power. Third, it is embodied evaluation, where the inspector as agent embodies inspection knowledge, judgement and authority.

The establishment of agencies charged with policing and inspection has become an important element of the regulation of public services (Boyne et al.: 2002). Ofsted, the school's inspectorate, is one of these. Indeed, it may be seen as the

principal one in the English school system since local authorities are being emasculated (Wilkinson, 2006). All maintained schools and academies in England are subject to regular inspection.

In this way conformity with government policy is policed through a national inspection regime (Bush, 2013) and this reflects the nature of a regulatory state (Boyne et al.: 2002). While the primary task of inspectors and the inspection system is to report without fear or favour on what they evidence, a successful inspection system contributes more than simply delivering inspection judgements on a school by school basis. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's annual report to Parliament on the quality and standards of education in England is based on all the inspections conducted in the previous academic year. This state of the nation report ensures that inspection drives improvement in policies, as well as in individual schools.

Inspection enables governance at a distance (Clarke & Ozga, 2011) where organisations (schools in this case) are deemed not to be trusted to regulate themselves effectively but must be monitored and held accountable by external agencies (Power, 1997; Hood et al.: 1999). However, as Thomson argued:

'Most English heads do not wish to give up the autonomy they have. Instead, they argue for a relaxation of testing and inspection and related audit requirements. They want less onerous accountabilities and less cut throat consequences for apparent lack of progress against government targets.' (2010: 11)

De Wolf and Janssens (2007) argued that school visits are the most important instrument for inspectorates. During these visits a school's strong and weak points are systematically vetted, the level of education quality and compliance with statutory regulations are assessed. A school is also informed about how it can improve the quality of its education. By providing feedback on these findings to schools, but also by publishing the report on the school or institution, inspectorates

expect to be able to influence school policy, and by doing so, contribute to an improvement in the quality of education in the school in question.

Different methods of school inspection, all based on observation, have been in place in England since 1839 (Grubb, 2000) but it was the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) formation in 1992 that saw the start of a systematic school inspection regime in England.

Ofsted

Ofsted is a non-ministerial government department with a remit to improve standards of achievement and the quality of education through regular independent inspection, public reporting and informed advice.

Ofsted is a dispersed organisation, with a small core and until September 2015 a significant amount of outsourced employment of the inspector workforce. In other words, Ofsted has one of the characteristics of a, '*placeless organisation*' (Nardi: 2007) since its organizational structure is an, '*hierarchy of nucleus and distributed vetted participants*' (2007: 7). Ofsted had an annual budget of about £160 million for the financial year 2014/15, falling to £145 million in 2015/16. Its inspectors comprise about 600 Her Majesty's Inspectors, employed directly by Ofsted, and about 2,700 additional inspectors who were employed directly, or contracted, by three independent commercial organisations (Inspection Service Providers) contracted by Ofsted to provide inspection services until 31 August 2015.

There are approximately 22,000 state funded schools in England and during recent academic years about 8,000 schools were inspected, which may help to explain why inspection practice is often seen as bureaucratised and pressurised. It is now on an, '*almost industrial scale*' (Clarke & Ozga, 2011: 17). Approximately 80 per cent of primary and 70 per cent of secondary schools are judged outstanding or good, with the remaining required improvement or are judged inadequate, and deemed to be failing (Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, 2013/14).

The next section addresses the relationship between the professional body from which the subjects of the study are drawn (headteachers) and inspection.

1.3. Headship and inspection

Research on headteachers has focused on them as organisational leaders (Gunter & Ribbins, 2003) and the originality of this study is the focus on those amongst them who choose to inspect, about whom we know little. The headteacher is formally responsible for the proper functioning and management of a school and is the executive representative of its governing body. Significant weight therefore is given to the pivotal role of the headteacher in managing the school, perhaps almost to the exclusion of all other factors. As a result headteachers carry, almost alone, the responsibility for school failure (Bell & Rowley, 2002). Because headteachers are largely accountable for the success or failure of their schools, principally through inspection, this can be felt as a very personal responsibility (Crawford, 2007).

Ofsted is premised on executive action on behalf of a nationalised school culture and the assumption is that inspection contributes to the quality of schools in a positive way. However, inspection is high stakes (Lerman, 2006) for all headteachers since inspectors cast a critical eye on schools and emerge with judgements, using terms such as 'requires improvement', 'serious weaknesses' and 'special measures', all represented by numerical values. This language constrains as well as enables (Fielding, 2001). Inspection reports are in the public arena, and remain there for all to see and the politics of school failure are emotional (Hargreaves, 2004).

Bush argued:

'Conformity with government policy is policed through a national inspection regime, which grades leadership as well as classroom practice. The consequences of an 'unsatisfactory' grade are profound.' (2013: 127)

Indeed, in reporting the results from a survey conducted in conjunction with the Association of School and College Leaders, *The Times Educational Supplement* (23 March 2012) noted that, *'the buck stops with the head'*. In its view, the world of school leadership is a high stakes one, where, *'mud sticks'* and, *'public dressing-downs'* cause deep and painful scars on the collective psyche of the profession.

In interviews with 15 headteachers, Coldron et al. concluded that the headteachers were aware that the symbolic capital conferred on them by being graded by Ofsted as at least 'good' and preferably 'outstanding' was what mattered most and that:

'Anything less in future inspections would be a fateful recategorization; a loss of local and national prestige demoting both school and headteacher.' (2014: 398)

In these circumstances it is unsurprising that inspection is a highly emotional activity for the inspected headteachers, and the inspectors. Historically there has been a distinction between them and this has influenced professional dialogue and relationships. The Ofsted regime, at least to date, has not encouraged a sense of collegiality and the policy of public naming and shaming of failing schools may be seen as confrontational. However, in a speech to a conference of headteachers in offering an olive branch to the profession, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector commented that in future headteachers would be able to challenge criticism in inspection reports or the Ofsted grades awarded to their schools (*The Times*, 16 June 2015).

So, just over two decades since its formation, Ofsted is a major entity in the English education system, arguably one of the most regulated in the world

(Lerman, 2006). Many, perhaps even most, headteachers forge day-to-day action and the contemplation of new initiatives with reference to the likely Ofsted reaction (Bottery, 2007) and it seems that headteachers who choose to inspect lend weight to the Ofsted discourse. In this environment of competing power discourses (Foucault, 1980) headteachers who inspect, it may be argued, are part of the, '*culture of compliancy*' (Ball, 2000) as opposed to taking more subversive roles in the change agenda.

Nonetheless, inspection is still a, '*particularly contentious issue in education*' (Waldergrave & Simons, 2014: 4) largely because it is seen as bureaucratised and pressurised (Fielding et al.: 1998). For example, the Workload Challenge consultation conducted by the Department for Education in the autumn of 2014, asked headteachers about, '*unnecessary and unproductive*' workloads within schools. The findings as set out by Ofsted were that:

'53% of the sample respondents said that the burden of their workload was created by accountability or perceived pressures of Ofsted.'
(Ofsted, March 2015: 6)

Thus, while inspection can be seen as pressure (or challenge) for improvement, as Chapman argued, it is:

'Characterized by 'technical-rational' view of improvement, underpinned by high levels of pressure, lack of support and the claim to provide objective and rigorous judgements.' (2005: 36)

Having considered the complex relationship between headteachers and inspection, the next section sets out the reasons why I made headteacher inspectors the focus of my research.

1.4. The rationale for the research

I decided to research headteachers who inspect since we know little about their agency as inspectors, which is under-theorized. The research is timely in light of the central policy impetus to engage more headteachers as inspectors, for the reasons explained in the next section.

The drive for headteachers to inspect

It is essential that schools, and the public, have confidence in the people that inspect since their judgements can have far reaching consequences. This point was commented upon by the Audit Commission when it noted that skilled and credible inspectors are the single most important feature of a successful inspection service (Audit Commission, 2000).

Some commentators have argued that schools should become more involved in evaluating themselves and each other and there should be a loosening of the distinction between inspectors and teachers (Woodward & Chrisafis, 2000; Winch, 2001). The argument is that this would promote mutual understanding and break down the functional barriers between teachers and inspectors.

The drive for more headteachers to take up the inspection baton is pressing. In September 2009, when the six-year contract with the inspection contractors began, less than 10 per cent of additional inspectors were practitioners. The target was 33 per cent by September 2014, with at least one practitioner on every inspection team. In practice, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector reported in a speech to the Association of School and College Leaders that:

'Almost 60% of inspection teams now include a serving head from good or outstanding schools, and that number is increasing by the year.'

(Ofsted, 21 March 2014)

From September 2015, '*almost 70% of Ofsted inspectors will be serving leaders*' (Ofsted, May 2015).

Headteachers who inspect normally need to be leading a successful school and the expectation is that they have led their own schools to an overall inspection outcome of good or outstanding. If not, their suitability to inspect is assessed on a case by case basis. For example, they may have taken over the headship of a school and are demonstrably improving it.

Headteachers usually offered the inspection contractors 20 days a year for inspection work. About 75 per cent of all additional inspectors inspected for less than 30 days a year and in practice most worked fewer. Since September 2015 Ofsted's expectation is that practitioners offer 16 days a day, with non-practitioners committing to 32 days. Practitioners also usually work as team inspectors, rather than leading inspection teams. In terms of remuneration the guidance from Ofsted and the Education Funding Agency advises against direct payments to headteachers for consultancy, which is deemed to include inspection work. The guidance is that fees should be properly remitted to the school rather than to the individual.

The initial impetus for increasing the number of serving practitioners arose largely out of the findings of the Education Select Committee (Education Select Committee Report, 17 April 2011) which stated that too few inspectors have recent and relevant experience of the settings they inspect. The committee took the view that this had contributed to a loss of faith in the inspection system and cited the need to increase the percentage of inspectors who are senior serving practitioners from the front-line. The argument was that this would aid the credibility and quality of inspection teams since inspectors have to be trusted and recognised as expert if they are to command the respect of the profession they seek to regulate. This move to involve more serving practitioners is exemplified by the appointment of a headteacher to the post as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in January 2012.

Shortly after his appointment, in a speech to the London Leadership Strategy's *Good to Great* Conference in February 2012 (Ofsted, June 2012) Her Majesty's Chief Inspector acknowledged that he was in discussions with the National College for Teaching and Leadership, whose publications and programmes embody the core ideas of government policy (Simkins, 2010), about whether to introduce a, '*national service*' for outstanding headteachers, suggesting that these, '*conscripts*' will join Ofsted on a small number of inspections a year in order to ensure consistency of judgements. The Chief Inspector's argument was that headteachers cannot complain about variations in judgements unless they are prepared to bring their expertise to the process. The strategy of Ofsted is to build bridges with schools and demystify the inspection process (*The Times Educational Supplement*, 4 March 2011) while addressing complaints of inconsistent grading (*The Times*, 10 February 2012).

Addressing an audience of headteachers at the annual conference of the Association of School and College Leaders (Ofsted, July 2012), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector again set out his commitment to more headteachers becoming involved in inspection, referring to a, '*cadre*' of headteachers, usually Local or National Leaders of Education, arguing that it is valuable professional development for them, and helps their own schools to improve.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector also presented details of a pilot programme that had been agreed with the National College for Teaching and Leadership to encourage headteachers to undertake a small number of inspections each year. This accelerated training programme comprised a first cohort of 40 additional inspectors, drawn from headteachers, particularly those deemed as National Leaders in Education, and funded by the National College for Teaching and Leadership. As a result, from September 2012 a number of National Leaders of Education were involved in up to six days of inspections a year. These were a first tranche of serving headteachers to inspect on a regular basis.

A marked shift forward in momentum was signalled by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in another speech to headteachers (Ofsted, March 2014) when he set out his intention to include in the Ofsted workforce a much larger number of seconded practitioners serving in outstanding schools. At the same time he reported his intention of working with the National College for Teaching and Leadership to promote a new Fellowship Programme to recognise those headteachers who step up to serve the, '*national interest*' by working with Ofsted to improve schools.

One of the reasons behind the drive for more serving practitioners taking up the inspection baton is the concern that the knowledge, experience and understanding of other inspectors are inadequate, or out of date. Several submissions to the Education Select Committee (2011) raised concerns about the quality of inspections carried out by additional inspectors compared to those carried out at by Her Majesty's Inspectors who are employed directly by Ofsted. Indeed, headteachers have long complained that they do not have confidence in inspections managed by the independent contractors because the inspectors they use are out of touch with current education working practices (*The Mail on Sunday*, 8 January 2012). In his paper on headteachers' experiences of school inspection Courtney argued:

'Many headteachers report that inspection was less positive due to variation in inspector quality (p. 164)...the connecting theme is variability in the quality and judgments of inspectors, raised by all six interviewees.'
(2013: 167)

The current position

So, a new course was set. As a first step the inspection contractors received notice that they were to cease the deployment of any inspectors without qualified teacher status and teaching experience. Since September 2012 only those with qualified

teacher status are allowed to inspect in maintained schools and academies. Now, virtually all trainee inspectors are serving practitioners and so an increasing proportion of the inspector workforce is classified as serving practitioners, most being headteachers.

The position therefore is that some school leaders are being co-opted in increasing numbers from the main body of their colleagues to act as inspectors. Their credibility, it is argued, derives from their knowledge and experience as well as the way they conduct themselves (Audit Commission, 2000). The underlying theme throughout these moves to recruit headteachers to play a major role in the inspector workforce is that the outcomes of inspection hinge on the capacity of the inspectors.

A further step change was made in May 2014 when Ofsted announced that, from September 2015, it will no longer contract with independent contractors for the delivery of school inspections. From then, all inspectors, including the headteachers amongst them, will be contracted directly by Ofsted, giving it more direct control over their selection, training and quality assurance (Ofsted press release, 29 May 2014). As part of its public consultation on the future of education inspection (*Education inspection: a blueprint for the future*) Ofsted confirmed it had been:

'Seeking the views of serving practitioners about working with Ofsted alongside their day-to-day roles.' (Ofsted, 9 October 2014)

In June 2015, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, in a letter to the Times Educational Supplement, wrote, *'We need to bury once and for all the outdated notion that Ofsted and the education profession are involved in a "them against us" battle'* (TES, 10 June 2015, p.23)'.

Understanding why headteachers inspect and what they learn from practising it is under-researched. We do not actually know what difference they make as inspectors or how they engage with teachers, other headteachers and other inspectors. It is these gaps that I seek to fill and the value that I seek to add.

My argument is that there is a debate to be had about whether headteacher inspectors may be seen as system leaders in English schools, undertaking a wider system role and who are almost as concerned with the performance and outcomes of other schools as with their own school (Hopkins & Higham, 2007). The context for this argument is that:

'Structures and relationships are emerging that are diverse, fragmented and have very different implications for the local in different contexts.'

(Woods & Simkins 2014: 331)

Having demonstrated why the research study is topical and timely the next section explains my own position.

1.5. My position as researcher

The research arises out of professional interest, as well as a sense of personal achievement. From April 2006 until August 2015 I was employed as a Senior Managing Inspector by one of the inspection contractors. I managed sixty or so additional inspectors and led school inspections. My post ended when the contractors' contract with Ofsted finished.

I am not a serving practitioner but I share a professional relationship with the headteachers since I understand the practice of inspection and I have a commitment to it, having led on average twelve inspections of primary, secondary or special schools, or pupil referral units every year for the last twenty years. I am supportive of headteachers working as inspectors since I see at first hand the

benefits they bring to inspection. However, I have no direct experience of the norms and values held by headteachers, including those who inspect.

Researchers, like me, who examine their own organisation offer a unique perspective because of their knowledge of the culture, history and people involved (Smyth and Holian, 1999). I have opinions about the subject of my study and how things should be (Diefenbach, 2009). In my experience, inspection is a challenging and rewarding job of work. It is mostly positive but there is no disguising the fact that the stakes are high for schools, their pupils, parents and, of course, their headteachers.

As a result of the four assignments for part one of the EdD programme, set out in appendix [vi], and other reading, I considered several topics that interested me as possible research areas, all involving inspection. My reading of Foucault initially captured my interest. In particular, his argument that if the gaze of inspectors is felt to be inescapable and continuous and the subject:

'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.' (1977: 202)

I began to think about what this might mean for headteachers who also inspect.

Wenger's (1998) concept of practice also interested me since he views learning as a social construction and places knowledge in the context in which it has meaning, important for an individual's learning and acquisition of knowledge. Researching headteachers who inspect offered the opportunity to explore these concepts as well as offering originality. It also gave the potential for influencing policy and practice since my view is that understanding about the practice of school inspectors is limited, and even more so for the growing numbers of headteachers

amongst them. As things transpired, the policy direction has placed much greater emphasis on headteachers as inspectors.

In addition, the idea of headteachers as leaders of the system has come to the fore (Boylan, 2013; Higham et al.: 2009; Hopkins, 2006 & 2007; Hopkins & Higham, 2007; Robinson 2011 & 2012). Bell et al. (2003) argued that headteachers should be supported and trained to raise educational standards as part of the re-design of school leadership. In making a case for headteachers' professional responsibility, Cranston argued:

'School leaders should be the ones driving a critical examination of their profession whereby the shackles of accountability on them are replaced by a new liberating professionalism.' (2013: 129)

Now, new roles are emerging for headteachers including those outside their schools (Robinson, 2011 & 2012) and these are a means of spreading best practice. My view is that this includes headteachers' engagement as inspectors. As I shall argue that inspection may at some point be seen as a form of system leadership when conducted by headteachers. The exploration of this point is timely since as Boylan argued, there is a, *'relative lack of research on the practices and identities of system leaders* (2013: 11):

The next section sets out the research aim, objectives and questions.

1.6. Aim, objectives and questions

The aim of this research is to develop an understanding of headteachers who also inspect. I set out with three research objectives:

- [1] To create understanding of why headteachers inspect and what they learn from it

- [2] To explore headteachers' perceptions of their impact on inspection practice
- [3] To explore headteachers' perceptions about how they engage with other inspectors and the teachers of the schools they inspect, and especially their headteachers.

The research questions were:

- [1] Why do headteachers cross a boundary and take on the role of school inspector?
- [2] What knowledge do headteachers claim in order to take on the identity of inspector?
- [3] How do headteachers construct their engagement in the inspection process?
- [4] How do the professional practices of headteacher inspectors change as a result of their inspection work?
- [5] How do headteachers characterise their relationships with other inspectors, the teachers and headteachers of the schools they inspect, and of their own schools, and others?

This is new ground and I do not seek to ally with any theory. Rather, I set out what emerged from my findings. The approach is adaptive, about which I say more in chapter 3 (methodology and methods), since I developed my thinking on from an exploration of the concepts that I initially used to ground the study. What emerged was the possibility that headteacher inspectors might be well placed to take up the baton as system leaders.

These deliberations took place against a rapidly changing policy context about the future of Ofsted.

1.7. The structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of five further chapters as follows:

Chapter two locates the study in relation to the developments within the English education system, the debates about school inspection and headteachers' changing leadership, including the changes they are facing and the emotions involved. It looks at panopticism and post panopticism. The chapter then considers the concept of system leadership exploring what it means, why it is important, the characteristics of system leaders and the roles they take. The chapter then sets out the context of the boundary between headship and inspection, including what is meant by the term 'boundary', communities of practice, boundary crossing, brokering, the use of boundary objects and learning. The chapter considers the meaning of identities drawing out how identity is formed through practice, and the concepts of positional identity, figured worlds, knowledge and situated knowledge, capture and sameness.

Chapter three outlines the methodology and methods used. It explains why I chose a qualitative approach given the research aim, objectives and questions, and how I sought to apply ethical considerations throughout the research process. It explains my approach to interviewing and how I collected the data. My role as interviewer is then contextualised. The chapter gives brief details about the sample and how I conducted the interviews. It then describes the recording, transcription and analysis of the data, before concluding with the study's limitations.

Chapter four sets out the experiences of headteachers who inspect. The themes that are documented are those that emerged from the data and represent the voice of the interviewees at that time. They recount what it is like to be inspected

from their perspective as headteacher; what it is like becoming an inspector and inspecting; their relations with teachers, and especially other headteachers; their relations with other inspectors, and with their governors and local authorities; their learning from inspecting; and the ambivalence they have about the inspection process as they have experienced it. It then gives an overview of the key points that emerged from the interviews and how many headteachers commented on them.

Chapter five is a discussion of the research findings: why the headteachers inspect and the emotions involved. It considers boundary practices and looks at boundary crossing, brokering, and the qualities necessary for crossing boundaries, the use of inspection artefacts as boundary objects, challenges and the future. It then explores how inspecting impacts on the identity of headteacher inspectors by considering identity formation, roles and accountabilities, the figured world of inspecting, knowledge and learning, team-working, empathy, capture, sameness, leading inspections, limitations, support for a dual identity and identity conflict. It then considers in what ways headteacher inspectors may be considered as system leaders, revisiting the notions of moral purpose and substantive engagement before ending with an interpretation of system leadership against the background of the growing cadre of headteachers who also inspect.

Chapter six draws conclusions and summarises the findings of the research. It looks at the implications of the research, It explores recent developments impacting on headteacher inspectors, the possibilities of them embracing a system leadership role in the future and the barriers and challenges they face. The chapter sets out the strengths and weaknesses of the chosen methodology and methods. It then offers some views about the future for headteachers who inspect and my claims to knowledge. The chapter concludes by suggesting some ideas for further research before offering final comments.

Chapter 2

Contextualising the study

2.1. Introduction to the chapter

This chapter contextualises the study by discussing in more detail the developments within the English education system since the 1988 Education Reform Act, drawing out the concepts of accountability and improvement, and the emergence of a new middle tier interfacing between schools and central government, important when considering the activities of headteacher inspectors and any potential place they take within the wider school system. The chapter considers the debates about inspection, panopticism and post-panopticism, and the impact of inspections. These issues are important to an understanding the context of being a headteacher at the time of the study, and in particular one whom also chooses to inspect.

The chapter continues as a review of the literature relevant to the study. It explores headteachers' leadership, focussing on the changes they face in their leadership of schools, and the tensions and emotions involved in the current climate where inspection is prevalent. It then considers the wider system: the developing concept of system leadership, focussing on what system leadership means, why it is important, the characteristics of system leaders and the roles they currently hold.

The chapter then looks at theoretical frameworks considered to be of relevance, beginning with the concept of boundaries. This has an immediate bearing on the work of headteachers who inspect as they move back and forth across the functional and physical boundary between headship and inspection. It focusses on communities of practice, boundary crossing, brokering, boundary objects and learning at the boundary. As will be shown later, the movement across the boundary to inspect impacts on the identity of the headteachers who choose to do so. Therefore, the chapter also frames the research by exploring the meaning of identity and the concepts of identity in practice, positional or relational identity, figured worlds, learning, situated knowledge, capture and sameness.

2.2. Contextual narrative

While there is no clear narrative about school improvement, in other words about what is considered to be the normal or correct way of securing improvement, the underlying assumption underpinning this thesis is that, as Macnab argued, all countries wish to have a school education system which, '*provides a rich and productive learning environment for young people*' (2004: 53). Improving the quality of state funded school education in England is an explicit policy aim of governments of all persuasions. The standards agenda has focussed on the implementation of national strategies for measuring pupil achievement and the compliance of schools to externally derived standards of performance. The Education Reform Act of 1988 marked a decisive break in the tradition of administering education policy in the United Kingdom by introducing elements of a market type mechanism and the next section explains why.

The 1988 Education Reform Act

While the post war statutes, notably the Education Act of 1944:

'Fused finance and provision, the Act of 1988 separated those functions and introduced elements of a market type mechanism into UK education.' (Le Grand, 1991:1268)

In other words, the Act of 1988 set out the intention of the state to stop being both the funder and provider of services (Glennerster, 1991). In practice this is yet to happen since the state remains the core provider while at the same time, as a funder, it purchases services from a variety of private, public and agency providers, within a competitive framework. In this way resources are allocated through a bidding process.

Commenting on the policies of the New Labour governments (1997-2010) Sammons argued that the focus became the:

'Enhanced localisation and professionalism (more specialist schools, additional resources, improved pay and conditions, more freedom for successful schools, light touch inspection and increased self-evaluation) was evident alongside significantly enhanced centralisation (National Strategies, explicit standards and targets, reduced powers for Local Education Authorities' (2008: 653).

The next section says a little more about what these changes mean for schools, and their headteachers.

Accountability and Improvement

The outcome of the changes following the Education Act of 1988 was a shift to greater accountability. In short, there is the need by schools to set and meet demanding targets in terms of measurable performance indicators and to exhibit appropriate forms of management and organisation which can be inspected (Simkins, 2000). In this way Perryman argued that performativity:

'Becomes the mechanism in which schools demonstrate, through documentation and pedagogy that they have been normalised, and inspection, through surveillance and panoptic techniques examines this process.' (2009: 616)

Central government, on behalf of its taxpayers, naturally wants to obtain the best service for their investment and external scrutiny has now become a key part of the agenda (Mok, 1999). Indeed, to monitor educational provision and outcomes, *'many countries put in place some form of external supervision, often referred to as a schools inspectorate'* (Macnab 2004: 53).

It may be argued that inspection of schools is a form of examination which according to Foucault:

'Combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement. It is a normalizing gaze, as surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish.' (1979: 175)

The next section notes the paving of the way for new players in this more fluid policy environment following the move to re-structure and de-regulate state education. The gap filled between schools and central government is relevant to this study of headteacher inspectors since they may have a place within it. Indeed, this gap offers opportunities for influencing the new structures as they emerge (Schools White Paper, the Department for Education, 2010).

The new middle tier

The Education Reform Act of 1988 sought to link significant degrees of institutional autonomy with an emphasis on parental choice and competition, thereby creating quasi-markets (Gordon & Whitty, 1997). Such alignments create the pre-conditions for privatisation and the commodification of core public services, including education. In short, the story of educational reform since 1988 has been one of increased autonomy for schools, but within a framework within which such autonomy has been heavily constrained and orchestrated by the regulatory regime of national government. Indeed, Woods and Simkins (2014) summarised the three dominant themes as school autonomy, central control and diversity of provision.

In practice, this involves the dismantling of local authorities and the concept of a self-improving school system (Hargreaves 2010; 2011). One of the outcomes is that uncertainty is now a feature of local governance as it emerges within this larger national context.

The result has been the creation of a space in the system (the area between central government and schools) where the governance and administration of education are enacted locally. This has led to the need for a new middle leadership

tier in the English school system and significantly, the opening up of the policy space in the school system brings with it opportunities to change the power relationships within the system and to, '*bring new actors into the arena*' (DfE, 2010: 334). Smyth referred to these local actors as the '*enterprising self*', adding that:

'The local in the emerging system involves calculation, opportunity-spotting, sometimes risk-taking, and acting purposefully in uncertainty to construct innovative and untested ways or working within and between institutions.'
(2011: 335)

Managing the self-improving school system is developing and is a complex arena with many players, including the Schools Commissioner and the regional school commissioners (who work with school leaders to promote and monitor academies and free schools) and the Teaching School Council (a body representing all Teaching Schools and working with system leaders across England promoting an inclusive school-led system).

In this complex setting, some headteachers take the view that standing still is not an option and it remains to be seen if those amongst them who inspect are to have a role in this space. Indeed, '*choices have to be made about the kind of identity and agency that players within the system want to aspire to*' (DfE, 2010: 336). Indeed, there are plans to recognise exceptional school leaders:

'Those who are taking risks, putting themselves out and disseminating good practice beyond their own institution.' (Ofsted press release, 15 June 2015)

Here, it is timely to reflect on inspection further, since its impact is still subject to differing views.

Debates about the inspection of schools

There have been many changes in Ofsted's methodology since its inception. The original conception was that every school in England would be inspected every four years. Since then the concept of proportionality has been introduced with efforts focussed on those schools deemed to be most in need of intervention. However, Ofsted has become a body which belongs very much at the policing end of the continuum of activities of inspection (Hughes et al.: 1997) and this has led to a measure of distrust between inspectors and the inspected. At the same time Robinson (2012) argued that for the majority of headteachers, stress over inspection was affected by the paradox of their gaining recognition. Headteachers may resent Ofsted because of the way they are forced to comply with nationally mandated change, but they also need it as a reference to enhance their careers.

Inspection is seen as a lever for change (Sammons, 2008). The inspection system is an important part of a wider effort to bring about improvement in the ways schools are led and managed so that more pupils achieve their educational potential. Boyne et al. (2002) saw inspection as an important element of the regulation of public services. Hughes et al. (1997) took the view that Ofsted has become a body which belongs very much at the policing end of the continuum of activities of inspection. Ofsted exists to control the quality level of schools and public education, a control system which aims to guarantee a minimum level of educational quality. School inspections have a positive effect on schools' compliance with legislation and regulations.

While Ofsted fulfils an accountability role rather than an advisory one, it is a requirement that inspectors identify areas in which a school could improve. Direct interventions such as providing feedback directly to schools and indirect interventions such as the publication of school reports are expected to lead to improvement (Ehren & Visscher, 2006 & 2008; Lofty, 2003; Mathews & Smith, 1995; Ouston et al.: 1997).

While Fielding (2001) talked about the increasingly prevalent culture of blame within the public services, another view is that inspections serve necessary purposes for monitoring and for the professional development of school staff, including headteachers. Mathews and Smith (1995) argued that there is much evidence that preparation for inspection results in a number of benefits, including the value of having an external audit.

The performance of schools and the public's expectations of them, have risen over time, and inspection reflects that. The rigour of the grade descriptors, and the data now available, means that there is an ever more acute appraisal of pupils' progress and a school's performance. The published inspection report tells parents, the school and the wider community about the quality of education at the school and whether pupils can achieve as much as they can. The findings from the inspection provide information to parents about how well the school compares with others and sets out what the school needs to do to improve.

Performativity lends itself to Jeremy Bentham's (1791) Panopticon and the next section looks at this concept in more detail, as well as referencing a recent research paper on post panopticism.

The Panopticon and post panopticism

In the Panopticon, prisoners are never sure if they are being watched so they learn to behave as if they are being watched all the time. Perryman, citing Ball (1997: 332) argued that:

'During Ofsted inspections, schools change their practices to conform to what they think the inspectors inspect and a school becomes an organisation for the gaze and for avoidance of the gaze.' (2009: 617).

Wilcox and Gray (1996) located the Panopticon within the *School Inspection Handbook* which continues to influence schools between inspections, and is often used as a management tool (in schools). As Perryman argued:

'Even if a school is not being officially inspected, "the dark central tower" of Ofsted is always invisibly watching.' (2009: 617)

This exercise of continuing surveillance through the process of monitoring means that, as Harland argued:

'Those concerned come to anticipate the response, to their actions past, present and future and therefore come to discipline themselves.' (1996: 101)

Mahony and Hextall characterised the education system as a, *'high surveillance/low trust regime'* (2000: 102).

A failure to perform has many consequences such as the dismissal or forced retirement of the headteacher, media demonisation, withdrawal or collapse of parental trust in the school and even school closure (Thomson, 2010).

So, it may be argued that the inspection discourse serves both to reinforce power and encourage conformity. If the gaze of the inspectors is felt to be inescapable and continuous:

'The subject 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: 202)

There are consequences and here it is timely to note a point made by Hopkins:

'One of the central features of policy frameworks worldwide is the introduction of structures and process for external accountability...although external accountability may be a useful strategy at the early stages of an improvement process, its continued use will reduce both performance and motivation.' (2013: 310-311)

Courtney (2014) argued that changes to school inspection policy in England constitute a post-panoptic regime since school inspection now goes beyond the compliance of school leaders, and is more concerned with, *'the exposure of their constructed and differential incompetence'* (2014: 2).

The six key features of post-panopticism in school inspection as identified by Courtney (2014: 7) are: first, total visibility to all; second, the 'norms' it imposes are purposively in flux, transient and fuzzy, and so are not norms at all; third, the goal is to expose subjects' inevitable failure to comply; fourth, its consequence is to disrupt subjects' fabrications that had been predicated on stability; fifth, it is dependent on external 'experts' to produce success criteria; sixth, its effects are experienced differentially.

Drawing on his small-scale, mixed-methods, study into headteacher's recent experiences (one of the six interviewed was a headteacher inspector) Courtney argued that post-panopticism in school inspection is reflected in the frequent changes to the inspection framework and is:

'Designed to wrong foot school leaders, disrupt the fabrications they have constructed to withstand the inspectors' gaze, and make more visible the artifice of the performances that constitute their identities.' (2004: 2)

Furthermore, Courtney argued that:

'Panoptic performativity relies on everyone knowing the rules of the game of inspection. In a post-panoptic regime, the fabrication is continually

destabilised to betray the players' ignorance of the rules and the artifice of their performed identity.' (2014: 12)

So, what evidence is there that inspecting makes a difference? The next section seeks to throw light on this question.

The impact of school inspections

Whether or not school improvement is generated as a result of Ofsted inspection remains a contested question. Indeed, *Research Intelligence*, the newsletter of the British Educational Research Association (2001), called for a study to identify the contribution made by inspection and other factors to the raising of national standards in education. This has not happened and while improvement is an explicit aim of Ofsted the evidence that this occurs is mixed (Cullingford, 1999) and there is limited and contradictory evidence about the impact of inspection.

Hood et al. (2000) and Boyne et al. (2002) referred to an evidence vacuum about the marginal effects of increasing or reducing investment in regulation of government. Some studies suggest that the impact of inspection on school performance may be neutral at best. For instance, Fitz-Gibbon and Tymms (2002) argued that the exact effects of school inspections are still unclear and that principals are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with inspection visits.

Chapman's (2001 & 2002) research showed that approximately 70 per cent of teachers believed that the main aim of Ofsted was to make schools accountable for their actions, while 58 per cent of teachers thought inspection was a useful tool for school improvement. Chapman also noted that teachers told him that Ofsted had failed to pick up many important issues for the school.

Ouston et al. (1997) argued that inspection visits lead to changes in behaviour among a large majority of school principals. Clarke (2005) drew attention to the

performative character of the inspection process, arguing that school staff talk about jumping through hoops, papering over the cracks and stage management. All were driving forces for the reduced period of notice, of half a day, given to schools from September 2012. Perryman, in her case study school, argued that teachers fabricated the situation in order to meet Ofsted requirements, but this fabrication led to inspection of the performance:

'Inspectors do not see the real school because of the level of stage-management, game-playing, performance and cynicism engendered by the panoptic regime.' (2009: 619).

As Perryman argued:

'It is through the increasing culture of performativity and accountability that conformability, discipline and normalisation is ensured, as teachers learn to police themselves and to perform the successful inculcation of the normalised behaviour.' (2009: 616)

De Wolf and Janssens (2007) concluded that studies do not provide a clear answer to the question of whether school inspections and performance indicators have causal effects. It is not only methodologically difficult to demonstrate causal effects but the methodology used also appears to have a strongly determinative effect on conclusions concerning the extent and direction of the effects. Plowright, citing Newton et al. (2001) argued that:

'There is some statistical evidence that indicates that Ofsted inspection has no positive effect on examination achievement and if anything, results are made slightly worse by the Ofsted inspection process.' (2007: 376)

Shaw et al. (2003) and Rosenthal (2004) both argued that the impact of inspection may be neutral or even negative while on the basis of research into the satisfaction

of the parties involved in the inspection visit, de Wolf and Janssens (2007) concluded that inspection visits are probably effective.

De Wolf and Janssens undertook an overview of studies into the effects and side effects of control mechanisms in education was carried out by. Their aim was to generate an overview of effects and side effects of control mechanisms on the basis of existing empirical studies, and they remind us there is a dearth of scientific research and empirical studies on effect of control mechanisms and specifically into the effects of school inspection, and indeed about the conditions which may facilitate school improvement. They noted that most of the studies find that a significant majority of the schools, between 70 and 90 per cent, experience the inspection visit as professional, supportive and positively contributing to the quality of schools.

However, de Wolf and Janssens reminded us that a problem with the existing studies into the effects and side effects of control mechanisms is that the findings are ambiguous, the research methodology varies substantially and is not always appropriate for testing causal effects and the findings appear to be closely linked to the research methodology used.

Some have argued that inspection would result in the inhibition of diversity and innovation (de Wolf and Janssens, 2007) but there is no proper empirical evidence for these side effects. There are only indications, such as the fact that the instruments for school self-evaluation and quality assurance often become copies of the instruments of inspectorates. This is principally the *School Inspection Handbook*, which is publicly available.

Of course, and unsurprisingly, satisfaction with inspection is positively influenced by the inspectorate's judgement of a school (Matthews and Sammons, 2004). They focussed on the effects and side effects of inspection visits, and public performance indicators, and found that there is no clear answer to the question of

whether school inspections have causal effects. They concluded that the studies do not provide us with a clear answer to the question of whether inspections have positive causal effects on the quality of schools.

Results of studies of publications on public performance indicators are ambiguous. For instance, de Wolf and Janssens (2007) concluded that although principals and teachers believe performance indicators are important, parents and pupils take very little notice of these indicators when choosing schools. They also reference that several of the studies refer to the existence of side effects, such as window dressing and other types of gaming. Ehren and Visscher (2006 & 2008) argued that direct interventions such as the on-site inspection activities and indirect interventions such as the publication of school reports are expected to lead to school improvement. Ouston et al. (1996) found that all three stages—pre-inspection, the inspection itself and the report—were seen by the majority of schools as being of some benefit. Lofty (2003) argued inspections can and do serve necessary purposes for monitoring and potentially for school improvement.

So, even though government policy has relied heavily on the idea of school improvement through inspection, Frost (2008) argued that there remain doubts as to the extent of the impact of this. As Chapman argued:

'It (Ofsted) has played one of the key roles in national educational reform by increasing schools' accountability for their actions, and systematically monitoring their long-term decision-making and progress. However, the widely used corporate slogan of 'improvement through inspection' is less robust in response to criticism.' (2002: 257)

The problem with the studies into control mechanisms is that it is methodologically difficult to demonstrate causal effects (de Wolf & Janssens, 2007). Almost no use is made of research designs that focus more strongly on exposing causal relationships, such as the use of control groups and more quasi-experimental

approaches. There are two important methodological issues. First, the clarity of the distinction between poorly performing and well performing schools. Second, the period of time during which quality changes might become visible; a distinction is hardly ever made between short-term and long-term effects.

In summary, there is limited and contradictory evidence (Cullingford, 1999). Some studies suggest the impact of inspection on school performance is unclear (Fitz-Gibbon & Tymms, 2002) or neutral (Shaw et al.: 2003; Rosenthal, 2004). The extent to which inspection contributes to school improvement is therefore open to debate. While it may be argued that inspection visits have positive effects on school improvement few conclusions can be drawn as regards the extent and consequences of them. What is clearer is that over time the climate has changed so that now there is zero tolerance of failure (Sammons, 2008).

In practice, instruments for school self-evaluation and quality assurance often become copies of the instruments of inspectorates and school inspection visits often lead to changes in behaviour among a large majority of school headteachers (Ouston et al.: 1997). A successful inspection system can therefore contribute more than simply delivering inspection judgements on a school by school basis and taking into account research into the satisfaction of the parties involved, inspection visits are probably effective (de Wolf & Janssens 2007). However, the lack of evidence about the causality of inspection leads to reflecting on how the professional practices of headteacher inspectors change as a result of their work as inspectors.

Having set the context to the study following the changes since the 1988 Education Reform Act, explained a little about Ofsted and reflected on its impact, the next section considers the changing roles of the subjects of the study and then makes some points about the developing concept of system leadership which emerged as a key concept.

2.3. The leadership of headteachers

Headteachers occupy a role that is fast changing within the developing scenario facing English schools. We have arguably moved into a post panoptic era, while at the same time there is a gap in the middle tier, between schools and central government. The background is the ongoing debates about school inspection, not least its impact.

This section therefore explores some of these changes in order to further contextualise the work of those amongst them who also inspect. This is because headteachers' engagement as inspectors involves interplay between their individual agency and the social context (Vähäsantanen et al. 2008). It addresses some of the literature on school leadership, the tensions surrounding accountability and the emotions involved in its practice, as well as the developing concept of system leadership.

School leadership

Educational leadership is widely recognised as complex and challenging (Shields, 2004) and within schools the headteacher's role is pivotal. The impact of the headteacher's leadership and management is widely seen as the key driver of the quality of teaching and learning in a school and its overall effectiveness, and inspection is seen as a significant test of headteachers' professional credibility (Hall & Southworth, 1997). This centrality of role was reflected in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's *Back to school* speech delivered to an audience of headteachers, where he commented that most of Ofsted's inspection findings are attributable to strengths and weaknesses in leadership:

'Wherever we find success, good leadership is behind it. Where we uncover underperformance and failure, we ask questions of leadership and governance.' (HMCI Wilshaw, 2013)

These shifts in school leadership are identified in a commissioned paper for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. In the paper, Mulford argued that:

'School leaders remain of crucial importance for continued improvement of education...the real challenge facing most schools is no longer how to improve but, more importantly, how to sustain improvement.' (2003: 2)

In the same paper, Mulford also argued for:

'The need to build on the preference of educators to learn from each other by developing and refining quality network learning communities...and apprenticeships.' (OECD, 2003: 47)

Gronn (2003) argued that educational leadership is, '*greedy work*' since it asks more and more of headteachers. But there is no single theory of leadership which can be applied to headship. This is because of the varied nature and increasing complexity of the role (Robinson, 2012). As Glatter argued:

'Leadership is embedded in relationships, context and task performance and operates in conditions of complexity and ambiguity.' (2004: 215)

This describes inspection as well as headship. It is important therefore to explore the agency of headteachers when they enter a school in their role as inspector, wearing the Ofsted badge. Significantly, Boylan (2013) argued that moral purpose is an important attribute of educational leadership regardless of role and I next look at the changes practitioner inspectors face as headteachers.

It is argued that leadership is critical in times of change at both the school and system levels (Fullan, 2003; Southworth & De Quensay, 2005). In its practical guide for school leaders, the National College for Teaching and Leadership stated that:

'The task of 'growing' tomorrow's leaders is not just desirable as a philosophical requirement, but a key responsibility to be shared across the system.' (2003: 2)

The guide cites (2003: 56) the specific experiences that have the most potential as falling into four broad categories: on-the-job assignments, working with other people, hardships and setbacks and others, which includes formal programmes and on-working experiences (inspecting is not mentioned).

One of the main drivers of change, the culture of performativity, has forced school leaders to continuously monitor and improve the educational quality of the school (Leithwood & Earl, 2000). This means that in practice, and as Cranston argued:

'External accountability has effectively re-defined school leadership professionalism.' (2013: 132)

Gunter and Rayner argued that headteachers exercise power conditionally since they are, *'positioned as middle managers necessary to ensuring that national reforms are delivered on site'* (2007: 54). The impetus for these changes has been the discourse where government seeks to steer from a distance (Blackmore, 2004) and to regulate rather than directly administer. Inspection lies at the core of regulation and the focus is on outcomes rather than inputs and processes. The underlying assumption is that strong accountability improves pupils' and students' achievement. The consequent devolution of responsibility down to schools, and the associated tools of self-management, has increased responsibilities and risks on to their headteachers.

The change of focus from accountability to responsibility (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009) means that what school leaders are expected to do is significantly different from what it was even a few years ago. As PricewaterhouseCoopers noted:

'The role of school leaders has become more challenging in recent years, and the complexity and range of tasks they are required to undertake has increased significantly.' (2007: 1)

Indeed, in their work on the challenge of school leadership Pont et al. argued that:

'There is a need to redefine and broaden school leaders' roles and responsibilities.' (2008: 9)

As Biott et al argued:

'A new interplay of accountability and autonomy in schools seems to give new conditions for headteachers' construction of professional identity.'
(2001: 396)

Moore et al. raised the concept of, '*strategic pragmatism*', typically involving a conscious practice of creative-sometimes subversive-response to reform. They argued that:

'Each issue being carefully measured and judged in terms of what is and what is not acceptable when set against the institution's or institutional manager's preferred philosophy and practice.' (2002: 186)

In their study of new English headteachers Crow & Weindling found that they responded to external issues (as well as internal political issues) by trial and error, by using mentors/role models and by information gathering. One of the external issues cited are those involving, '*government entities*' (2010: 137) and they note that:

'Frequent intensive assessments by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills create high-stakes accountability demands on the school, staff, and headteacher.' (2010: 143)

The next section says a little more about the background to these pressures.

Tensions

Tensions exist between external accountability, including inspection, as opposed to internally driven school improvement (MacBeath, 2008) and these tensions may be seen as the unintended consequences of public sector reform (Ghobidian et al.: 2009). This pressure has created a climate and legacy of mistrust (Macnab, 2004) that forms a backdrop to the work of headteachers, and to the identity of those among them who inspect. Thomson noted in her interviews with headteachers, over a 10 year period, that many of them talked of:

'Selectively rejecting some changes while acceding to those that they judge relevant. The majority suggest they actively decide what to do and when and are resentful of any suggestion that they simply do as they are told.'
(2008: 89)

Thomson pointed out the difficulties headteachers face when implementing policy, arguing:

'Headteachers mediate policy, ensuring the best possible outcomes for their schools...the counter-suggestion is that heads ought to resist the imposts of conservative, marketised policies.' (2008: 85)

Similarly, Rayner argued:

'School leaders face potential conflicts between the demands of national and local education policy and the values and ethics that brought them into teaching and subsequently into school leadership.' (2014: 38)

These points raise questions about whether headteachers who elect to inspect are, resisting or not. Reio argued:

'When confronted with the ambiguity and uncertainty of change...emotional reactions influenced their risk taking, learning and development, and identity formation.' (2005: 985)

Increased self-regulation has led to a situation where headteachers manage themselves better and this becomes internalised over time (Foucault, 1980). Continuing surveillance through the process of monitoring and evaluation, such as inspection, means that teachers come to anticipate the response and come to discipline themselves (Harland, 1996). The result is that only a few years after Ofsted came into being inspectors were referred to by Troman (1997) as the, '*absent presence*' in schools. The argument is that so complete is the relationship between Ofsted and schools that many headteachers are effectively, '*resident inspectors*'. Indeed, Perryman (2009) argued that even if a school is not being inspected the, '*dark central tower*' of Ofsted is always invisibly watching.

As noted in an earlier section of this chapter, Foucault's notion of the disciplinary regime and normalizing judgement is also useful in understanding teachers' descriptions of themselves as feeling professionally compromised, intimidated and stressed by the inspection process (Case et al.: 2000). Here too, I view headteachers as teachers first and foremost.

As Fielding argued, inspection carries with it:

'An over-confident and brusque carelessness born of too much power, too much questionable data and too little thought.' (2001: 695)

Fielding also commented on Ofsted's:

'Formulaic superficiality and despoliation of the hinterland of indigenous professional judgement.' (2001: 704)

These are hard-hitting words and it is timely to consider next the emotions involved in inspection from a headteacher's perspective, an important factor in the formation of some headteachers' responses to change by taking on the role as inspector alongside their full-time posts as the professional leaders in their school.

Emotionality

Fineman (2008) argued that emotions are what we experience internally, and are the feelings that we show. Crawford (2009), following her research with 11 headteachers, a similar number to my own sample, argued that emotion is a powerful component of leadership, and she shifts the emphasis from accountability related models to an explicit recognition of emotions to effective leadership. Emotion is a complex issue since it is interwoven with issues of power, identity and resistance (Zembylas, 2005). Indeed, Fineman (2000) argued that organisations are best understood as *emotional arenas*. My view is that teachers, including headteachers, desire to belong to a school that is doing well and share the feelings of success that produces (Hargreaves, 1994, 1998 & 2004). The converse is also true and this is one reason why the prospect and the experience of inspection has emerged as a dominant pressure for many schools (Simkins, 2000).

Inspection is founded on judgements made by inspectors (including headteacher inspectors) and these judgements have a significant impact on teachers, and especially headteachers, the professional lead in the school. None of us likes to fail or to be seen to underachieve and we may be angry when ranked unfairly. This raises questions about how headteachers react to the judgements of other headteachers who inspect them.

The reason why emotionality is important for this study is expressed by some commentators who use strong language about inspection. For example, Inglis (2000) referred to a, '*brutalising regime*', while Hayes (2001) talked of the, '*agony*' of inspections. Arguably, this emotion has not lessened over time, and more recently Clarke & Ozga referred to:

'The dislocation and distraction associated with being inspected' and inspection as 'time consuming, expensive and corrosive of trust and professional culture.' (2011: 18)

Even more recently the *Guardian* newspaper reported the Association of School and College Leaders as noting that the school inspection system has significant problems, including confusion about what inspectors are looking for as well as:

'A culture of fear around inspection which hampers sensible innovation and risk-taking.' (5 March & 8 March 2014)

As a practising inspector, though not a headteacher, I suggest that inspecting is also emotional labour and it is not surprising that inspection practice is characterised by human drama. Given the high-stakes involved there may well be, *'adversarial relationships'* between the inspectors and the inspected (Winch, 2001). However, we know little about what inspectors think about inspecting, emotional or otherwise, including the headteachers who choose to do it, and this is the gap I seek to fill.

It seems that the role of headteachers is changing significantly to what it has been historically. In part this is a result of performativity measures set in train over recent years. Inspection is at the forefront of these accountability exercises and the decision to inspect is perhaps one of the most contentious for headteachers to take, raising questions about their motivation.

The exploration of headteachers' engagement as inspectors may help us to understand how this group of school leaders respond to educational change, which is important if change is to be, *'successful and sustainable'* (Hargreaves, 2005: 981). As a result of the changes within the school system Simkins argued:

'The emphasis has shifted to new types of leader—'system leaders' and new approaches to leadership—'network leadership.' (2012: 635)

The next section considers the concept of system leadership because, over time, I came to consider this concept to be potentially pivotal for the subjects of the study, headteachers who also work as Ofsted inspectors. The paragraphs that follow set out to explain the meaning of system leadership, why system leaders are needed, their characteristics and the roles they typically hold.

System leadership

Hargreaves set out the building blocks of a self-improving school system: the structure (clusters of schools), two cultural elements (local solutions and co-construction) and, of most relevance to this thesis, the key people (system leaders). Hargreaves argued that these building blocks are, '*already partially in place but need to be strengthened*' (201: 3).

As such, and following the original use of the term *system leader* by Fullan (2005), system leadership is an emerging practice that Hopkins & Higham (2007) referred to as a professional movement. Similarly, Hatcher (2008) argued that system leadership reflects a new professional identity for headteachers, and along similar lines Robinson argued that the concept is:

'A strand in the professional repertoire of headteachers as they combine it with other new roles.' (2011: 77)

Robinson (2012) argued that the role of all headteachers is pivotal because they can act as agents of change and are used as one of the main levers for school transformation by implementing government policy in schools. This mirrored both the government White Paper, *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All* (DfES, 2005) and a Cabinet Office paper (2008) which highlighted the new professionalism: once core standards are achieved, public services need to unleash the creativity of those who work on the front line.

Taking a different tack, Hatcher (2008) argued that system leaders are holders of knowledge and practice which conform to government agendas and are a new way of continuing centralized control.

More recently, acknowledging their interconnectivity, three different meanings of system leadership are set out by Boylan (2013): interschool leadership, a systemic leadership orientation and identity, and leadership of the school system as a whole.

Interschool leadership is usually through a formally designated role, and refers to someone, *'holding a senior leadership position who exercises or evidences leadership beyond their own school'* (2012: 2). Systemic leadership, follows Sachs (2001 & 2003b) and refers to someone who is an activist leading professional. Boylan argued that this meaning is, *'useful in accounting for leadership practices in collaborative and interschool contexts'* (2012: 2). Boylan's third meaning, *'leadership of the school system'*, to the macro system through, *'the promotion of centrally designated policy goals in which school leaders are mobilized to enact change from the top down'* (2012: 2).

It had been argued that all headteachers have the capacity for system leadership, and, *'that it is not the exclusive preserve of a small, elite group'* (The National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2012: 4). Boylan's meanings seem to offer more scope than previously to include headteacher inspectors within the remit, or not to rule them out.

The common thread in all three of Boylan's meanings is the sense of moral purpose (Fullan, 2003; Hargreaves, 2010; Higham et al.: 2009) and this is pivotal to the concept's meaning since:

'There is a need to consider leadership at system as well as school level in order to address concerns about fragmentation in an increasingly diverse school system.' (Simkins, 2012: 626)

The purpose of the next section is to consider why system leadership is important.

The importance of system leadership

The government takes the position that one of the most effective ways of achieving school improvement is by working with other schools. In March 2015, the government through its official website (<https://www.gov.uk/system-leaders-who-they-are-and-what-they-do>) noted that there are now many opportunities for headteachers and other school leaders to receive support from their peers, and the options available and how to access them are summarised. It is useful to briefly set out the background to this development.

Fullan (2004a & 2004b) had argued for a new kind of leader who works in their own schools or for one of the national agencies while also connecting with and participating in the bigger picture. Fullan referred to these leaders as system thinkers in action or the new theoreticians, arguing that to change systems requires leaders who gain experience in linking to other parts of the system.

Around the same time government saw that the development and deployment of a cadre of system leaders could go a long way to responding to the challenges for school leadership (Miliband, 2004). In 2005, addressing the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (the Schools Network), Dunford summarised the context:

‘The greatest challenge on our leadership journey is how we can bring about system improvement. How we can contribute to the raising of standards, not only in our own school, but in others too?’

Just a few years later, Higham et al. noted:

‘Sophisticated forms of collaboration that are leading to a transformation of the landscape of school education.’ (2009: 129)

Hill and Matthews (2010) argued that the new landscape of schooling in England was giving birth to a wide variety of forms of association between schools. More recently, and setting out the current context, Woods and Simkins noted:

'Fundamental questions about how a system of almost 25,000 schools will be governed and managed in ways which ensure that arrangements for accountability and support are responsive to the local circumstances of individual schools and communities.' (2014: 328)

The next section reviews the characteristics of the system leaders, having a place in moving this new landscape forward.

The characteristics of system leaders

Commentators have, over recent years, put forward their understandings of the characteristics of system leaders and it is timely to set some of these out.

Hopkins (2006 and 2007) emphasised the notion of change agents and (2007) set out what he considered to be the five key characteristics: they actively lead improvements in other schools; they commit staff in their own school and other schools and engage them in organizational thinking; they lead the development of schools as personal and learning communities and build relationships across schools; they lead work in the areas of equity and inclusion by enabling aspiration and empowerment; and they manage strategically by meaningful engagement and managing change.

Hopkins and Higham (2007) and Higham et al. (2009) argued that one of the characteristics of system leaders is their engagement in personal development, usually informally through benchmarking themselves against their peers, as well as an interest in developing their skill base. My analysis of the study data indicates that the headteachers sampled place great emphasis on their personal development and they do this by benchmarking through their engagement in the

formal mechanism of inspection. The data includes several illustrations where the headteachers use inspection to affirm the practice in their own school, and so their own leadership practice.

Hargreaves (2010) argued that system leaders share the following core features: a value, a disposition to action and a frame of reference. He also argued that all three features, '*reflect a deep moral purpose*' (p. 11) while acknowledging that system leadership is expanding but, '*relatively little known or understood*' (p. 11).

Taking these notions forward, the next section sets out what roles system leaders have, at least to date, taken.

The roles of system leaders

Boylan (2013) noted that a growing number of roles have emerged in which school leaders can act as system leaders, seen as having, informed professionalism (Barber & Fullan, 2005) and in practice various roles are associated with the concept.

Hopkins (2006) cited several including change agents such as National Leaders in Education. These are outstanding headteachers who work with schools in challenging circumstances to support school improvement. Significantly, the growing number of National Leaders of Education who inspect for the inspection contractors will also be inspecting directly for Ofsted from September 2015 when it is estimated that 900 of the 1200 Ofsted inspectors working with Her Majesty's Inspectors will be serving practitioners.

Hopkins and Higham (2007), focusing on secondary headteachers, cited several roles but in neither of these lists (Hopkins, 2006; Hopkins & Higham, 2007) are headteacher inspectors cited.

However, as Hopkins and Higham acknowledged, system leadership:

'Embraces a variety of responsibilities that are developing...within discrete national networks or programmes that, when taken together, have the potential to contribute to system transformation...it is not clear what or how many system leadership roles are being undertaken.' (2007: 147-151)

Higham et al. listed, in tabular form, the extent of system leadership activity in England. They did this by classifying 1,313 individuals in the positions they held in 2008. Once again inspector is not specified and nor is it cited in the taxonomy of the roles they also identified, but as they argued:

'It is not the named roles themselves but rather what leaders do through them that constitute system leadership.' (2009 12)

In summary, the commentators who have looked at the concept of system leader have failed to cite headteacher inspectors as exemplars, but the situation is still unfolding. There is a potential synergy to headteachers inspecting since as Robinson noted:

'Many new roles have developed for headteachers because of a form of credibility they have attained, or earned autonomy granted through validation through successful inspection.' (2012: 102)

Recently, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, in speeches to audiences of headteachers made reference to, '*national service*' (Ofsted, July 2012) and, '*the national interest*' (Ofsted, March 2014). Both terms are noteworthy in the discussion about headteacher inspectors' future place as system leaders.

The agency for many of the changes headteachers face, the National College for Teaching and Leadership, recognises the importance of leaders being able to exercise leadership beyond the particular institution they run and contribute to organisational improvement and pupil progress in other schools (Ballantyne et al.: 2006). A search for system leaders on its website (<https://www.gov.uk>) refers to

Teaching Schools, National Leaders of Education and the National Support Schools Programme, Local Leaders of Education, Specialist Leaders of Education and Regional support: teaching and leadership advisers. Again, there is no reference to inspecting.

So, to date no commentators cite headteacher inspectors as system leaders, an important tissue revisited in the discussion chapter and the conclusion. but first I explore two of the theoretical concepts that I consider are of direct relevance to the agency of those among them who also choose to inspect. These theoretical tools were chosen to help me to understand the perceptions of the 12 interviewees and to investigate whether headteacher inspectors are system leaders, or have the potential to be so.

2.4. Conceptual frameworks

This section looks at the two theoretical tools used - boundaries and identities - since both are integral to the work of headteachers who also inspect. It begins with the concept of boundaries, important since the changes in the English school system of which headteacher inspectors are a part, are taking place in a, '*new landscape of more fluid organisational boundaries*' (Boylan, 2013: 2).

Boundaries

For the subjects of this thesis, the concept of boundaries is integral since while headteachers routinely cross boundaries from one school to another, very few headteachers have moved across the boundary between school and inspection.

Given the dynamics arising from the 1988 Education Reform Act as set out previously, this situation is changing rapidly with the numbers of headteachers who inspect on course to increase significantly in absolute terms and as a proportion of the school inspector workforce. The exploration of how headteachers interpret their work when they move across the boundary between schools into inspection on behalf of Ofsted may help illuminate how they relate to this wider environment

(Close & Raynor, 2010). This section therefore seeks to explain some of the key points about boundaries, relevant to this work:

Meanings

Akkerman referred to the many boundary terms that reflect the various ways in which boundary crossing can happen, and that boundaries can be crossed by people, by objects and by interactions between actors of different practices:

'Professionals may face boundaries between different perspectives and practices.' (2011a: 1)

Uemer et al. (2004: 53) argued that boundaries are, '*activated, questioned and moved*' and this too is pertinent since the work of headteacher inspectors is taking place at a time of significant change in inspection practice, with Ofsted throwing its considerable weight behind a practitioner dominated workforce. At the same time, boundaries can be defined as socio-cultural differences which lead to discontinuity in action or interaction (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011) and this offers the potential for dissonance.

While this research does not seek to explore the concept of communities of practice, nevertheless the concept offers some important insights for the study.

Communities of Practice

Wenger's (1998) work in this area offers some pertinent lines of enquiry. This is because Wenger argued that boundaries are important because they connect communities and offer learning opportunities.

In simple terms, a community of practice is a group comprised of members who share common understandings including shared vocabulary, jokes and lore,

although communities of practice are, '*extremely variable and difficult to pin down*' (Nardi, 2007: 16).

Wenger argued that people are able to participate in multiple communities (of practice) at the same time and that:

'The success of organisations depends on their ability to design themselves as social learning systems and also to participate in broader learning systems such as an industry.' (1998: 225)

For the purpose of this study with its focus on headteacher inspectors, I take a school to be an '*organisation*', and inspection as an '*industry*'. After all, 8,000 or so school inspections take place every year. The subjects of this thesis, headteachers, are the leaders of these '*organisations*' and also engage in the practice or '*industry*' of inspecting. Morgan (2006) argued that boundary management is an important function of headteachers. The concept therefore raises questions about headteacher inspectors since boundary work is an important aspect of inter-professional activity. The next section explores the meaning of boundary crossing.

Boundary crossing

Boundary crossing refers to a person's transitions and interactions across different sites. While there are different notions of boundary crossing, Kent et al. (2007: 68) argued, '*In all its forms it takes place in two directions.*' The term denotes how professionals enter territory with which they are unfamiliar and for which they are to some extent unqualified (Suchman, 1994). Engeström identified the value of boundary crossing as a way to enter unfamiliar domains, introduce new elements into established practices, and potentially to expand and transform these practices. It is the process of:

'Negotiating and combining ingredients from different contexts to achieve hybrid situations.' (2001: 319)

Wenger identified different types of boundary crossing or interactions: boundary encounters, boundary practices and boundary peripheries. The first, boundary encounters, includes visits, discussions and sabbaticals, and these provide exposure to a practice. The second type, boundary practice, is where:

'A boundary requires so much sustained work that it becomes the topic of a practice of its own.' (1998: 237).

Wenger argued that sometimes in boundary practices a new practice develops in its own right and this aspect in particular, raises questions about headteachers who cross a boundary to inspect. The third type identified by Wenger, boundary peripheries, are where some communities take steps to manage their boundaries to serve people who need some service, are curious, or intend to become members.

Boundaries are sites of practice and power since they are social constructions defining who is included and excluded from interactions. Fisher and Atkinson-Grosjean in their work on technology managers who, *'look across and negotiate boundaries'* (2002: 461) argued that central to boundary work is the:

'Creation of partnerships and...part of their role is to mediate and translate the different cultures across boundaries.' (2002: 461).

While the boundary between two activity systems represents the potential value of establishing communication and collaboration it also brings with it the potential difficulty of action and interaction across systems (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). As a result boundary crossing is not without its challenges and it calls for personal fortitude (Landa, 2008). Indeed, Fisher and Atkinson-Grosjean (2002: 461) argued that, *'The most difficult task is to negotiate and then consolidate partnerships.'* In

which case boundary attributes are likely to be very important (Fortuin & Bush, 2010). This raises issues about the attributes required, in this instance, by headteacher inspectors. As Wenger argued:

'Boundaries can create divisions and be a source of separation, fragmentation, disconnection, and misunderstanding.' (1998: 233)

Corbin et al. (2003) identified tensions in their study on numeracy co-ordinators in primary schools in the United Kingdom in the second year of the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. The tensions identified included issues around the notion of professional identity and this raises questions about headteacher inspectors.

Some leaders are successful because of a boundary crossing leadership style (Morse, 2010) and boundary crossing requires people to have dialogues with the actors of different practices and between the different perspectives they take on. Boundary crossers are simultaneously members of multiple communities (Wenger, 2000) or are in transition from one to another site (Guile & Young, 2003) and while they are capable of introducing elements of one site to another they therefore need to manage and integrate multiple, divergent discourses and practices across boundaries (Walker & Nocon, 2007). This also raises questions about headteacher inspectors whose inspection work may involve differences in interpretation between themselves and schools and their headteachers, and perhaps with the other members of inspection teams.

Boundaries also define what knowledge is considered relevant (Edwards et al.: 2010) and as Wenger (1998) argued, boundaries can be areas of learning, places where perspectives meet and new possibilities arise. Kent et al. (2007: 68) argued that the crux of boundary crossing is, *'How different views of the artefact are, or are not, co-ordinated.'*

A brief exploration of the role of brokering, the use of boundary objects and the potential for learning are other relevant aspects of boundary crossing, and so these issues are each considered in turn.

Brokering

Brokering is an extension of the act of boundary crossing, where some people introduce into one practice elements of another practice (Wenger, 1998; Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Wenger assumed that a broker participates in each community and acts as a translator able to align the perspectives and develop links between them (McCormick et al.: 2010). Brokering involves participation and reification (Wenger, 1998) and it makes something that is abstract more concrete or real. As such it is an interpretative practice and Wenger used this meaning in the context of his work on communities of practice which, he argued, emerged through the, '*sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise*' (p. 45).

McCormick et al. make a point about brokering that raises issues for headteacher inspectors:

'For a school looking to keep its practice at the forefront, brokers are clearly a must.' (2010: 97)

Brokering requires enough legitimacy to influence the development of a practice. It addresses conflicting interests. Boundary brokers build bridges between both worlds and are the means for connecting both sides (Wenger 1998; Fisher & Atkinson-Grosjean, 2002). McCormick & Carmichael also raise an issue for headteacher inspectors, when they argued that brokering takes place when:

'A participant from one community of practice enters another and persuades the latter community to adapt an interpretation of a procedure from the former community.' (2005: 47)

The brokering process involves translation, co-ordination and alignment between perspectives (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011) and the act of brokering enables individuals to negotiate and combine ingredients from different contexts to achieve hybrid situations (Engeström et al.: 1995). Burt (2005) argued that brokers are, '*opinion leaders*' who have a, '*vision advantage*' likely to have creative ideas that emerge from selecting and synthesising across, '*structural holes*'.

Wenger identified various forms of brokering (1998: 235): boundary spanners, who take care of one specific boundary over time; boundary roamers, who move from place to place creating connections and moving knowledge; boundary outposts, who bring back news and explore new territories; and brokering pairs dependent upon personal relationships between two people. All raise questions about headteachers who cross boundaries to inspect.

However, while effective brokering is mutually beneficial to all participants it is not without its tensions (Hakkarainen et al.: 2004). Indeed, Corbin et al. (2003) argued that Wenger's concept of brokering helped them to theorise tensions in the practices of the Numeracy Co-ordinators who broker change. '*particularly concerns about ambivalence and liminality*' (2003: 348). They reminded us that Wenger's conceptualisation presumed a two way flow at the boundaries with, '*possibilities for identities, including productive and well as conflictual engagements*' (2003: 347). Corbin et al. also identified tensions in relation to, '*discourse and identity*' (2003: 344).

The views of some commentators (Corbin et al.: 2003; Hakkarainen et al.; 2004; Wenger, 1998) suggest that boundary crossing individuals run the risk of not being accepted (Edwards et al.: 2010). Understanding this may help to throw light on any tensions which surround the boundary that headteacher inspectors cross, including the potential for marginalisation. Wenger (1998) also argued that there is a risk with boundary practice since people develop a practice of crossing a boundary effectively but create their own boundary, preventing them as functioning as brokers.

Boundary objects are another key aspect of boundaries since all inspectors, including headteacher inspectors, use the inspection artefacts and my view is that these documents may legitimately be considered as boundary objects.

Boundary objects

Objects that cross boundaries are often referred to as boundary objects, a term introduced by Star (1989) and Star and Griesemer (1989). They are commonly understood to be:

'Objects that inhabit both several communities of practice and satisfy the informational requirements of each of them.' (Bowker & Star, 1999: 297)

Boundary objects are the reified form of the knowledge of a practice. They mediate two or more systems (Star, 1989) and as intermediaries boundary objects can be artefacts such as documents. While inhabiting intersecting social worlds they satisfy the specific informational requirements and practices of each. Boundary objects can serve as an interface between different social worlds and entities (Emad & Roth, 2009). Kent et al. argued that:

'Boundary objects have an explicit role to facilitate boundary crossing between various communities, communicating across different perspectives, and facilitating shared decision-making.' (2007: 67)

In this way boundary objects sit on the boundary between the different domains (Star & Griesemer, 1989) and there they fulfil a bridging function as well as providing an anchor for meaning within each domain (Simpson & Carroll, 2008). Wenger saw boundary objects as a way to analyse the heterogeneous nature of knowledge at workplaces arguing that some objects:

'Find their value, not just as artefacts of one practice, but mostly to the extent that they support connections between different practices.'
(1998: 236)

Because boundary objects provide a common frame of reference for communication and practice their use is important in generating new knowledge across boundaries (Carlile, 2002 & 2004). Using an artefact as a boundary object requires processes of translation and this raises the issue of whether headteacher inspectors do this as boundary crossers.

Oswick and Robertson (2002) argued that boundary objects are often subject to political processes, noting that they have a mediating role for contrasting goals and may reinforce power structures and hierarchies. This too raises a point about the inspection documents used by headteacher inspectors, especially since they may lead to negative inspection judgements.

The learning potential of boundaries is considered next since one of the issues to be considered is what headteachers learn by inspecting.

Learning at the boundary

Akkerman and Bakker saw the learning potential of boundary crossing. Their interpretation of learning includes:

'New understandings, identity development, change of practices and institutional development.' (2011: 142)

One of the most valuable forms of learning for headteachers is the learning from interacting with colleagues, including colleagues in other schools (Little, 1990). Wenger (1998) viewed boundaries as the locus for the production of new knowledge. Citing Engeström et al. (1995) and Wenger (2000), Akkerman argued that:

'In several learning theories it is claimed that boundaries are resources for learning.' (2011a: 2)

Akkerman also argued:

“Many educational scholars have stressed the learning potential of boundary crossing...a boundary is not a static and predefined distinction...conceptual openness turns the notion of boundary into an active concept...when there is potential for learning.” (2011b: pp. 21-22)

With reference to brokering McCormick et al. argued that, in education:

‘Brokers and affiliation networks, in particular, offer useful ways of thinking about knowledge creation and sharing.’ (2010: 235)

This is a point to bear in mind when I come consider the concept of system leadership. In the meantime I briefly review Akkerman and Bakker’s (2011) four mechanisms of learning at the boundary since they help to contextualise the headteachers’ engagement as inspectors.

The first mechanism is a process of identification or *‘legitimizing coexistence’* (2011: 143) where the nature of practices is redefined in light of one another. Akkerman and Bakker cite Bogenrieder and van Balaan (2007) who describe how people, when working simultaneously in different organisations have to:

‘Consider the interference between their multiple participations to be able to pursue each one and be accepted in this multiple membership by others in the respective groups.’ (2011: 143)

Akkerman and Bakker argued that the learning potential resides in a renewed sense-making of different practices and related identities.

The second mechanism to describe learning at the boundary identified by Akkerman and Bakker, co-ordination, is relevant in the context of using boundary objects as mediating artefacts. They argue that co-ordination requires, ‘a

communicative connection' (2011: 144) which can be supported by boundary objects shared by multiple parties. It requires, '*efforts of translation*' (p.144) between the different worlds. Coordination also entails, '*enhancing boundary permeability*' (2011:144) where actions and interactions run smoothly, without cost or choice.

Akkerman and Bakker identified a third mechanism, reflection, which illustrates the potential for boundary crossing. This is the process of coming to realize and explicate the differences between practices and, '*to learn something new about their own and others' practices*' (2011: 144-145). Reflection is learning to look differently at one practice by taking on the perspective of the other practice. Akkerman and Bakker argued that:

'A boundary creates a possibility to look at oneself through the eyes of other worlds.' (2011: 145)

Boland and Tenkasis (1995) refer to this act as perspective taking and argued that boundary objects in knowledge intensive organisations are artefacts that can serve as a perspective-taking experience. This point is helpful since my view is that inspection is a knowledge-based activity.

Transformation is the fourth learning mechanism identified by Akkerman and Bakker. It leads to changes in practices or even the creation of new in-between practices:

'Profound changes in practices, potentially even the creation of a new, in-between practice, sometimes called a boundary practice.' (2011: 146)

Furthermore, Akkerman and Bakker argued that transformation processes consistently begin with:

'Some lack or problem that forces the intersecting worlds to seriously reconsider their current practices and the interrelations.' (2011:146)

This point is helpful too, since inspection may be viewed as just such a, '*problem*' by some, and is characterised by what many commentators identify as the dislocation between schools and inspection.

Having looked at some of the aspects of boundaries, I now wish to address the second of the theoretical concepts that underpins this study. As Gee argued:

'In today's fast changing and interconnected global world, researchers in a variety of areas have come to see identity as an important analytic tool for understanding schools and society.' (2000: 99)

Having considered the first of the two theoretical tools used, it is timely to consider the second, that of identities.

Identities

An exploration of professional identity is relevant to the study since it contributes to our understanding of headteachers who also inspect. As a starting point the section considers some meanings of the concept through the views of some commentators.

Meanings

Giddens (1990 & 1991) characterised identity as conscious, arguing that self-identity is a means by which individuals construct a personal narrative which allows them to understand themselves as in control of their lives. Simply put, identity is the mapping of our place in the human world, both as individuals and as members of collectives (Jenkins, 2008).

Hargreaves (1998) argued that the multiple concept of identity encompasses moral, emotional and political dimensions. Reio (2005) argued that educational reform influences teacher identity and this influences their emotional reactions, which in turn impact on risk-taking behaviour and their learning. I am seeking to make a contribution to this debate, since underpinning this study is the headteachers' sense of identity as they deal with the possible, perhaps inevitable, challenges posed when they take on the role and ritual of school inspector while also in headship. As Fineman argued, identity:

'Is a process of holding and resolving different social-emotional narratives about who we are, who we were, and who we wish to be.' (2008: 5)

Just as teachers' moral purposes are rooted in their identity (Lasky, 2005) my presumption is that each headteacher who inspects has identities that are negotiated in the course of their biography (Vähäsantanen et al. 2008) and they more or less harmonise (Beijaard et al. 2004). This raises issues about the headteachers sampled for this research and is helpful since, as Beijaard argued:

'More attention needs to be paid to...the role of the context in professional identity formation.' (2004: 107)

Identity includes an individual's professional philosophy and their public actions (Gee, 2000) and it embodies an individual's perceptions of themselves to include their sense of belonging, values and commitment (Beijaard et al. 2004; Day et al. 2005). As such identity is a resource people use to explain, justify and make sense of themselves in relation to others and to the world at large (MacLure, 1993). We do not have just the one identity and individuals consciously pursue multiple goals and interests (Goffman, 1959). As a result, identity is both complex and dynamic, and for an individual it is:

'A matter of arguing and then redefining an identity that is socially legitimated.' (Beijaard et al.: 2004: 113)

Not only are we faced with a multiplicity of identities, but some may conflict and result in tensions (Curry-Johnson, 2001). Mishler (1999) argued that professional identity consists of many sub-identities that may conflict or not align with each other. As Jones argued:

'There would appear to be ambiguity and often discomfort, not only over who, but also, over how, to be.' (2008: 692)

Biott et al. argued that:

'Building an identity as a headteacher consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social and practice communities.'
(2001: 397)

In common with other professionals, headteacher inspectors' identities are formed through activities because they give a sense of meaning and commitment to them (Kirpal, 2004). Headteachers who inspect operate across a range of different contexts or fields (Bourdieu, 1984) and operating in these different fields may draw from us a range of identities as we position ourselves according to the fields of operation. Urrieta (2007) argued that identity is how people come to understand themselves and how they come to figure out who they are through the worlds they participate in, and how they relate to others within and outside these worlds.

Integral to the concept of identity are notions of power, since practices which produce meaning involve relations of power. Individuals, in this case headteachers, can neither be free from, nor operate outside of, the exercise of power (Foucault, 1990). For Wenger (1998) identity is not only a locus of social power to belong and to be a certain person, but also the vulnerability of being part of communities, contributing to defining who we are and what has a hold on us. Wenger explored how identity is formed, and he determined it to be a negotiated, social and learning process. Beijgaard et al. found that in the studies they reviewed, in their research on teachers' professional identity, most of the respondents saw identity as:

'An ongoing process of integration of the 'personal' and 'professional' sides of becoming a teacher.' (2004: 113)

Sachs (2001; 2003a; 2003b) identified two types of teachers' identity and my premise is that in all but the rarest of instances, headteachers are teachers first and foremost. The first of Sach's meanings, managerial and entrepreneurial, is driven by engagement with the discourses of standardisation and accountability. Sach's second meaning, professional learning, is driven by engagement through participation in communities, collaboration and co-operation through professional development and organisational relationships. These meanings raise questions for headteacher inspectors.

My presumption is that when working as an inspector, on a contract basis and not an employee of Ofsted, headteacher inspectors develop a professional identity. This raises the question about how this motivates them and secures their retention, as well as improving their performance and job satisfaction (Baxter, 2011b).

Indeed, Beijaard et al. argued that it is important to pay attention to the personal part of professional identity since if there is a conflict and the professional and personal are too far removed, it can lead to friction. For example, what is relevant to the profession may conflict with what in this case headteacher inspectors, *'personally desire and experience as good'* (2004: 109). This too raises questions for the respondents.

Another aspect of identity, identity in practice, is considered next.

Identity in practice

Headteachers' identity is formed through activities (Kirpal, 2004) and the specific activity that forms the core of this study is their engagement in the practice of

inspection. Bruin et al. argued (2007: 84), '*The concept of practice provides a way to theorize "knowing at work".*'

Wenger's (1998) social ecology of identity is, I suggest, pertinent to the debate about the changing roles of headteachers, and those amongst them who inspect. He argued that practice is always social practice and he acknowledged the important role of the social, historical and structural contexts in which practice take place. Wenger's constructivist view of identity formation has the role of community as an integral part. Wenger argued that there is a close connection between identity and practice, and that it is useful to consider three distinct modes of belonging: engagement, imagination and alignment (1998: 173-181), in order to make sense of identity formation and learning.

Each of these modes of belonging raises issues for headteacher inspectors and it is timely to pause briefly to reflect on their meanings.

Wenger argued that the first mode of belonging, engagement, is an, '*active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning*' (1998: 173). It is experienced as tacit collegueship or unspoken practices of collaboration, and this involves interaction, practices, relationships, and shared histories of learning.

The second mode of belonging, imagination, enables people to reflect back and project identities forward:

'The creation of images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from our own experience.' (1998: 173)

Alignment, the third mode of belonging, enables individuals to place their actions in a wider context and involves concepts of power:

'The coordination of our energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises.' (1998: 174)

Another point to consider is headteachers' positional (or relational) identities.

Positional or relational identity

For Holland et al. (1998) identity is a concept that combines the personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations. They argue that identities are lived in and through activity and are conceptualised as they develop in social practice. They also argue that behaviour is mediated by senses of self, constructed through the mediation of powerful discourses and their artefacts. This raises issues for headteachers who inspect since my view is that Ofsted and their artefacts represent a powerful discourse.

Holland et al. (1998) argued that the rituals of practice transform the individual's image of him/herself and his/her identity and they talk of positional or relational identity. This is how one identifies one's position relative to others, mediated through the way one feels comfortable or constrained. This enables people to develop knowledge in the context of their figured worlds. Again, this concept raises questions about headteacher inspectors who work as members of inspection teams.

Working from Bourdieu's (1977b) theory of culture in practice, Holland et al. (1998) described identity in practice where, they argued, people construct their identities within contexts of figured worlds and the next section gives a little more detail about this concept.

Figured worlds

Holland et al.'s (1998) figured worlds have four characteristics, and provide useful reference points for this study.

The first characteristic of figured worlds is that they are cultural phenomena to which people are recruited or into which people enter, and that develop through the

work of their participants. The second characteristic of figured worlds is that they function as contexts of meaning within which social encounters have significance and people's positions matter. Activities relevant to these worlds take meaning from them and are situated in particular times and places. The third characteristic of figured worlds is that they are socially organised and reproduced, and people are sorted and learn to relate to each other in different ways. The fourth characteristic is that figured worlds distribute people by relating them to landscapes of action. Activities related to the worlds are populated by familiar social types and host to individual senses of self.

Urrieta Jr. argued that figured worlds are, '*intimately tied to identity*' (2007: 107). As Holland et al. argue, these ways of interacting become almost like '*roles*' (1998: 41) but not in a static sense. Urrieta Jr. also argued that:

'The significance of figured worlds is that they are recreated by work, often contentious work, with others; thus the importance of activity, not just in a restricted number of figured worlds but across landscapes of actions.'
(2007: 109)

This also raises issues for headteachers who also inspect given the often contentious nature of the work.

The next section returns to the concept of learning since it is integral to the formation of identity including the identity of headteacher inspectors. They clearly have knowledge of their own organisation (school) and of headship, and also of inspection, but learning is much more than the acquisition of factual knowledge or information.

Learning

Sole and Edmondson (2002) argued that contextual elements shape how individuals learn and how they acquire knowledge and competence, and that a

practice-based perspective emphasises the collective, situated and provisional nature of knowledge. Wenger argued that:

'Knowing, learning and sharing knowledge are not abstract things we do for their own sake.' (1998: 223)

As such learning transforms who we are and what we can do, and it is an experience of identity involving the process of transforming knowledge in a context. Knowledge builds up over time and people develop knowledge that is valuable to an organisation (Yanow, 2004). Blackler (1995) argued that knowledge should not be conceived as a timeless body of truth that experts have internalized and which organisations harness. He argued that people simply cannot know everything there is to know about the nature of their craft. Knowing and doing are linked to social relations and developed through shared practice (Swan et al.: 2002).

It is useful to recognise a distinction between explicit knowledge which is objective, generally applicable and publicly available in systematic, propositional language, and tacit knowledge which is subjective and context specific and not readily communicated other than by demonstration (Hegarty, 2000). Nonaka (1994) argued that the continuous dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge leads to organisational knowledge. While new knowledge is developed by individuals, organisations play a critical role in articulating and amplifying that knowledge. Giddens (1991) argued that in the postmodern information age we use our reflective resources of knowledge, judgement and morality to act capably. A few years later Hargreaves (1996) argued that the social geography of knowledge was undergoing a profound reconfiguration, where the free flow of information means that spatial distinctions are fast collapsing. For the first time schools were no longer clearly bounded systems, and nor were they locked in insulated spaces. The documents underpinning school inspection, for example, are in the public domain. As Bruni et al. (2007: 89) argued, *'Knowledge resides not only in humans and rules, but also in artefacts.'*

These changes support the context of the study, where knowledge is situated and progressively developed through activity (Brown et al. 1989). My argument is that this reflects inspection practice where inspectors develop their knowledge of applying the inspection rubric as team inspectors, and then possibly as lead inspectors. As Bogenrieder and van Baalen argued:

'Many authors have pointed to the importance of multi-membership for knowledge sharing across communities and teams.' (2007: 579)

Situated knowledge

Brown et al. (1989) argued that knowledge is situated, being in part a product of the activity, context and culture in which it is developed and used. In their work on situated learning, Lave and Wenger (1991) placed emphasis on the whole person and viewed agent, activity and world as mutually constitutive. They argued that learning is a process of participation in communities of practice. At first participation is legitimately peripheral and then it increases gradually in engagement and complexity. They argued that situated learning reflects how newcomers are inducted into socially enduring and complex activities and this raises issues about headteacher inspectors.

As distilled in Lave and Wenger (1991) and popularised by others such as Brown and Duguid (1991) situated learning theory has emerged as an alternative to cognitive perspectives on learning, focusing as it does on how learning is embedded in power relations. Fox (2000) argued that situated learning draws attention to learning as participation in everyday activities through social interaction in shared practices, and knowing is a situated activity (Bruni et al.: 2007).

The construct of situated knowledge, or knowledge grounded in site-specific work practice, plays a critical role in dispersed team learning (Sole & Edmondson, 2002). I suggest this is the case for every inspection event since each takes place on a specific school site, and has explicit beginning and end times. Contu and Wilmott (2003) argued that the concept of situated learning has emerged as a

possible vehicle for revitalizing the understanding of how knowledge is developed and organized within workplaces.

Handley et al. (2006) argued that situated learning theory offers a critique of cognitivist theories of learning by emphasizing the relational aspects of learning. This is because situated learning acknowledges the processes of knowledge formation and sharing as integral to everyday work practices, and impacts on identity formation.

The last two sections of the chapter draw out two concepts that help to further set the context for the study, capture and sameness.

Capture

Taking the meaning to be capture by schools, Boyne et al. argued that:

'Capture occurs if inspectors become too close to the inspected and the capacity for independent judgement is undermined or lost.' (2002: 1206)

Capture is most likely to occur when the inspectors are drawn from the same professional group as the inspected, which is why the concept raises issues about headteachers who inspect. The argument is that if inspectors are not insiders it is likely that the level of formality is greater, the required relational distance is maintained and judgements tougher (Hood et al.: 1999). Relational distance is associated with fewer visits and Hood et al. (1999) argued that outsiders tend to be tougher inspectors and achieve the required relational distance. This raises questions about the judgements made by headteachers who inspect, including in comparison to inspectors who are not practitioners. Boyne et al. (2002) also argued that capture is also likely to occur when there is a regular and long-term relationship between specific people in the inspectorate and the organisations that they visit.

The extension of the capture argument is that while outsiders are more likely not to become too close to those inspected they are most in danger of alienating them (Boyne et al.: 2002), which is also relevant to the inspection context.

The alternate meaning of capture is that of the headteacher inspector being captured by Ofsted and this too raises questions about the subjects of the study. Here, Courtney's argument that, '*school leaders' identities are invested in the norms with which they attempt to comply*' (2014:10), is useful to bear in mind since he argued that, '*compliance with an unstable template is problematic*' (2014:10). Courtney adds that the misrecognition of their own compliance (Bourdieu, 2000) is integral to post-panopticism where, '*the subject's sense of self relies on the pretence of normative stability*' (2014: 11).

Sameness

Brubaker & Cooper (2000) argued that as a phenomenon, identity denotes a fundamental and consequential sameness among members of a group. This sameness is expected to manifest itself in solidarity, in shared dispositions or in collective action. This raises questions about the headteachers who, by inspecting, seem to buy into the inspection discourse. The issue is whether or not they see themselves as a distinct sub-group, or community, within the workforce of inspectors. I acknowledge that I will not be accessing the perspectives of headteachers who do not inspect, or other inspectors, to find out if they see headteacher inspectors as a distinct sub-group.

2.5. Chapter summary

This chapter has sought to establish a framework for the study by exploring the key ideas that informed the research: the recent developments within the English education system, the debates about school inspection, headteachers' changing roles, and the developing concept of system leadership, boundary practices and identity.

The chapter has focussed on those aspects of these concepts that I judge to be of particular relevance to the thesis: the re-definition of school leadership and the importance of system leadership. It has considered the characteristics typically associated with system leaders and the roles they currently hold.

In looking at the concept of boundaries, the chapter has reviewed communities of practice, boundary crossing, brokering, the use of boundary objects and learning at the boundary. In considering the formation of identity in this fast changing environment the chapter has reviewed its meaning, identity in practice, positional or relational identity, the notion of figured worlds, the process of learning, situated knowledge, capture and sameness. The reason for this approach is that by the end of the study I hope to shed light on how headteachers who inspect manage the crossing of the boundary that spans headship and inspection, and how their identity might then be described.

At the same time, the chapter has sought to lay the groundwork for what has emerged as a key argument which is that by inspecting, headteachers might be considered as system leaders within the English education system if not now, then in the future.

My view is that their potential is overlooked and under-used at the present time. As Wenger argued:

'Developing the boundary infrastructure of a social learning system means paying attention to people who act as brokers...are they falling through the cracks?' (1998: 236)

The next chapter explains how I set about the fieldwork.

Chapter 3

Methodology and methods

3.1. Introduction to the chapter

This chapter is about research design and it sets out my choice of research methodology (qualitative) and method (interview). It begins with the reasoning behind my choices given the research aim, objectives and questions. It then reviews the ethical issues I considered throughout the research process, followed by a description of approaches to interviewing and my role as interviewer. Next, the chapter gives details of the sample of headteacher inspectors, how I set about the interviews, and how I recorded, transcribed and analysed the data. The chapter ends by setting out what I see as the study's limitations.

The decision to focus on headteachers who inspect led me to the literatures on boundaries and identity. My improvement in conceptualising was continuous and latterly I looked at the literature on system leadership. All three literatures (boundaries, identity and system leadership) as set out in the previous chapter helped to give order to the patterns contained in the emerging data (Layder, 1998).

The first section explains my use of a qualitative approach in light of the research aim, objectives and questions.

3.2. Issues considered when choosing a qualitative methodology

The aim of the research, to develop and understanding of headteachers who also inspect, lent itself to a methodology that does not make use of data, but rather a methodology that is able to give an understanding of the complex world of experience (inspection) from the point of view of those who live it (Scwandt, 1998). The methodology chosen needed to support me in my attempt to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people (headteacher inspectors) bring to them and in context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994 & 2005; Leininger, 1992).

I sought to explore how the professional practices of headteacher inspectors change as a result of their inspection work, and this will invariably vary. At the same time I wanted to try to understand how the headteachers characterise their relationships with other inspectors, the teachers and headteachers of the schools they inspect, and of their own schools.

The underpinning paradigm of the study is constructivist where social phenomena (inspection) are experienced by social actors (headteachers who inspect) through social interaction (inspection teams and staff of the inspected schools). The qualitative methodology is well suited to addressing these goals. The next section offers a rationale for the choice of methodology.

The qualitative methodology

Qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities, processes and meanings that are not examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. This methodology provided flexibility, with a focus on an inductive approach and a high level of researcher involvement. There were several factors to be considered when deciding to engage in qualitative research: its ability or potential ability to do justice to the complexities of headteachers who also inspect, with an emphasis on explaining their perspectives; the premise that reality is not objective nor given, but rather that it is a social construct and each individual headteacher's perspectives are valid; text is the material upon which my interpretation would be based; and my role as researcher (Flick, 1998).

Qualitative researchers often examine experiences from the perspective of the individuals who experience the phenomenon, as in this case, and since qualitative research is not as prescriptive as quantitative research the precise use of the different qualitative techniques and instruments depends on the stance of the researcher, and on how the researcher chooses to use them. The indices for making decisions about reliability and validity, sample size and so forth are not

delineated with statistical procedures that give a precise numerical value (Morse, 1999c).

Qualitative methods use the subjective view of participants and the sample is often small, in this instance, 12 headteacher inspectors. Because qualitative enquiry usually generates enormous amounts of data large samples are not usually feasible. Data consists of words, usually from interviews, as in this instance. The size of the sample is determined by saturation which is the point at which obtaining new information is unlikely, and there is no requirement for replication. This supports the position that while each individual is unique, patterns do exist and people tend to make sense of their experiences in similar ways. The purpose of quality research is:

'Not to measure something but rather to understand the meaning of phenomena in context.' (Leininger, 1992: 401)

From the outset I assumed there would be professional differences between the headteachers, and that people construct meaning in relation to the world in which they live. Each reality is unique (Thomson & Walker, 1998).

The qualitative paradigm suits the research aim and objectives as well as the questions since it is an attempt to make sense of phenomena (inspection) in terms of the meanings people (headteachers who inspect) bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It was my understanding therefore that I would encounter a variety of constructed realities because qualitative research can provide a view of reality as experienced by some subjects who know some things about the phenomena. I was interested in the interviewees' work as headteachers who also inspect, rather than their work as headteachers.

I did not attempt to divorce myself from what I am and from what I know, and was mindful of Strauss (1987) urging the researcher to mine his or her own

experience. I have been inspecting for a number of years and this gives me some insight into the world of the headteachers when they inspect, and while I know something about inspection and inspecting I know little about headship. I did not begin the project with a preconceived theory in mind but allowed the theory to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1988) acknowledging that quality research is value-laden (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Over time I applied aspects of the theories of identity, boundaries, and system leadership. This meant that the approach was adaptive (Layder, 1998). I had in mind that the most difficult skill is, *'the ability to see what is in the data'* (Davie, 1996: 454).

Thompson and Walker (1998) argued that a researcher has questions about events or experiences of which little is known. Often in qualitative research the researcher asks less specific questions, in contrast to the norm in quantitative research, where the research questions are often more exact. However, I acknowledge that the general areas of questioning took interviewees down the broad paths I wished to explore and which were driven by the research aim and objectives.

The purposes of qualitative research are not directed toward producing generalisations of findings from large samples (Leininger, 1992) and I sought to explore the experiences of 12 headteachers. As such I examined phenomena that may be characteristic of particular individuals or groups, in this case headteachers who also inspect, whilst accepting that the sample is not necessarily representative of all headteachers who inspect. In seeking validity and how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them (Creswell, 2000; Schwandt, 1997) I took an interpretivist stance (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and sought their individual views on a synopsis of my findings.

One of the 12 complete interview transcripts is set out as appendix [iv] in order to illustrate the format of the interviews, and the richness of the data.

I did not interview the headteachers for a second time for two reasons: first, the amount of data from the one interview, 80,000 or so words, is considerable and is rich in content; and second, within a relatively short period of time following the first interviews a number of the headteachers retired from headship, and so while some continued to inspect they did not meet the criteria of being serving practitioners. Now that time has passed and inspection itself has changed, it would be interesting to interview the same headteachers and others, with a different set of questions, including exploring the concept of system leadership.

In terms of the study's trustworthiness, its validity may be viewed as the extent to which the account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers (Hamersley, 1990). It is not a single or fixed concept, but is an interpretative and subjective understanding which leads towards relativism rather than truth. Researchers describe and interpret differently what people see and there is no such thing as the one and only truth. However, research is credible when the descriptions or interpretations presented are recognised immediately by people who have had that experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

My analysis of the data involved conceptualisation of text through the transcripts, and was based on my interpretation of how the headteachers defined their situation and revealed their perceptions. There are potential problems of bias in deriving coding categories and interpretations and these involve the consistency with which instances are assigned to a code and category (Barbour, 1998). This has implications for dependability. For instance, a different researcher at a different point in time might highlight different aspects of the data gathered and so arrive at a different analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I exercised due diligence, closely supported by my two supervisors who probed and prompted my interpretation of the data throughout my analysis of it.

Nonetheless, total objectivity is not possible since there is no protection against self-delusion whatever forms the research takes, let alone the presentation of

unreliable or invalid conclusions. It is impossible to eliminate my opinions and values but it was important for me to keep an open mind, be aware of the potential of bias and not allow it to distort the study's findings. In my interpretation of the data I strove for authenticity and to be fair to the personal constructions of the headteachers.

The final paragraphs of this section offer a more specific rationale for the research methodology allied to the research objectives and questions.

The research objectives

One of the study's objectives was to set out to find out why headteachers cross a boundary and take on the role of school inspector, and what they learn from it. Two of the research objectives are about the perceptions of twelve headteachers who inspect schools. The study sought to explore their perceptions of their work as inspectors and interviews seemed to be the most appropriate tool for this. . From the outset an interview with each, focussing on the individual within a broad framework of questions, seemed to be the most fruitful way forward.

The research questions

The research questions all explore how headteacher inspectors construct their engagement in the inspection process. Semi-structured interviews seemed to be the most appropriate method most likely to enable me to draw out the nuances and rationales which were very individualistic.

It was only possible to explore the first question (why headteachers cross a boundary and take on the role of school inspector) by either asking them directly, either verbally or asking them through a questionnaire. There was no better way since their own voices needed to be heard. A questionnaire offering alternates might have led them too much and/or been too restrictive. This reasoning also

applied to the second question (what knowledge headteachers claim in order to take on the identity of inspector).

The third question (how headteachers construct their engagement in the inspection process) called for a more subtle approach and in practice could only be elicited through several linked questions, targeted to original responses. Semi-structured interviews are ideal for such questions. A similar point applies to the fourth research question (how the professional practices of headteacher inspectors' change as a result of their inspection work) since any number of responses needed to be accommodated, again all potentially individualistic.

The final research question (how headteachers characterise their relationships with other inspectors, the teachers and headteachers of the schools they inspect, and of their own schools, and others) called for an even more open dialogue since the potential responses could have taken me in any number of directions. This question was likely to call for a significant amount of probing.

The next section says more about the ethical approach taken.

3.3. Ethical approach

Written permission was sought and received from my then employer, one of the three inspection contractors, to use their list of inspectors from which to select my sample. I sent an invitation to each interviewee to enlist their participation in the research as set out in appendix [ii]. In the letter of invitation I explained that I was studying for a doctor of education degree at Sheffield Hallam University and that my research topic was about headteachers who are also school inspectors. I explained why it was important and set out the study's procedures and ethics. I attached an information sheet, also in appendix [ii], with the invitation where I addressed key issues through a series of questions: What is the research about? What is involved for you? What will happen to the interview transcripts? Can I

withdraw from the study? I also enclosed a consent form for the respondents to complete. This too is set out in appendix [ii].

Throughout the research process I complied fully with the university's guidelines and requirements for registration, completing and submitting the appropriate documentation in a timely manner to the research degrees sub-committee.

I viewed the interviewees as participants rather than subjects and anticipated they had an interest in the research since it is directly relevant to them. It was vital that the interviewees saw their participation as voluntary and they were selected because they experience the phenomenon of interest and were able and willing to share that with me. I took the view that the interviews should be purposeful conversations where my purpose was to gather descriptive data in the headteachers' own words so that I could develop insights into how they interpret their work as inspector. I planned for interviews to be experienced as shared dialogue and the outcomes explored qualitatively rather than quantitatively.

My findings in the form of this thesis will be in the public domain and so will be available to all headteachers and inspectors, Ofsted and the Education Select Committee. Key issues for me to consider were confidentiality and the potential consequences for the headteachers taking part. In the study a pseudonym, same gender, is used to identify interview recordings, transcripts and analysis. In my introductory letter I explained that participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, for whatever reason and without question, that participation would involve a semi-structured interview with recorded audio and that I would want to conduct the research with ethical responsibility.

I set out the study's procedures and ethics as follows: the interview would last about an hour: there would be no expense incurred by participants other than giving the time; the research would be used by me personally to inform greater knowledge about serving practitioners who inspect; if the research paper were to

be accepted for publication in the future, of for some other purpose, I would seek interviewees' permission; they would have access to me by telephone or email to raise any concerns. It was explicit that their participation was voluntary.

I take confidentiality to mean that all participants have the right to privacy and anonymity, and this is incontestable. It is vital to protect study participants such that individual identities are not linked to information provided and never publicly divulged (Polit & Beck, 2006). Consideration needed to be given to the maintenance of interview recordings and transcribed data. I might have destroyed the digital recordings but this meant an audit trail could not be conducted at a later date and I decided to keep them under secure conditions.

Subjectivity is not a cause for concern but is to be acknowledged and an asset to be exploited and empowered me to reflect on practice. I acknowledge my position as reflected by my background and attitudes, age, gender and professional experiences. I have managerial responsibilities for sixty or so additional inspectors, some of whom are headteachers. However, I ensured that I did not interview any inspector for whom I had any management responsibility, inspected with, trained or quality assured.

Qualitative research is particularly prone to bias. This is any systematic deviation from validity or some deformation of research practice that produces such deviation (Hammersley & Gomm, 1997). This is invariably because the researcher is integral to the research. Bias is a tendency on the part of the researcher to collect data and/or to interpret and present it in such a way as to favour false results that are in line with their pre-judgements and/or beliefs. This may consist of a positive tendency towards a particular but false conclusion or the exclusion from consideration of possible conclusions that happens to include the truth. Bias can imply an unequivocal reality exists which can be distorted by subjective interpretation (Finlay, 1998). This raises the issue about the trustworthiness of the study's findings.

However, I take the alternate view which is that multiple realities exist rather than a single and unequivocal reality. Bias is generally seen as a negative feature and something that can and should be avoided and it was something I reflected on throughout, from the selection of the sample, into the interviews and then in my interpretation of the data. My reflective view is that the content of the interviews is of a similar nature to the content of normal professional conversations between two people who both engage in inspections.

Ethical issues needed to be considered concerning potentially negative findings because of my employed position and how such findings might be received and perceived by my employer, and by Ofsted. The appropriate and principled strategy is to report findings without fear or favour, much like inspection. In the event several critical points did emerge and to ensure the integrity of the research these critical reflections are included in the chapters that follow since it is my view that the policy makers need to be aware of them.

At the outset of my research the Head of Inspection Services, on behalf of my then employer, was supportive of my EdD studies, but since this individual's retirement I have not communicated with any person within the organisation about the research. As a home-based worker living 120 miles from the office of my employer, the routine means of communication was by email and telephone. Communication with the headteachers was by secure email or telephone, the accepted means of communication between the contractors and the inspector workforce. The email system is approved by Ofsted, and meets the government's security requirements.

High reliability in qualitative research is associated with low-inference descriptors (Seale, 1999) and this involves recording observations in terms that are as concrete as possible. I used a digital recorder and transcribed the verbatim comments personally on to a laptop computer which is encrypted and complies with the government's data security requirements. In this way the discussions were recorded without the possibility of uncertainty, preferable to any

reconstruction of the general sense of what the interviewees said. This minimised the potential for allowing my personal perspectives to influence the reporting. The verbatim transcripts of the interviews are available, as are the audio recordings, and in the next section I say more about how I approached the interviews.

3.4. Approaches to interviewing

Qualitative enquiry generates a significant amount of verbal data and so large samples are not usually feasible and I adopted this approach since this study does not seek to measure something. Rather, it seeks to provide an account of the experiences of headteachers who inspect. The qualitative paradigm suggests that although each individual is unique, patterns do exist and people tend to make sense of their experiences in similar ways. Because of this I decided interviewing was the most effective means of achieving my objectives and I shall now explain my reasoning.

Interviewing is well suited to the exploration of attitudes, values, beliefs and motives (Richardson et al.: 1965; Smith, 1975), all of which are pivotal to this study. Interviews are conducted either face-to-face or by telephone and I elected for the former because I much prefer face-to-face communications. I could have used questionnaires which would have been more effective in terms of time and expense, but I considered they might have led the interviewees too much or responses may have been too vague. While interviewing is subject to similar problems I think it is a more flexible and powerful tool to capture the voices and the ways people make meaning of their experience (Rabionet, 2011). The personal interview as the method for data collection also has the potential to overcome the poor response rates of a questionnaire survey (Austin, 1981). Essentially, we cannot observe how people have organised the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on and we have to ask them about this (Patton, 1990).

I decided to interview since it would allow me some insight into the other person's perspective and would give me access to personal experience, as well as the flexibility to respond to and probe people's accounts (Hargreaves, 2005). This is well evidenced in one of the interviewee's comments about what it is like to go into another school as an inspector. It was something that I had not expected since I have been inspecting for a long time, more or less every week and have no doubt become rather accustomed to it, and also I am not a headteacher. The interviewee's comment, like so many others, would not I suggest have been captured in any way other than through an interview, or one that is structured. The point he made, about conduct, became a recurring theme in the interviews. The headteacher said:

'How to conduct yourself on an inspection. Because that's a really difficult thing to do. Walk into somebody else's school with that hat on (an inspector)...as a head is a very, very stressful thing to do. Forget the technical skills...I think it's the people.'

My belief that differing perceptions would be held meant that it was important for me not to constrain the responses of the headteachers and I needed to make choices about the degree of structure and control. Interviewing also means that respondents are unable to receive assistance from others while formulating a response (Bailey, 1987).

I selected a semi-structured interview because I was able to narrow down some topics, and while there were some specific ones I wished to cover, I also wanted to hear the headteachers' stories. I decided not to use a structured interview where the order and sequence of the questions are carefully planned and no deviations are made. A formal structure with an agenda of questions which were not to be strayed from would not allow me to explore and develop a respondent's views. Another alternative, unstructured interview, with a range of open-ended questions

(Minichiello, 1990) had the risk of not eliciting themes related to the research questions.

Semi-structured interviews are well suited for the exploration of the respondent's perceptions and opinions. In this way the use of semi-structured interviews allowed the main questions to be explored and enabled replies to be clarified and understanding to be deepened through follow up questions. Semi-structured interviews require a degree of structure in their implementation. This was achieved by constructing an interview schedule so that all interviewees received questions in common, with a degree of flexibility to maximise use of the opportunities offered to enrich the data (Kvale, 1996).

Such an interview has a sequence of themes to be covered as well as suggested questions (Kvale, 1996). At the same time there is openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given by the respondent. While there was no defined order of the questions there was a need to ensure the key issues were addressed.

All respondents were encouraged to talk about their experiences through open-ended questions and the ordering of further questions was determined by their responses. In this way the use of semi-structured interviews allowed the main questions to be explored and enabled replies to be clarified and understanding to be deepened. This allowed all twelve headteachers to be asked the same questions within a flexible framework (Dearnley, 2005).

Open-ended questions enable the participants to reflect on and identify their true feelings (Warren & Karner, 2005), while probing questions help to gain insight. Probing is an invaluable tool since it allows for the clarification and exploration of interesting and relevant issues (Nay-Brock, 1984; Hutchinson & Skodal-Wilson, 1992). Probing can elicit valuable information and enables the interviewer to explore and clarify inconsistencies within interviewees' accounts (Austin, 1981;

Bailey, 1987). Probing also maximises the potential for interactive opportunities between the respondent and the interviewer (Patton, 1990).

It was important to maintain the flow of the interviews, with care taken to avoid leading questions, since interviewee's expectations can affect their response (Moser & Kalton, 1979). Questions needed to be planned well, especially to avoid any discomfort on the part of the respondents, and also to ensure that I was familiar with them (Treece & Treece, 1986). I elected to let the headteachers have sight of the areas of questioning before meeting them so that they had the opportunity for critical reflection and to prepare. I chose to do this because I wanted to get as much from the interviews as possible and this is my preferred open style.

There was a need to approach issues delicately, especially when interviewing colleagues, which the headteachers effectively are since we all inspect. Some of the interviewees asked me questions and it is acceptable for an interviewer to share information about themselves and their families, but there needs to be care taken to prevent this leading to a loss of focus (Oakley, 1981; Devault, 1990). The interview should not degenerate into a chat, but richer data was possible through judicious use of self-disclosure on both sides.

People agree to participate in research projects for a number of reasons. Altruism on the part of the respondent towards the interviewer or emotional satisfaction can influence the decision to participate (Nay-Brock, 1984). A research interview may provide the only opportunity for the participant to discuss the topic (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999) and this can provoke strong feelings. In the event, the interviewees, as headteachers, are well versed in such settings.

It was important for me to remember that this might be the first time that someone has listened to this particular story, and I found this to be the case. This may be one reason for the apparent willingness of the headteachers to participate

and engage with me, and for the enthusiasm shown. This helped to establish a sense of rapport and reduced the risk of socially desirable answers, although no one can know exactly what someone else means (Charon, 1989) since sometimes we mean one thing and others take our communication to mean something else. To avoid this I tried to avoid making, indicating or inferring evaluative comments about what the headteachers meant. I was mindful of Jick's (1979) acknowledgement that anecdote is important because it reflects how individuals create representations of areas in which they are experiencing cognitive dissonance or gaps in their identities which they are coming to terms with (Baldwin, 2008).

Interviews need to be scheduled in advance at a designated time in a location normally outside everyday events, and they usually last from 30 minutes to several hours (Whiting, 2008). My interviews were all planned in advance, at a suitable location for the headteachers, and were mostly an hour or so in length.

3.5. My role as interviewer

Through the research I make the case for more headteachers to inspect and as a result my role in inspection will change significantly, and in due course may cease due to Ofsted's activities to recruit more headteachers. However, I did not want to make a case for something, select and arrange the data accordingly. I simply want to tell a story. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that my decisions are subjective and that no two researchers will come up with the same data even if they have investigated the same research questions, at the same time and with the same methods (Achenbaum, 2001).

I am aware that there is an inevitable power imbalance in the interview since the interviewer controls the issues discussed (May, 1993) and the interviews were dependent to some extent on my input as the researcher. As Biott et al. acknowledged in their interviews with 12 school leaders:

'The stories told by the headteachers are shaped by the relationships between the interviewer and the interviewee. For instance the way the interviewer acts, questions and responds will influence the ways headteachers give their accounts of experience.' (2015: 398)

This means that the headteachers may have responded differently to a different interviewer. At the same time I asked certain questions and not others and my findings reflect this. I am also conscious that my persona as researcher may also have affected the interpretation of data. This is because I am not able to divorce myself from what I am or from what I know (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). My interests and political perspective will have affected the research questions as well as the methodological approach (Pyett, 2003; Diefenbach, 2009). Since the research was undertaken within the general remit of my own institution (Hull, 1985) it had potential pitfalls in terms of subjectivity (Cresswell, 1998).

As an insider-researcher I was mindful to maintain my commitment to the transparency of the research process and to giving voice to the participants, but this does raise the possibility of bias emerging in the study. The headteachers are independent because they are not employed by the same organisation as me. However, they are engaged on a contractual basis by the organisation and so they may have perceived me as an inside researcher, and potentially threatening. They may have wished to be seen as an enthusiastic and engaged member of the organisation, and non-participation may have been perceived as an issue for those who might not wish to engage. However, in practice none of the headteachers I approached declined or gave the slightest indication of resistance. They were all enthusiastic interviewees, and I was struck by how keen all of them were to talk about their work as inspectors.

Previous experience of interviewing may influence the way in which the interview is carried out, and the influences are a two way process. The gender, status and attributes of the interviewer will influence the interviewee, either consciously or

sub-consciously. I was mindful that as a researcher I may want to hear certain things and so lead the respondent. Similarly, I was aware that data can be spoiled by the interviewees reacting to being asked about certain issues (Diefenbach, 2009) and that they can follow cultural scripts about how to express themselves on particular topics (Alvesson, 2003). The dialogue between me and the interviewees reflected our sensitivity to inspection practice and this made possible a secure interpretation of the phenomena, although I do acknowledge the existence of my personal biography and that the research is not value-free. These influences are not necessarily a weakness but needed to be taken into account as a factor in the analysis of the data that was generated.

At the beginning of the interview it was useful to give a time limit to provide a framework to plan a closure, and I gave thought to this (Minichiello, 1990) since it was important to finish on good terms. My aim was that both the headteachers and I should feel the discussion purposeful and meaningful. A great deal of importance is put on the relationship in a face-to-face interview and all were very positive and enjoyable experiences. I have no cause to think the interviewees did not feel valued and respected and reciprocity occurred in each of the social interactions.

3.6. The sample

I considered it vital, indeed non-negotiable, that I had no personal or professional relationship in any capacity whatsoever with those interviewed. This limited the number of headteacher inspectors available for me to sample. At the outset of my fieldwork the vast majority of serving practitioners were primary headteachers and worked as team inspectors in that phase. There were about sixty active serving practitioners working for the one contractor. I selected the interviewees from the forty or so of these with whom I had had no contact, and did not know in any professional or personal capacity. The sample was about twenty per cent (1:5) of

the total number of headteachers who were categorised as serving practitioners at the time of the fieldwork.

I based the selection from the forty or so to represent headteachers new or relatively new to inspection work as well as those with more experience, women and men headteachers from primary and secondary schools, and from different school settings in terms of their size and denomination. Location was important since I live outside the inspection contractor's region; each interview took a full day including travel, and leave was taken in all cases to facilitate this.

Eight of the interviewees were female, four were male. Ten were primary headteachers, while two were headteachers of secondary schools. It is important to note that the sample is not statistically representative.

The small number of headteachers enabled the study to sustain an in-depth focus on their lived experiences as headteachers who inspect. The sample of twelve made it possible to focus on single cases so that I could investigate the relationship of a specific behaviour (inspecting) to its context (inspection) and the relationship between the individual (practitioner) and the situation (inspection) (Kvale, 1996). I did not interview inspectors who were not headteachers, or headteachers who did not inspect.

All of the headteachers worked as team inspectors, while two had led inspections in the past but no longer did so. The headteachers worked for up to twenty days a year on inspection, with one exception who worked slightly more. In practice, most inspect for between eight and 12 days a year, typical of practitioner inspectors. At the time of their interview their inspection experience as measured in inspection days ranged from ten to 70. Seven held posts in schools that were judged as good for overall effectiveness at their last inspection, four were from outstanding schools and one was from a school requiring improvement. A profile of the interviewees is set out in table 3.1 that follows.

Table 3.1**Profile of the sample**

Pseudonym, and if responded to the synopsis of findings, inspection activity	School type and size	Gender	Annual contract length	Lead inspector (LI) or Team Inspector(TI)	Inspection days completed at the time of the interview
Brenda Now retired	Primary 3-11 NOR 451	Female	20 days	LI but no longer leads	70
Frank No longer inspects	Secondary 11-18 NOR 1680	Male	20 days	TI	22
Helen Responded to the synopsis of findings	Secondary 11-16 NOR 694	Female	20 days	TI	51
Christine Responded to the synopsis of findings	Primary 4-11 NOR 189	Female	20 days	LI but no longer leads	36
Robert Responded to the synopsis of findings	Primary 3-11 NOR 730	Male	20 days	TI	43
Deborah	Primary 4-11	Female	35 days	TI	10

Responded to the synopsis of findings	NOR 112				
Maurice Responded to the synopsis of findings	Primary 7-11 NOR 238	Male	20 days	TI	31
Rose Responded to the synopsis of findings	Primary 4-11 NOR 197	Female	20 days	TI	18
Diana Responded to the synopsis of findings	Primary 3-11 NOR 275	Female	20 days	TI	26
Charles No longer inspects	Primary 4-11 NOR 522	Male	20 days	TI	41
Olive Responded to the synopsis of findings	Primary 5-11 NOR 212	Female	20 days	TI	55
Freda No longer inspects	Primary 5-11 NOR 195	Female	20 days	TI	51

3.7. Interviewing the headteachers

Locating a suitable venue to conduct the interviews is important. I gave each headteacher a choice of venue and each was conducted in a quiet, private room ensuring a comfortable environment (Burns & Grove, 2005). Most interviews took place in the headteacher's office in their school while some asked to be interviewed at their home; one respondent had a home-office in her garden. The alternatives would have been costly and involved interviewees in travelling, necessitating more time and expense on their part, and possibly making them less willing to participate. I was careful to ask the headteachers to ensure that we were not disturbed and these arrangements worked well. In their school there was a need for confidentiality and I asked for it to be arranged for visitors and telephone calls to be diverted.

The interviews took place over a six month period. In listening to the recordings of the interviews and reading the transcriptions I consider that I showed empathy, and quickly gained the confidence of the headteachers. The interviews seem natural and not that I was asking a series of pre-determined questions. Nonetheless, I valued having a structure to guide me. The timing of the interviews is also a factor when analysing responses since they took place at a point when the functions and powers of local authorities were being dismantled.

I based the questions on the research objectives: first, to create understanding of why headteachers inspect and what they learn from it; second, to explore headteachers' perceptions of their impact on inspection practice; and third, to explore headteachers' perceptions about how they engage with other inspectors and the teachers of the schools they inspect, and especially their headteachers. To help me to manage the interviews in a logical way, and to ensure that key areas were not overlooked, I located the questions within three areas: context and values, identity and role and learning and knowledge. The interview script and questions are set out in appendix iii.

At this point I want to say something about how the data was recorded and transcribed.

3.8. Recording and transcribing the data

An accurate and permanent record of the interview is vital and the literature points to audio recording above all other methods. The interview is the primary source of evidence even though the data is analysed (Kvale, 1996). While the recording confirms what was said, the words are de-contextualised, so the transcript is an invaluable aide memoir, especially to me as the researcher. The interviews, with the interviewees' permission, were recorded using a high quality digital recorder which meant I could concentrate on the words, tone, topic and dynamics (Kvale, 1996). This contributed to a relaxed atmosphere in all the interviews because I was freed from the distraction of note-taking and was able to concentrate on interacting with the participants.

The presence of any form of recording activity can influence the flow of conversation and affect what an informant is willing or not willing to say (Kvale, 1996) and I was mindful to use the recorder discreetly. Audio taping ensured a verbatim and fully accurate record, facilitating rigorous analysis. It also reduced the potential for interviewer error, recording data incorrectly or logging an answer to a question that was not asked. I also used a reflective diary (Clarke, 2006) and these measures helped me to systematise my work and supported the rigour of the research process.

The transcripts are the artificial construction from an oral to written mode of communication and it is difficult to capture the atmosphere and describe the hesitations and silences. Accuracy is important and I was mindful that the interview recording is best transcribed verbatim (Whiting, 2008). I did this myself and a one hour interview took about five hours to transcribe. This was completed within a few days following the interview, and before the next. I transcribed word

for word, checking against the written transcript, and generating more than 80,000 words of text. This was invaluable since in doing so I relived the interview and became closer to its content, permitting content and thematic analysis.

There are dilemmas about whether to record the interview using Standard English or as a literal transcript of how the interviewee speaks. I used verbatim transcripts because I wished to understand the circumstances of the participants in their own words, interpret their meanings and form conclusions that are well-rooted in the data. My interest is in the informational content of the interviews and the meanings attached to the content, and my focus was on what is said, rather than how it was said. I revisited the transcripts many times.

3.9. Analysis of the data

The aim of the data analysis was to obtain an understanding of the issues arising during the interviews, focussing on the headteachers' views, opinions, perceptions and experiences of inspecting alongside their headship. I recognise that it is not possible to carry out qualitative research that is uncontaminated by personal sympathies (Becker, 1967) but it is crucial that interpretations are accurate to the descriptions of the interviewees. I had no wish for unjustified generalisations and conclusions beyond what the data revealed.

After the initial familiarisation I elected to set the transcripts out in tabular form to support my retrieval. I used a grid system with seven columns:

Column 1: Lines of dialogue numbered for ease of reference

Column 2: The verbatim transcripts

Column 3: Codes e.g. experience, team, pride, disappointment, lazy, unfair, struggle, angry, frustration, satisfaction

Column 4: Category e.g. identity, knowledge, learning, boundary

Column 5: Memorandum (themes) e.g. identity formation, sense of community or shared identity, challenges in crossing boundary, motivation to inspect

Column 6: Explanatory notes.

These headings may be seen in the sample transcript in appendix [iv].

Once I had constructed a matrix I generated initial codes for content; I did not determine coding categories until after the interviews had concluded. Because I had digitally recorded the interviews and transcribed them I was able to consider the content of the data several times. Computer analysis can be used effectively in the qualitative paradigm but there is a downside since the computer analysis of qualitative data may distance researchers from its richness and may negatively impact the quality of the analysis (Nelson, 2008). I therefore chose not to use specialist software, preferring to immerse myself in the transcripts to get close to the data.

Codes were, where possible, formulated in the same words used by the headteachers and in line with '*in vivo*' coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Other codes were constructed through an interpretation of content and meaning. These codes were developed and refined over time. Since I have professional experience of the study topic I am reasonably sensitised to recognise key codes in the context of school inspection, but I was mindful not to block unexpected issues that arose.

Next, I identified meaningful patterns to form categories. Some topics-boundaries and identities-were of interest to me across the data set, and others emerged, some of which were not anticipated. I was then able to determine the common

themes that recurred across the different interviews. These themes were the patterns that emerged across the data sets that I considered important to describe the phenomena relating to the research questions. The themes, like the codes and categories, were refined over time, including during the writing phase as I sought to move beyond description towards conceptualising from the sample.

The main themes, which form the structure of the next chapter, after reflection, trial and error, and challenge from my supervisors became: the headteachers' experiences of being inspected; how they describe becoming an inspector and inspecting; how they describe their relations with teachers and other headteachers, and with other inspectors, governors and local authorities; what they learn by inspecting and their ambivalence, in some cases dissonance, about inspecting.

Throughout the analysis and interpretation of the data I sought an understanding of the ways in which headteacher inspectors' perspectives compare to the versions given by others, taking an inductive and contextualised account of the discourse. I acknowledge there is a degree of subjectivity in this process and I was expertly supported through what was an extensive period of reflection by the challenge offered by my two supervisors at the university.

Latterly, during the writing phase, I began to understand that what I had effectively done may be described as an adaptive approach (Layder, 1998). Towards the end of the analysis, when I realised that headteacher inspectors might have the potential to be system leaders I constructed some of my argument around that concept. This led me to somewhere between a hypothetico-deductive approach and a theory-constructing approach, reflecting the evolution of the research, which I see as one of its strengths.

Consideration needed to be given to whether the transcript should be returned to the interviewees for verification of accuracy (McNiff, 1988). One advantage of

doing so is that it increases the validity of the findings because participants are able to confirm that they said what they meant, or not, and it gives them the option to withdraw statements with which they are not comfortable. However, an interview is an artificial form of communication and we normally only hear a proportion of what is actually said, while a transcript shows it all. The concern is that participants might be surprised, even alarmed, by their scripts since speech can appear disjointed when seen in written form, and they might be distressed by this. Indeed, some participants may experience shock when reading their own interview that is transcribed verbatim (Kvale, 1996) because oral language when transcribed appears incoherent and confused.

For these reasons I decided not to return the interview transcripts for accuracy checking even though I was confident in the accuracy of the transcriptions. Instead I sent a summary of the emerging findings, as set out in appendix [v], to each headteacher. Eight responded in writing, for which I am grateful. This response reflects their wholehearted engagement in the activity. Their additional comments are also in appendix [v] and are incorporated in the research findings.

3.10. Limiting aspects to the study

The main limitation to the study is that the findings derive from the stated views of a small number of headteacher inspectors and those not selected did not have the opportunity to put forward their views and influence the research (Diefenbach, 2009). It is important not to assume these headteachers are representative and I do not know the views of those headteachers who also inspect but were not part of the study and the many other headteachers who do not inspect.

I acknowledge that the headteachers' narratives were constructed in interaction with me and they may have tried to present themselves in terms of a coherent identity. The headteachers have particular interests stemming from social and job position, personal plans, worldviews and ideologies and I recognise that their

responses to my questions were thought through in the light of these, and to serve them as well as possible in their own eyes. It is not easy to know whether people really say what they mean and mean what they say, and there is always the possibility that an interviewee did not tell me what she or he really thought.

My interpretation of the interview data is dependent on the spoken word of the headteachers and no two people will ever agree on what someone else means (Charon, 1989). Whether or how successfully the headteachers misled me depended on their intellectual capabilities, experiences with interview situations, ethical and moral values, social and power status, their relation with me and my own interviewing skills. These factors are usually greater with people of higher social status (Diefenbach, 2009) who may provide false and misleading information in a more convincing way than less experienced interviewees since they are aware of political correctness and the danger of saying the wrong things. I suggest that my sample fall within this category but this study is no less susceptible than others.

The headteachers' narratives are the main data source and provide context-specific insights, and the data from different interviews referring to the same issues provided a valid picture. I set out to generate rich descriptions of experiences and situational influences and the interviews capture the headteachers' ideas, experiences and practices. My analysis of the data is my interpretation of how the headteachers defined their situation, considered their perspectives and revealed their thoughts. As the interviewer I was able to compare the data which led to emerging patterns and themes pertinent to the topic of the study.

I expected many positive comments from the headteachers and these were forthcoming. At the same time apparent frankness was proffered and exemplified by the forthright comments about other inspectors, especially lead inspectors, and the inconsistency of practice they experience on inspection. Such comments were more prevalent than I had anticipated at the outset of the research. The

interviewees may have been comfortable enough during our discussion to express more critical views than they might have done to somebody who was not also an inspector. While my findings cannot be generalised I contend that they are valid in the context of the aim and objectives of the study. As the researcher I am able to come up with any interpretation I think is the best one (Diefenbach, 2009). It is difficult to establish that another observer would interpret the same verbatim text in the same manner. Similarly, it is not certain whether some future researcher(s) could repeat the research study and come up with the same results and interpretations. The interviewees are self-reporting, and we cannot really be sure of the reality.

3.11. Chapter summary

This research is a qualitative study that sets out to access the views of headteachers who inspect. The research problem is part of the lived experience of the headteacher and its focus is on their perception and the subjective meaning of their experiences of inspection and inspecting.

I do not claim to be asserting an objective truth and I submit that the advantages of my knowledge of inspection and the willingness of participants to speak to me outweigh the potential problems. Overall, my perception is that there was and is sense of '*street credibility*' (Robson, 1993) that comes through the data and its analysis.

The examination of experiences in context from the perspective of the headteachers experiencing the role as inspector enabled me to explore the complexity of the phenomenon (inspection) from their perspectives (headteacher inspectors). I try to unveil the nature and meanings of the phenomena as completely as possible.

The research strategy was to conduct an interview with a number of serving practitioner inspectors, all of whom are headteachers. A cycle of semi-structured interviews was the research technique. This allowed the main questions to be asked, enabled replies to be clarified and understanding to be deepened through follow-up questions. The interviews were focused and reflective conversations and moved loosely. All interviews were taped, transcribed verbatim by me, analysed for content and subjected to thematic analysis. The participants were renamed for this report.

These findings are from interviews with 12 headteachers and so the extent to which secure generalisations can be made relating to the wider population is limited. I do not assume to draw out new theory from only 12 interviews but I do offer a glimpse into this uncharted territory. This is indicative of what might be meaningfully explored through further study, out of which theory may emerge, including headteacher inspectors' recognition as system leaders.

I acknowledge that the determination of headteachers' behaviour cannot be assessed solely on the basis of interviews with them. This was not intended. Rather, the aim has been to gain an understanding of their perceptions of their situation. How typical of all headteacher inspectors these findings are is difficult to determine since the sample is small and involves a range of backgrounds in headship and inspection. Nonetheless, these results may be seen as indicative.

The next chapter sets out the headteachers' experiences, using their own words and with exemplars to illustrate the key points.

Chapter 4

The experiences of headteacher inspectors

4.1. Introduction to the chapter

This chapter seeks to provide an analytical description of the experiences of the research participants, all of whom are headteachers who also inspect schools on behalf of Ofsted. I aspire to reflect their views about their engagement in inspection practice. The chapter sets out the emergent themes from my analysis of the data. These stem from the questions that I asked and the patterns that emerged across the data sets that I considered important to describe the phenomena relating to the research questions.

The themes are inter-related but I have grouped them as follows: what the interviewees say about being inspected, becoming an inspector and inspecting; their relations with teachers including other headteachers, with other inspectors and with their governors/local authorities; learning from inspecting; and their ambivalence and, in some instances, dissonance about their inspection work.

It may be useful to bear in mind that ten of the interviewees are primary headteachers, while two are secondary (Helen and Frank). I use a number of direct quotations in order to accurately reflect the headteachers' views and to illustrate how much the headteachers care about their work.

As a starting point I recount what it was like for these interviewees when they were inspected in their role as headteacher, often more than once. This is because these experiences are contributory factors in their decision to cross the boundary between headship and inspection. Being inspected is also the start of the story of their inspection journeys.

4.2. Being inspected

At the time of the interviews the headteachers were, with one exception, leaders of either outstanding or good schools, as determined by the school's last

inspection. All were disappointed with some aspects of the inspections of their own schools, yet all chose to go on to inspect.

Several of the headteachers use language such as '*bullied*', '*disappointed*' and '*horrendous*' when describing their experiences of being inspected. If nothing else, this reveals something about the strong emotions involved in inspection from their stance as headteachers on the receiving end. The evidence suggests that it was not the outcome of the inspection they found unpalatable. It was the conduct of the inspectors and in particular the lead inspector.

One headteacher had been inspected once as a headteacher and this was, '*a disappointing experience*' (Brenda). Brenda reflects antipathy and no sense of belonging to a community of inspectors, referring to a, '*lazy*' team of inspectors who had inspected her own school because she thought they did not make much of an effort or challenge her as she had expected them to. More vociferously another comments, '*I was bitterly disappointed, gutted*' (Diana), while another comments pithily, '*It wasn't the most pleasant experience I've had*' (Maurice). One of the headteachers has been inspected three times commenting, '*The first one was absolutely horrendous. It was the attitude of the inspectors*' (Christine). One of the secondary headteachers cites more than one negative experience:

'I've been involved in two which I found horrendous. You were done to rather than done with.' (Helen)

In another instance the lead inspector was also a serving headteacher, but no respect was shown:

'She bullied my senior leaders. She'd come out of meetings and left people in tears.' (Olive)

Another's inspection was led by an inspector working out of phase (this usually occurs when secondary headteachers inspect primary schools) which he found unsatisfactory:

'I didn't find the inspection supportive. I didn't feel the lead inspector had enough primary experience and insight. We all felt very exhausted by the whole thing.' (Robert)

One of the headteachers notes how pivotal the lead inspector is:

'My second inspection was better, a far more a positive experience. It was down to the lead inspector. He was a smoker and he'd say, "Come with me we'll go for a walk". We'd walk round the houses and he'd be discussing various issues with me and I'd be arguing back. Challenging really and that was a lot more positive.' (Christine)

Along similar lines another headteacher comments:

'He was on his own and we got a fair crack of the whip. A couple of things where I challenged his judgements he gave me the opportunity to come back with other evidence and took it on board. It was a fair, good experience.' (Deborah)

These two headteachers illustrate how much they valued the dialogue with the lead inspector. Both use the word, '*challenge*' suggesting that providing they were able to offer a response they were content. As such the inspection is seen to be 'fair'.

However, Deborah's experience was negative, and reflects cynicism in the inspection process:

'It was one of those awful experiences where the inspectors locked themselves in a room. They'd obviously made their decision before they came and this was backed up at the first sight of the graffiti. They decided what we were going to be and didn't want to know about anything else.'

Of those who specifically comment on how the inspection of their own school influenced their decision to inspect, one headteacher comments:

'I went into the training having had that experience and I promised myself no matter what the message I would be gracious about it.' (Diana)

In summary, the headteachers express two main misgivings about their experiences of being inspected: the conduct and attitude of the inspectors and being inspected by inspectors working out of phase (in these instances a secondary specialist inspecting a primary school). What they most valued was the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with inspectors, especially the lead inspector.

Given these serious misgivings about being on the receiving end of inspection, which are described emotively by more than half of the headteachers, one of the issues to explore is why they choose to inspect and some of the reasons they give are set out in the next section.

4.3. Becoming an inspector

This section sets out the headteachers' views about why they chose to inspect. They can be grouped into four categories: first, to broaden their own professional experience and skill base; second, to improve their own school, including preparing it for inspection; third, to pick up ideas from others; and fourth, with a view to life after headship. All are committed to the principle of inspection.

As we have seen, the headteachers interviewed had poor experiences of being inspected yet only two, from different sectors, raise doubts about becoming an inspector. Helen's (secondary) concerns soon passed:

'I was worried at the beginning but I got working with colleagues I got to know really well and I admire and enjoy working with.'

Diana reflects on the possible implications of falling short:

'Taking myself out of my comfort zone, because you can get very comfortable. You're exposing yourself and going through the training.'

These misgivings are understandable since a loss of face is a possibility for headteachers who do not succeed in the initial training or are found not to be up to the job in practice.

Limited experience of headship was a pivotal factor for some since they chose to inspect in order to take on a, 'challenge' and, 'broaden horizons'. Helen's (secondary) teaching career had been in one school:

'When you've done the same job for many years, to change and adapt is quite a challenge. It's easy just to keep doing it because you do it well or you know it well. It's a challenge to step out of that and work in a professional way in a different dimension.'

Maurice who was promoted from deputy headteacher to the headship of the school comments:

'It could be tempting for me to stay here and see my career out. My career has been very narrow in terms of where I've worked. The Ofsted stuff keeps

me on my toes and takes me out of my comfort zone. It's very important for that and without it I would be bored.'

Rose comments,

'I was coming up to six years here and because of my age I felt that I was too old to start somewhere else. I didn't want to sit around and become complacent. I thought that doing this I would carry on learning and it would be something I would enjoy, and I've got something to give back.'

Succinctly, Brenda comments, *'I love learning and this gave me the opportunity to learn new skills.'*

Helping to prepare their own schools for inspection also seems to be a key motivation for most of them, possibly the main one. The practical benefits of inspecting and how their purpose is to improve their own schools (and themselves) are illustrated by Brenda, *'I pick up a lot from other schools and bring it here,'* while Charles notes:

'If I see practices I will bring them back into school, there are all manner of things that I've brought back.'

Similarly, Deborah comments:

'The opportunity to go into schools and benchmark your practice.' You see good things and you steal them because it makes your place better. I want to be able to be in the best position to make my school the best it can be.'

Olive admits:

'I always find something to pinch. I'll go back to my own school and they'll say, 'what have you got for us this time?''

Olive makes no bones about sourcing ideas from other schools. Others see inspecting as a way to steer their own school through its own inspection:

'It's about making sure my school is as well prepared as it can be in terms of what the inspection system is. Being part of that is of help because I want the best for my school.' (Charles)

Rose notes, *'I gain because I get an insight into the Framework'*, and Robert is unabashed that his motivation is for both the school and his own benefit:

'I wanted to make sure I knew what the criteria were so that I could make my school improve. That's first and foremost. Selfishly I wanted to make sure any school I led did well out of it.'

These comments from Rose and Robert relate to school improvement, which is the premise that underpins the principle of inspection, and Charles also comments:

'Any external body that is here to validate us is good since we need to be seen at our best. I really do believe it helps us to improve. I'm very pro and would stand up in front of any audience to say "we need an external system of accountability because otherwise we get what we had before and that isn't good enough".'

Others purposefully took up inspection with a view to their life after headship. This is not untypical and perhaps not unsurprising given the age profile of inspectors, who (at present) tend to be at least in their forties. One comments, *'If I could retire early from headship and continue with inspections that appeals.'* (Freda),

while another notes, *'It might be a little side-line or opening to do with part time retirement'*. (Robert)

In summary, the headteachers' motivations are a combination of professional as well as personal influences. Both Helen (secondary) and Diana raise the implications of failure and this affirms the commitment all show to the role. So in the next section I explore what it is like for them to inspect.

4.4. The headteachers' experiences of inspecting

Having considered what the headteachers say it is like to have been inspected and what has motivated them to become inspectors it is now timely to look at what it is actually like for them to inspect alongside their headship.

Several of the headteachers talk enthusiastically about how much they enjoy inspecting. Two exemplify this well: *'I come back buzzing more from that now than I do from this (headship) which is worrying'* (Rose), while Diana says:

'I really enjoy it. I've got a lot out of it. I have no regrets whatsoever. I just love it. I've taken to it like a duck to water.'

Maurice taking a balanced view draws out what he likes, as well as dislikes, about inspecting:

'It's increased my confidence about inspection and my own self-evaluation. It can be a positive process but it can be a really horrible, negative process. Sometimes I feel a bit unfair but generally speaking I've grown to really like it.'

Maurice welcomes the feedback he gets and contrasts it to his experience as a headteacher. As an inspector he is a team member, rather than team leader:

'I very rarely get feedback on my performance (as a headteacher) but as an inspector you get it and that's good. I didn't mean just written, verbally as well, "thanks for that", or "try this", and I find that useful. You don't get that as a head. It's quite an isolated job. Here (in school) I'm less part of a team. I'm a driver of it.'

So, these headteachers value their inspection work alongside headship. In the case of Rose, for instance, it seems it may even be preferred since she *'comes back buzzing'*. No regrets are expressed by any of the headteachers even though, as we shall see later, there are some significant challenges in crossing the boundary between headship and inspection.

One of the secondary headteachers, Helen, finds it, *'seamless to jump from one role to another'* commenting:

'I love my job as headteacher and I love my job as inspector. I look forward to working with different people and meeting other heads and school leadership teams and I really do enjoy the work. I do find though that you do the inspection work which is very focused, a very difficult one and you come back the next day and you've got to take that hat off, take that coat off and say, 'Right I'm doing the job, I'm not inspecting it' and just flip back again.'

This same headteacher notes that when beginning to inspect she met with resistance and found other inspectors, *'dismissive'*. Her view is that other inspectors did not accept her evidence as she thinks they would that of a, *'professional inspector'*. Brenda also finds it easy to switch between the roles of headship and inspector:

'Put inspector hat on and that's it. I answer questions about serving initiatives which save other inspectors' time. I don't have to have them explained to me.'

Going into a school as an inspector can be a source of anxiety as illustrated by Maurice:

'It's an extremely nerve wracking process and even now I get butterflies going in. I remember sitting outside a school, the first one, about an hour and a half early really terrified because as a head I was petrified of Ofsted. It is so public.'

These are strong words reflecting the view Maurice has of the Ofsted regime from his position as a headteacher, of an outstanding school). He is also noting how exposed he feels, *'so public'*, partly because the inspection report is available online within days of the on-site visit, as well as being sent to the school's parents. The same headteacher is critical of those who are no longer practitioners:

'Inspectors who have been out and get cold to it. They don't realise how scary a process it is for the heads. Some are unnecessarily brusque at times.'

Charles also notes how he helps other inspectors, *'when there's a particular acronym that's flavour of the month'*. Continuing this theme of being helpful to other inspectors, Deborah notes the respect afforded to her, and she welcomes this:

'Inspectors use me as a reference point, "Is this serving practice? What does this look like in your school"? It's really nice being afforded a lot of professional respect for actually still being in school.'

Robert comments:

'Being a headteacher really does help on inspection. It helps me have confidence in what I'm talking about. The up to date knowledge of what's happening in schools. I feel confident to know what challenges the school might be facing.'

Robert uses the word '*confidence*' twice in making his point, and also comments:

'Other inspectors aren't up to speed with what's actually happening in schools. It's coming at you all the time as a head and that's useful to me.'

Christine also notes benefits of being a practitioner and like Robert draws out the contrast with non-practitioners, being critical of them:

'I bring the day experience with me and the issues we are facing in schools. The role of headteacher complements inspector because you are the working proof of what you are inspecting...sometimes I work with people who have not got a good knowledge and understanding of education at the chalk face as it is now. They have been out of the classroom such a long time and they are off the mark.'

Maurice illustrates the same point:

'When teachers are talking about what makes a good lesson outstanding, you've got inspectors asking, "What's that"?''

Maurice also reflects on how he reconciles his identities and like Christine, Robert and Rose, he is critical of some other inspectors whom he thinks are not as helpful to the staff of the inspected school:

'Up to date serving knowledge, initiatives, good practice, I know that inside out. How can someone who is not in school every day know what that is? That's what I bring, empathy, the personal side, positive relationships. I get a kick out of giving constructive feedback to teachers on lessons. I've heard other inspectors say things that are general, vague things. I like to pinpoint stuff for them (the teachers). That goes down well, they find it useful.'

Maurice also offers an example of the specific knowledge he brings to inspection as a headteacher:

'Something I can do well as a head is the scrutiny of books. That's not something that somebody that's not been in schools can do. Practitioners can confidently look at books.'

The use of the word '*practitioner*' by Maurice is telling when allied to the knowledge that practitioners bring to inspection practice, which he says non-practitioners do not. Similarly Helen, a secondary headteacher, cites the '*up to date knowledge*' she brings to inspection that:

'Help you in professional debate with headteachers. You know where they are coming from because you've been there.'

Helen also reflects on how her identity as a headteacher helps her to broker between the inspection team and the school:

'I am often the only practitioner so I have that serving handle on things. If someone says, "What is this about"? I can tell them. This is part of the complementary role. You are part of a team.'

Both Helen and Maurice are reflecting on how they conduct themselves on inspection. Helen notes:

'Common sense is important, emotional intelligence. Judging how people are feeling, making them feel comfortable.'

While Maurice comments:

'Walk into somebody else's school as a head is a very stressful thing. Forget the technical stuff, it's the people.'

Helen also suggests her presence lends credence to the inspection process because:

'It helps the school have confidence in the inspection process. Because you're a practitioner they know you know what you are doing.'

Similarly, Rose says *'it gives you credibility because you are going through it.'*

Deborah suggests that headteachers lose touch after they have left school, commenting that as a headteacher her job has changed '*completely*' over seven years. Drawing out the importance of the credibility of inspectors she comments:

'For me the question is the up to date professional experience of who is coming into school and doing it...I'd be very happy if I knew the person leading my inspection was a serving head.'

Similarly, Christine emphasises the difference between practitioners and non-practitioners:

'It's an empathy with schools. When you turn up it can be easy to forget how you feel as a head. We do and you keep your feet on the ground.'

In terms of what they enjoy about inspection, Olive comments:

'I love the intellectual challenge. You get under the skin of the school, you start drilling down and it's captivating.'

Charles also refers to, 'challenge':

'I like the intellectual challenge, the stimulation. I find it energising...I enjoy the professional dialogue with the team which sometimes as a head you don't have that much of.'

Freda comments along similar lines:

'What I enjoy is that you are completely absorbed in it. When you're in school you feel that your head's here, there and everywhere. You can commit, you're one hundred per cent on your inspection and I really like that.'

There are challenges involved in crossing this particular boundary, and as Robert headteacher comments:

'There's empathy and that gets in the way a little bit. The first inspection I went on the deputy head got two inadequate lessons in a row and she went home and never came back after lunch. That was it, career finished. So it's a heavy responsibility.'

Overall, the headteachers bring out several points about what it is like for them to inspect: first, they enjoy it; second, they like working as part of a team where they make a contribution; third, they highlight the credibility they bring; and fourth, they draw out how they conduct themselves. This is very pertinent given their concerns about their own experiences of being inspected. They are less happy with the expertise of some of the inspectors with whom they work.

Significantly, all the headteachers interviewed find inspecting at least interesting, and some are more expansive, as in the cases of Olive (*'captivating'*), Charles (*'stimulating', 'energising'*) and Freda (*'absorbed'*), and no concerns are raised about making the move across the boundary from headship into inspecting.

The next section explores the headteachers' relations with the teachers and headteachers of the schools they inspect.

4.5. Relations with teachers and other headteachers

Three quarters of those interviewed commented on how they bring credibility to the inspection process and mostly enjoy favourable relationships with those they inspect. How they perceive their relationships with other heads is part of their self-image and identity. Here, I provide an account of their constructed reality rather than of 'reality'. Since it is only their view of how the inspected heads see things I begin by giving a flavour of the headteachers' remarks to the staff of the schools they inspect.

On meeting the staff Christine notes:

'My introduction will be, "I'm a serving head, I know what it's like, I've just been done myself quite recently and we're not here to catch you out".'

Olive comments:

'The schools really appreciate having a serving practitioner. When you meet the staff I always say, "I was in my own school yesterday, I'll be back in my own school again on Friday".'

Several comment on what they think the headteachers of the schools they inspect think about them. This is often positive, but not always and two of the

respondents say they have experienced some hostility from the inspected headteachers. Typically Frank (secondary) says:

'I was in a school where this guy looked at the website and said, "It's good to know that you are doing the job and you have got a good school". They look at your CVs and they look at your school.'

However, and in contrast, Rose describes a frosty response when talking about standards, with the headteacher commenting, *'we are not in a leafy county like some people'*.

The inspection contractors send inspectors' mini curricula vitae to the school the day before the inspection after the notification telephone call and Frank is referring to the fact that the headteacher did some background research on him, by using an internet search engine to source his school's inspection report (Ofsted publishes inspection reports online within 15 days of the end of the inspection). This reflects how all headteachers inhabit the Panopticon, where their performance is open to scrutiny.

Other headteachers local to the respondents are more critical, with four reporting negative feedback. For example, one comments that the heads around him think he has, *'gone over to the other side'*. In spite of this they are often asked for advice since local headteachers perceive them to have a secure handle on the quality standards. Several mention that they tend to keep their inspection activities to themselves. One inspects under her maiden name and is comfortable with that.

Emphasising his relationship with the school Frank explains how he draws on his serving knowledge as a headteacher to explain inspection judgements:

'I was relating it to my own school. You show you understand where the school is. It doesn't make any difference to your judgement. It was trying to get them (the school) through the process.'

This reflects Frank's empathy with staff and his view is that this does not impact on his judgements, while at the same time he sees his role as helping the school get through the inspection. This is a point meriting further research since there is no published research on the link between the composition of inspection teams (for instance, practitioners or non-practitioners) and inspection outcomes.

Charles says *'the feedback I've had is that heads have valued having a practitioner on the team'*, while Robert comments on how important it is to present well:

'It's being sensitive. It's no good going in saying, "In my school we do this", because this is the first thing that would put them off. There is a professional recognition'. As a head you go in and have sympathy with a headteacher because you know they might be working their socks off. You'd like to be more supportive.'

Christine says:

'The staff relax more with you when you are doing lesson observations. It's like you know what it's like, little Johnny there in the corner playing up.'

Helen (secondary) comments that her presence:

'Helps the school have confidence in the inspection process. Because you're a practitioner they know you know what you are doing.'

Frank (also secondary) using, *'empathise'* says:

'There is a definite Ofsted hat on where you conduct yourself in a professional, almost separate role. You are there to do a job of work, not to empathise with the head.'

Revealing the relationships with the headteachers they inspect, both Maurice and Deborah use, 'confide' when characterising the dialogue between them. Use of 'head to head' (Maurice) and 'camaraderie' (Deborah) may also indicate how they approach their inspection work. Making the same point, Diana infers that her dealings with inspected headteachers are different from those of other inspectors (non-practitioners):

'The discussion is different because you understand the complexities of running a school. Realising that it's not as straightforward as it might look, but that it's a difficult job.'

Frank (secondary) also suggests that most headteachers see him differently because he is a practitioner, in comparison to other inspectors, and he illustrates this:

'Most heads relate to you well if they know you are a headteacher and they chat'. Last week I walked out during break time to see how the school was and there's the headteacher on the driveway. He came up and said, "Do you do this in your school"? I said, "In my school I'd normally have a woolly hat on and a duffle coat but that's not the image of an Ofsted inspector".'

Diana illustrates vividly how it feels to be on both sides of the boundary:

'I've come away shuddering sometimes. I see the colour drain from a head's face when the inspection hasn't gone as they expected. When that realisation starts to come I always remember "You have been there".'

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Charles also reflects on being involved in both constituencies:

'It's not as though we are all part of the same Cosa Nostra but when heads discern that I'm a head there tends to be a relaxation. But it can work in other ways as well with them thinking, 'it's one of our own kind'.'

Others also reflect on possible problems. For example, Christine says:

'You'll be walking down the corridor and the head will pull you to one side. I've had that on a few occasions and they try and ask you about your own school and you have to be very careful.'

While Maurice raises a different issue:

'The disadvantage of being a head is comparing that school to yours. That's not what it's about. It's a double edged sword having empathy and an emotional attachment because you could be tempted to say things that you shouldn't and that's very dangerous.'

Two of the headteachers express frustration with their peers. Frank (secondary) says:

'It is sometimes like drawing teeth. We are in the game and sometimes even the best headteachers are not on the same wavelength.'

While Deborah comments:

'A number of heads haven't got a handle on their data. Often I think, "You deserve to get only satisfactory at best for leadership and management".'

Overall, these comments show that the headteachers think they enjoy good relationships with the staff of the schools they inspect. Some see empathy as an

advantage while others see it as something to be careful about. The headteachers appear to be clear that the staff of the inspected schools value their presence on the inspection team, although we do not actually know that from this study. They suggest they have a different relationship with schools as practitioners than other inspectors. Their comments suggest that the empathy they have does not prevent them from making professional decisions. Some cite instances where they are frustrated with the headteachers they inspect.

Having considered the headteachers' relations with teachers and other headteachers, the next section sets out their relations with other inspectors.

4.6. Relationships with other inspectors

This section seeks to give more of an insight into what the headteachers say about other inspectors. Ten of those interviewed say that they enjoy mostly good relations with other inspectors and value the mutual support on inspection teams. However, seven of the headteachers expressed frustrations with some other inspectors and a quarter specifically with some lead inspectors.

As we have already seen, several headteachers reflect on what they bring to inspection as practitioners in comparison to others who are not, but they do value, *'the professional discussion with the team, the experience of working with other team members'* (Freda), adding, *'I think they are all highly professional.'* Similarly, Maurice comments:

'I enjoy working with other people. I like the whole variety. I get quite excited on the way (to the inspection). Then you walk in and think, "what is this lead going to be like"? It's good because that's out of your comfort zone.'

Robert has a high regard for other inspectors, *'You have to admire these people, it's very pressurised.'* Helen also refers to, *'admiration'*. Overall, the characteristic most valued in other inspectors is how they conduct themselves on inspection, resonating with what the headteachers have to say about their own experiences of being inspected.

Frank, another secondary headteacher like Helen, is the third of the headteachers to use, *'admire'* when commenting on other inspectors. He reflects on how he *'learns'* from them and recognises some of the qualities they bring to inspection even though they do not currently work in schools. He illustrates this:

'They often have a real expertise because they've got that breadth. I take my hat off to them and sometimes I think, "I wish I could be that good". For all that you might be doing the job and very experienced in the day to day running of the job you sometimes sit in admiration of other inspectors in the way they are able to pick up key indicators within school. That's the benefit of this. Your professional development is not just about going into other schools and seeing what other schools are teaching for better or worse but also you learn such a lot from experienced people on teams.'

Others also reflect on how they like learning from others in team situations, citing their rigour and what comes across is how they enjoy the interaction with other inspectors. However, contrary views are expressed, sometimes with feeling. Helen (secondary) cites a poor experience:

'A maverick inspector stomping around, stuck on their own hobby horse, losing the focus of the inspection....the rest of the team have to rein them in because they can cause chaos.'

Deborah, for example, expresses little professional respect for some of her fellow inspectors:

'There have been a couple I've come across and thought, "Do you know what, you've been out of the classroom too long".'

Along similar lines, commenting on other inspectors being out of touch, Maurice comments:

'I've come across inspectors who have not worked in schools for some time and become cold and hardened to it. I'm never like that because I've come out of school the day before. I've felt, "You are not appreciating what that head's going through with the way you are coming across to them". It's putting yourself in the head's shoes. Some inspectors don't think like that because they are so far removed.'

However, some of the headteachers are not concerned about whether an inspector is a practitioner. Two comments illustrate this point:

'I am bothered about the acumen of the person, the approach. It doesn't matter whether it's a headteacher...it's about that person's professional ability and the way they are as a person.' (Charles)

'If the person is somebody that can command your respect and knows what they're doing it doesn't really matter if they are serving or not ...providing they have had the right experience to be able to make a judgement.' (Rose)

Seven of the headteachers are critical of other inspectors who are not serving practitioners. For instance, Maurice comments:

'I've come across inspectors who have not worked in schools for some time and become cold and hardened to it. I'm never like that because I've come out of school the day before. I've felt, "you are not appreciating what that head's going through with the way you are coming across to them". It's

putting oneself in the head's shoes. Some inspectors don't think like that because they are so far removed.'

But it would be injudicious to give too much weight to these negative comments because overall the data reflects broadly balanced views. Indeed, several of the headteachers were very complimentary about other inspectors. For instance Diana comments:

'I've worked with some people who in terms of their rigour are absolutely fantastic as a learning tool.'

This point reflects that many non-serving practitioners are regarded as 'experts' at inspection by some of the headteachers, even though they do not have recent experience of working in schools.

Several respondents commented on their relationships with lead inspectors. The headteachers have mixed views, but most are critical. Some of their views are strongly felt, indicating dissonance in particular about the conduct of some lead inspectors, and the inconsistency they see on inspection as a result. My interpretation of this is that it signifies non-alignment with the implementation of the inspection regime, and this is a point I shall pick up on later, given its significance.

Frank (secondary) places great store on the importance of the lead inspector in comparison to the body of the inspection team, stating that Her Majesty's Inspectors, are more highly regarded than other inspectors because, *'they take a broader view of things reflecting their national agenda'*. This is in contrast to additional inspectors, most of whom are freelance and self-employed or (increasingly now) practitioners.

In terms of inconsistency of practice, the comments of Rose are typical:

'You get a different message depending on the lead inspector and sometimes you come back (from inspection) frustrated...there was a guy I worked with who spent the entire afternoon...I wanted to be up and about and looking at things. He said, "No, it's alright we'll just sit here and start looking at the report, I think we have got this nailed now". That worries me because that's what gives it (inspection) a bad reputation. When I hear chuntering at heads' meetings it's difficult to defend.'

But offering some balance Rose also says,

'Ninety per cent of leads I have a high regard for. Great to work for, appreciative of everything you do, have respect for your professionalism and give you the rope that you need to go and find what you need to find. If you are proactive...they're very grateful.'

But others, like Rose, are also critical of some lead inspectors. Charles says:

'I have not enjoyed the manner of some people, the way they've conducted themselves...I wouldn't have done that... it does not fit well with me.'

Maurice's concerns centres on one of the core features of an inspector's work, which is giving feedback to a teacher on the key features that the inspector has observed in a lesson, or part of a lesson, principally pupils' achievement and their behaviour. This is a professional courtesy. However, Maurice has not been allowed to feedback where learning in a lesson have been inadequate. This clearly irks him as an experienced headteacher:

'I haven't ever fed back inadequate because I've gone to leads and talked it though. This is where the frustration comes in. They've said, "Well it doesn't really fit the picture, could it be satisfactory"? That's really got me.'

This means that Maurice was required to change. in other words, improve, the judgement to 'requires improvement'. Similarly, Diana voices her frustration with not being allowed to feedback judgements with integrity:

'I didn't feedback because most lead inspectors have said, "If it's (learning) inadequate don't say".'

Olive also resents the pressure exerted on her by some lead inspectors:

'The lead inspector will be saying, "Well this is satisfactory", and I have to keep my trap shut and think, "I'm never going to be happy about this".'

Rose is also aggrieved by what she sees as a slight on her professionalism commenting:

'I have worked with one or two (lead inspectors) that I could have smacked. One of them said to me, "I realise you're fairly new to this so do your evidence forms but don't fill in any of the boxes on the bottom (the grades) and then we'll talk them through". I was cross because I thought, "I am trained and I am doing this job on a daily basis so I know what I'm looking at and my opinion should count...I was very naïve at the time...it wasn't until I'd done another couple that I started to reflect and really took exception to it, and now I'd just say "No".'

Freda's comment indicates negative alignment with one particular lead inspector, 'He was a lead inspector but I didn't feel I had confidence in him.' However, she also adds:

'In all my experiences there's only been one. On an inspection by inspection basis I've always found lead inspectors helpful.'

Similarly, Deborah also reflects on just the one inspection where engagement was not mutual and there was no alignment with the lead inspector:

'There's only one lead that I've worked with where I've thought, "You actually don't give a monkeys what serving practice looks like, you are not interested in it at all. You've got your inspection plan, that's the route you are going down". We got into the inspection and the other team inspector and myself are saying, "these routes aren't the routes we should be following". We're in the school half a day and other things, more important things were coming to light but it was just, "No this is what I said we'd look at so this is what we're going to look at".'

Finally, Maurice notes how uncomfortable he was when he gave feedback on a lead inspector's performance, as part of the quality assurance process:

'I was honest once. She was a secondary head doing an infant school and it was awful. I got this horrible email off her and then I got a 'phone call. I thought, "I could end up working with her again". There is that possibility. It's not very pleasant.'

Maurice is raising two issues here that concern him: first, inspectors who work out of their phase, in this instance a lead inspector with a secondary background inspecting an infant school; and second, the robustness of the quality assurances processes where he is wary of giving honest, in other words negative, feedback.

In summary, the picture is mixed. The headteachers enjoy inspecting as part of a team and have mostly good experiences. They are frustrated with some other inspectors, the non-practitioners, whom they feel are not as up to date as they are. Several are frustrated, sometimes very frustrated, with some lead inspectors. In particular, they are affronted that their judgements are not given due credence and they are asked to change them. None said their judgements were criticised by

lead inspectors for being over generous. All who commented on this point cited instances when they were required to improve their grades. This has implications for the rigour and robustness of Ofsted's processes and judgements on schools.

I shall return to this issue about dissonance later, but the next section reflects what the headteachers say about their relations with their governors and local authorities.

4.7. Relationships with governors and local authorities

Several of the headteachers make reference to how their school governors regard their engagement in inspection and I begin this section by looking at this.

School governors are legally responsible for the school and accountable for the headteacher's performance. The headteachers are only able to inspect with the support of their governors who will need to consider several factors in determining whether or not to endorse the headteacher's release for the initial and ongoing training and for around twenty inspection days a year. Crucially, they will need to consider the leadership and management of the school in the absence of its professional lead.

All but one of the headteachers remark on how unreservedly supportive their governors are. The following comments are typical:

'They value having an inspector in the house. It's been invaluable and the governors have supported me all the way.' (Olive); *'Governors like me to do Ofsted because of the feedback I bring to the school.'* (Frank); *'Governors are very pleased, very interested, very keen, absolutely supportive, encouraged me to do it.'* (Robert); *'One hundred per cent supportive.'* (Freda); and, *'My governors were very supportive.'* (Diana).

Charles acknowledges that his involvement in inspection was seen as sign of his competence, and was pivotal to his appointment:

'When I came to school some people knew I did inspection work and that went down as some type of cachet. Governors felt that my experiences in understanding the (School Inspection Handbook) schedule would help this school.'

On a different tack, Rose says that one of the reasons for her governors' support is the financial gain to the school (the inspection contractors pay £350 to £400 a day for team inspectors, slightly more for lead inspectors):

'A very supportive governing body, they're the ones who pay for it. My salary goes into the school so if I do sixteen days that pays for a part-time teaching assistant.'

Of the twelve headteachers, only Deborah mentioned resistance from governors, reluctant to let her have any more time out of school:

'It has taken me a while to convince my governors two days out is good for our school every now and again. In their day a headteacher never left the building and they struggle with that. They need to see it in writing (the inspection report) that it is good for our school.'

In contrast to the positive responses from governors, only two headteachers say the same about their local authority. Half of those interviewed mentioned the indifference from their local authorities.

Of the positive comments, Brenda notes that the format she uses for her school self-evaluation is used by her local authority as an example of effective practice and is shared with other headteachers, while Charles comments:

'Partly why they asked me to be a school improvement officer is because they knew that I inspected.'

However, there is little other evidence of local authorities supporting these headteachers in their inspection activities, or that their inspection skills are tapped into. Typically, Freda comments:

'I'm very disappointed. The authority has never encouraged people to go into inspections. That's a great pity. Nor have they ever asked to use my expertise...the local authority is insular. They don't look at the national perspective so we need that from somewhere.'

Some of the headteachers are willing and do help local schools independently but not through the brokerage of the local authority. I have more to say about how they do this in the two chapters that follow since it is pivotal to my argument that practitioners may be considered to be system leaders.

In summary, the headteachers' governors are seen as supportive for three reasons: first, it brings a cachet to the school; second, they think it will help the school to improve; and third, it is a source of income. At the same time their local authorities are uninterested in their role as inspector.

So, one of the advantages their governors see is the difference having their headteacher inspect makes and this is exemplified in the next section.

4.8. Learning from inspecting

This section seeks to illustrate the points made by the headteachers as they reflect on their learning through the training and then their practice as an inspector. It shows how inspecting, in their view, makes a difference in several ways.

Referencing the training Frank (secondary) says:

'The incredible professional training it gives you and it keeps you sharp, sharper than if I wasn't doing it.'

While Christine notes, *'it's the professionalism and the people you are sat with'*. In Deborah's opinion, *'every head should be made to do the training'*. Once trained, seven of the headteachers specifically refer to how learning from their engagement as an inspector supports them to improve their own school. Frank (secondary) comments:

'In helping this school to improve it is absolutely first class...you are in touch with how people are judging standards and with the changes in Ofsted.'

Frank illustrates how he built on his own training in a practical way to train his own staff, noting how cost effective this is:

'When the new Framework was introduced I was able to take the senior team away for a day to do training on it and then we took away the middle leaders. You'd be paying thousands of pounds for people to do it...it caused me to have a higher expectation and to ask pertinent questions.'

Some of the headteachers cite how inspecting improves their skills. Freda says:

'Knowing the evaluation schedule has definitely made me sharper looking at data and interpreting it.'

While Christine notes:

'I've become more organised and I've delegated more which has been a plus for the staff.'

Robert illustrates how his inspection experience impacts on the way he now goes about his headship in a different way:

'More careful about making sure that I do what I think should be right, about setting a good example and treating staff well... it's very easy to be on their backs when you are not in the classroom.'

Robert also illustrates how it has made him, *'think more carefully when I write'*. He adds:

'Am I being crystal clear? Am I using too much jargon? Am I saying the same thing in three sentences I could say in one?'

Diana makes a different point. Inspecting helps her to see where her own school is relative to others and incentivises her:

'I'm starting to get some sort of measure about where schools can be. It also re-confirms some of what I'm doing and that I'm on the right track. It's made me even more determined.'

Robert says:

'As an inspector you know how schools are judged so when I'm planning improvement I focus on those things which I know will have a pay-off.'

Maurice makes a similar point adding that he has developed skills that he would not have without his inspection experience:

'You become more confident because you've got more of a global view and more confidence in your own judgement. Just being able to see more

schools and get that awareness...my evaluation skills are a lot sharper. My own self-evaluation here is rigorous. I do a 'mini inspection' twice a year with my deputy and a governor. We do some observations, scrutiny, chats with the kids, talk to the staff. I wouldn't have known how to structure that.'

Christine illustrates how her inspection work gives her (and her staff) a wider perspective:

'I come back and I'll say to the staff, 'You don't know how lucky you are here. I've been to this place and this is what they are coping with'. Years ago people moved around schools. They don't now, certainly not here. They come and stay until they retire.'

Several of the headteachers comment on how they use their experience of inspecting to prepare their own staff. Diana says:

'I make sure I don't fail them because I haven't prepared them', adding 'I've made sure my deputy and subject leaders are up to speed in terms of leading and managing teaching and learning... knowing what the standards are in their subject area.'

Robert notes that:

'The staff appreciate when I say things like, 'We ought to do that', they realise it's for a purpose and I have their respect in that way.'

Similarly, Christine's comment illustrates how headship and inspecting are complementary:

'One does influence the other...the training I give to staff...'this is what I'm looking for'...they are all sitting to attention.'

At the same time Christine is aware of the need to be cautious, reflecting one of the challenges of crossing this boundary, adding, *'On those occasions, though I don't say it, "I put a badge on".'*

Diana also raises the point that:

'They (her staff) see it as challenging', but adds that, 'they also see it as advantageous because I share my experiences and I keep saying to them, "we have got a lot of really good practice here that I haven't seen in other schools".'

On a similar theme Charles comments:

'The more astute members of staff value the fact that I get out and I'm using the Framework and it does impinge on what we do as a school and what we focus on.'

This implies that some members of his staff do not embrace this.

One of the benefits of inspecting is that by seeing practice in other schools the headteachers gauge the performance of their own. Robert values seeing practice which is good commenting:

'I like to see lots of examples, ideas and ways that schools have dealt with similar problems in different ways. Sometimes it's good to see how bad some of them are, because when you get back you think, "reassuring".'

Similarly, Rose says:

'It is a big advantage because if I go somewhere worse I can come back and say "actually we're getting it right".'

Making a similar point, but in this case where she sees better practice elsewhere, Deborah says:

'It reaffirms and sometimes I've gone back and looked at the grading again and at what we do. It's a prompt for me to go back and look at my own practice.'

Taking things a step further, others talk about how practical experience of inspecting helps them to make a real difference during the inspection of their own school:

'You are able as a head to lead the inspection...when the inspector 'phoned his first comment was "the data isn't looking good". But then get him into school, take him round, show him the right places. We got good...it (being an inspector) did help.' (Charles)

Similarly, Brenda comments:

'It gives me an insight into what the focus of inspections is and how these can be managed. I'm quite sharp and I've got that from inspecting. What evidence to gather, managing meetings for the inspection team and preparing staff. If I go for a look around my school I look at it from an outside perspective. I know what sort of evidence to gather. I know what they are going to want and so do my staff now.'

This point about how headteacher-inspectors can use their engagement in inspection practice can be used to prepare their own schools for inspection raises a

possible area for research, which is how the practitioners' schools fare at inspection before and after they become inspectors.

Several of the headteachers cite examples of the ideas they pick up on inspection and bring back to their schools. Rose says:

'I've got a system of safeguarding that I've pinched from somebody because it was absolutely superb.'

Freda sees this as a reason to inspect:

'The benefits are what you bring back to your own school. Every time I've been on an inspection I've come back with an idea. Nobody's got a monopoly on good ideas.'

Helen and Brenda make the same point, both using the same phrase '*brought back here*'.

Helen says:

'I've picked up so much good practice in the schools I've inspected and brought back here. We've re-invented it, we haven't just taken it on, but as an idea we've run with it.'

While Brenda comments:

'I've got so much out of being an inspector, bringing it into school. I've seen such good examples which I've brought back here.'

Similarly Diana notes:

'It's not necessarily from seeing good practice but from seeing where things could have been better. I'm thinking, "If only this had been done" and do it here. I've picked up a few bits and pieces about safeguarding and how to present some of the documentation, little booklets and things.'

However, several of the headteachers suggest a more conflicted position. I have referenced this already but the following illustrations show how careful they have to be when bringing ideas back to their schools. Charles says:

'I've had to temper that because in the last school I was a bit of a clipboard king...staff said, "Flipping heck, he's been out again".'

Along the same lines, Deborah comments:

'I have to rein myself in when I come back off an inspection so that I'm not always saying to staff "Guess what I've seen at this place I've been to, it's really great". We have got a really good school and I have to stop myself undermining that by coming back saying, "I've seen something even better". I have to curb it because I don't want to demoralise the staff who are thinking, "what does she want"?''

While Diana says:

'I come away with either, "we are doing that really well" or "that's something we could sharpen up on". The school that I just did had an absolutely fantastic (system) and they were wittering on about it, but I've had an email from my assistant head saying, "we don't know what you're on about".'

In summary, the headteachers value the training and how inspecting helps them to improve their personal skills, to develop their staff and improve their school.

They illustrate how inspecting impacts positively on both themselves and their schools. It enables them to benchmark the performance in their own school, pick up ideas and affirms their practice. There are also negative aspects to their involvement in inspection work, and some are wary of not being over-enthusiastic and bringing back too many ideas to their own schools lest it leads to staff disquiet.

This leads on to the next section which sets out how the headteachers are not uncritical about inspecting, and inspection.

4.9. Dissonance about inspecting

Previously I set out what the headteachers said about their experiences of being inspected. These were invariably negative. In this section I set some of the negative things they also have to say about inspecting. This is because in spite of the positive orientation to inspection, and good experiences overall, the headteachers interviewed made several critical points. This indicates some negative alignment with inspection practice.

The headteachers are most vociferous when talking about other inspectors, including a third of them who have had poor experiences with some lead inspectors. A half of those interviewed cite examples of where they experience inconsistency in inspection practice, a key source of disenchantment, with, for example, Charles commenting that in his experience some judgements are, *'flawed'*. A number of the headteachers voice concerns about the criteria used by inspectors when they arrive at their judgements. Broadly speaking, some think that it is more difficult for some schools to get the higher grades, while others think that some schools get higher grades than they merit.

Robert comments:

'I've felt the judgements are harsh on one or two occasions. I've thought, "what would I do with these kids? Could I do any better...probably not".'

Frank, headteacher of a large secondary school on the outskirts of a regional city, also expresses his unease with the rubric of inspection:

'The main conflict is what is a realistic expectation for a school to achieve because it is far easier for schools in the leafy suburbs to get an 'outstanding' than it is for schools that serve really difficult areas. That's really hard on these schools because they are often doing fantastic jobs.'

Helen, also secondary, notes that a school's journey is not necessarily reflected in inspection outcomes and like Robert and Frank she is frustrated with some aspects of the inspection rubric. She says:

'You know they are desperate for it because of the journey they have taken...I find that difficult...I understand and empathise with a school that are trying to pitch for a judgement they can't get. That is difficult to deal with because sometimes requiring improvement is hard won and they are pitching for good and trying it on.'

Helen illustrates her point in some detail and I want to cite it here since it highlights the distinct contribution a serving practitioner can make on inspection, once again drawing out the complementary role. Helen notes that this is not a 'conflicted' position for her:

'Having the experience to be able to explain why they can't have what they want. Recently there was a judgement on attendance and I said to the head, "you can argue with me all you like, read the evaluation schedule, you cannot get this". She said to me, "you know I respect your judgement, I can see where you're coming from but it isn't half a good feeling to

actually know you know what journey we've had to take to get here". That was useful. It's not a conflict, more a complementary role.'

Maurice raises the significant issue about judgements that are, in his view, too generous:

'It's a big job with a lot of pressure involved. As a result a lot of people play safe and go for the easy grades.'

Charles makes the same point:

'Some of the judgements have been flawed. I don't think some of them have been as hard hitting as they need to be because of fear of complaints. It's doing the schools no good at all.'

Charles and Maurice are suggesting that some inspectors make soft judgements. They use, 'play safe' and, 'not as hard hitting' and put this down to, 'pressure' (Maurice) and, 'the fear of complaints' (Charles). This strikes at the integrity of inspection and is a matter for Ofsted's quality assurance processes.

At this point I want to note that the headteachers also mentioned a number of practical issues, though none could be termed as dissonance, more obstacles to be overcome. These are not only about their capacity to leave their schools for around 20 days a year. Freda says:

'The most difficult part of doing inspections as a serving head is not doing them often enough...I only do one every half term so it's quite a long period between and I need to read up each time and refresh my memory.'

Brenda also talks about the difficulties of, 'keeping up to date', as does Robert who notes:

'It's difficult to keep up with all the changes. I don't have time to read them until the last minute, until I really have to.'

Freda is also mindful of the consequences should headteachers fail to pass the inspector training:

'It's difficult for heads because if you put yourself forward and don't get through its difficult going back.'

Frank (secondary) feels more comfortable and credible now that his own school is classified as good following its most recent inspection, since previously it had been requiring improvement.

Rose reflects on how frustrated she would be if she were to be inspected by a headteacher from a school that is not as good as her own:

'If somebody came in here as a satisfactory person I would be a bit miffed...they'd have to have something else to offer...if they were in a school that requires improvement but they'd brought that school out of special measures then that's different.'

Moving from being a team member to leading inspections is a common theme cited by the headteachers, with two thirds of them firm that they do not wish to lead. A recurrent point is the problem of managing the time commitment. Helen (secondary) says:

'How can I take four or five days out of school? I can take one, I can take two but I couldn't do four. Being out two days is enough.'

Brenda comments, *'I don't want to lead...I couldn't do that and run my school.'*
Similarly, Robert says:

'While I'm a headteacher I wouldn't consider it...although I've got a great team when I come back to school, after a one or two day inspection I have a lot of work to deal with...those weeks are very tiring.'

Others take a similar stance, while citing the possible consequences for their own school should they lead. Charles says:

'Haven't got the time, haven't got the inclination. Leading would kill me... it impinges on the work here which is to get better standards, to make sure the kids make more progress. If I spend a lot of time out of school I'm not sure that happens. It's getting that balance.'

Maurice makes the same point and is set against leading:

'Not unless I'm forced. Even in a school like this that runs like clockwork most of the time, when you get back there's additional workload, things your deputy can't do.'

Freda is also adamant she will not lead:

'That feels me with dread. I've been with leads who have said, "I don't want to lead anymore". I would find it impossible, the commitment of time and the writing of the reports. For headteachers it's a huge commitment of time. I haven't yet done twenty days in a year because even that's a big commitment.'

Some of the headteachers go even further. Maurice says he will not lead, *'unless forced'* and Freda uses, *'dread'*, but Christine, an experienced headteacher of an

outstanding school and who has led in the past, talks emotively, using '*daunted*' about the differences between leading and teaming:

'I did lead for a very short time. You've got so much information that I felt daunted, almost panic. I thought, "I can't get through all this. What am I going to do? It's just coming out of my ears'...a huge difference (as a team inspector) you know when you walk away on that second day and you have handed your evidence forms in and you have tea with your family you're not thinking.'

Brenda also used to lead inspections, but like Christine no longer does so because she did not like receiving critical feedback:

'My writing is dreadful. I'm not good at writing reports because there isn't time to keep up with the ever changing report writing requirements. I went from good to satisfactory (the outcome of the quality assurance read of the report) and I am not happy with that.'

Finally, Olive and Diana are the only two headteachers to offer more positive thoughts about leading at some point. Diana says, '*maybe when I'm thinking of retiring*', and Olive notes, '*once I retire I might like to do the leading then*'.

In summary, the headteachers voice some dissonance about inspecting. Their concerns may be grouped into the following categories: frustrations with the Ofsted criteria, some inspectors' judgements are too soft and several practical issues. The latter include the management of time, not inspecting regularly enough to keep up to date, the possibility of failing the training, worries that their own schools may lose their outstanding or good status, and being inspected by a headteacher from a school not as 'good' as their own.

The headteachers, with two exceptions who might do so when they retire, are set against moving up from team work to leading. Indeed, some use emotive words

such as, '*dread*' and '*fear*'. Those who have led are disinclined to do so again. Those who do not wish to lead cite concerns about time management and keeping up to date, as well as appreciating the need to prioritise the performance of their own schools.

This chapter closes by considering the similarities and differences among respondents that emerged in the interviews.

4.10. Synopsis of headteachers' engagement as inspectors

The two tables that follow (4.1 and 4.2) draw together the key themes to emerge and indicate how many times each emerged. The first chart sets out where the headteachers align positively with their engagement in inspection, the second where their engagement is negative.

I do not seek to make too much of these since this is a qualitative study and I do not claim that the headteachers interviewed are representative. I also acknowledge that the headteachers' responses were prompted by the questions I asked. Nonetheless the tables may help to give a flavour of what is important to them and crucially, illustrate the range of views even among a small sample. I shall pick up on some of the key points in the next chapter, but nothing should be read into the fact that five categories received common responses where the headteachers were positive, while eight expressed negative views. In this sense, the charts show the extent of the uniformity of views.

Table 4.1**Positive alignment with inspection practice**

Positive alignment	Brenda	Frank	Helen	Christine	Robert	Deborah	Maurice	Rose	Diana	Charles	Olive	Freda	Frequency
Commitment to the principle of inspection	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	12
Sure that the inspected schools value their presence on inspection teams	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	10
Enjoy mostly good relations with other inspectors and the mutual support on teams	√	√	√	X	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	10
Believe they lend credibility to the inspection process	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	X	√	X	9
Use of the Ofsted rubric in their own schools	X	√	√	√	√	X	√	X	X	√	√	X	7

Table 4.2

Negative alignment with inspection practice

Negative alignment	Brenda	Frank	Helen	Christine	Robert	Deborah	Maurice	Rose	Diana	Charles	Olive	Freda	Frequency
Disappointed with the inspection of their own schools	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	11
Do not wish to lead inspections	X	√	X	X	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	8
Frustrated with some other inspectors	√	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	√	X	7
Experience inconsistent application of the Ofsted rubric	X	X	X	X	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	X	6
Experience indifference from local authorities	X	X	X	X	√	X	√	√	√	X	√	√	6
Poor experiences with some lead inspectors	X	X	X	√	X	√	√	√	X	X	X	X	4
Experience negativity from other headteachers	√	X	√	X	√	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	4
Encounter frustration from their own staff	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	√	X	X	3
Experience negativity from the headteachers they inspect	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	2

4.11. Chapter summary

Each of the headteachers has their individual portfolio of experiences in headship and as an inspector. All have decided to cross the boundary between headship and inspection, and the role of inspector is one that holds great interest for all of them. All twelve headteachers display a commitment to the principle of inspection. They had a disposition to take on this role and by doing so they have placed themselves in a position where they have the potential to introduce elements of one practice into another. They hold strong views about how inspectors go about their work.

The headteachers consistently reflect on the advantages they bring to inspection practice and how as serving practitioners they differ from other inspectors. Ten refer to instances where teachers and especially the headteacher give every indication that they value their presence on the inspection team, giving '*credibility*' to the inspection process. The data also shows that inspecting lends them credibility back in their own school and here they are effectively boundary outposts, bringing back news and ideas, even though this is sometimes a source of frustration to their own staff. The data shows that boundary skills are required to manage this back in their school.

The data reveals both similarities and differences between the views of this small sample of headteachers but overall their view is that inspection helps to improve schools, including their own. They are committed to inspecting because of its impact on their work as headteacher and commented positively on this. They think that teachers, and especially the headteachers of the schools they inspect, value their presence on the inspection team and it lends credibility to inspection. They value working as part of a team and most say they enjoy good relations with most other inspectors. They are invariably well supported by their governors.

At the same time the headteachers voice misgivings about some aspects of their inspection work. All but one of the respondents expresses disappointment with the

inspection(s) of their own schools. A half are frustrated with some other inspectors because they are out of touch, and a third of this sample are angry at the way some lead inspectors go about their work, especially when their findings are not given due credence. A half of the headteachers are concerned about the inspection rubric and the inconsistent application of it, while a similar number say they experience some hostility from other headteachers, and experience indifference from their local authorities. A quarter acknowledge that they can be a source of irritation for own their staff, and two-thirds of the respondents say they do not wish to move on to lead inspections for various reasons.

The next chapter is a discussion of the research findings.

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1. Introduction to the chapter

The previous chapter set out what the headteachers said about being inspected and becoming an inspector, about what it is like being an inspector, their relations with various stakeholders, the consequences for them of inspecting and the ambivalence they have about some aspects of the work. The purpose of this chapter is to set these findings within the key issues arising from the contextualisation of the study in chapter two.

This chapter begins by considering the transition from being inspected to becoming an inspector. It then looks at boundary practices and then considers the dual identities of headteachers who cross the boundary to inspect. The chapter finishes by considering the place of headteacher inspectors within the leadership of the school system.

5.2. From being inspected to inspecting

This section contextualises the headteachers' emotional commitment to school improvement and their decision to further this by crossing a boundary to inspect. I do this by considering what it was like for them as headteachers to be inspected and then to consider their moral purpose, important when I consider their potential as system leaders in the next chapter (chapter six).

Being inspected

The headteachers interviewed in common with many other headteachers if some commentators are to be believed (Coldron et al.: 2014; Crawford, 2007) do not like being inspected. My analysis of the data shows the headteachers hold strong, mainly critical, views about their experiences of being inspected. While they have much to gain from inspection, they also have the potentiality to lose. As headteachers they get much of the credit for their school's success as validated by

its inspection. Conversely, there is the potential of opprobrium for perceived failure.

In practice, a third of the headteachers reflect their acute awareness of the consequences of a poor inspection outcome. There is no hiding place for headteachers given the public nature of an inspection event and the published report which stays on the public record (Hayes, 2001; Inglis, 2000). This touches on Fielding's (2001) view about the superficiality and despoliation of the hinterland of indigenous professional judgement. It is symptomatic of a fear of failure.

The headteachers' description of being inspected include, '*bitterly disappointed*' and '*absolutely horrendous*' indicating that they are concerned with the practice of inspection, rather than its principle to which they have committed. As one of the headteacher's rather colourfully commented:

'As a head I was petrified of Ofsted. It is so public. What about if it goes 'tits up' on an inspection?'

These emotive words when describing what it is like to be inspected from their viewpoint as headteacher lend weight to Wenger's argument that a boundary can be a source of, '*disconnection*' (1998: 233). One of the key issues for the headteachers was the apparent reluctance of some lead inspectors to engage in a dialogue with them as the headteacher, perhaps reflecting Fielding's (2001) view that inspection is characterised by brusque carelessness with too much power.

Both headship and inspection involve power relationships (Hargreaves, 1998). Maurice is mindful of the power he exercises as an inspector and this is integral to the concept of identity (Foucault, 1990; Wenger, 1998). As an inspector he finds having power as '*scary*' as being inspected. As headteachers the interviewees bear the brunt of the executive responsibility for many, often hundreds and over time thousands of children and adults.

Several comments made by the headteachers also reveal their frustrations with inspectors who are not serving practitioners. Maurice for instance expresses the view that inspectors, who have been out of school, '*get cold to it*' and do not realise how, '*scary*' a process it is. He commented that some inspectors are, '*unnecessarily brusque at times*.' The use of, '*brusque*' reflecting Fielding (2001). This point is also reflected by Christine. She thought that she was, '*done to*' as a headteacher but remains a willing participant in the process.

However, Christine's negative experience of being inspected has influenced her approach as an inspector, on the other side of the fence. She illustrates the empathy she showed towards a teacher:

'It was an inadequate lesson and a difficult feedback to give. I pulled very strongly on my experience as a head. There was some sort of acceptance from her that I was speaking to her as a head rather than an inspector. I just saw this poor woman as one of my members of staff and thinking, "I'm going to walk away from this place tomorrow and she will live with that for the next four years". I didn't want that but it was a poor lesson and she needed to be told and the reasons why.'

Christine's point is interesting for at least two reasons. First, that she, '*pulled very strongly on my experience as a head*', underlying how important she views this. Second, that the teacher, '*needed to be told*', signalling a commitment to her role as an inspector.

Looking at issues from a different standpoint, going into a school as an inspector can be a source of anxiety, at least for some. Maurice, the headteacher of an outstanding school, gives a flavour of how inspecting was, and to a degree still is, for him:

'It's an extremely nerve-wracking process and even now I get butterflies going in. I remember sitting outside a school, the first one, about an hour and a half early.'

My reading of the data suggests there are several reasons why headteachers want to gain an inside track as an inspector. The data indicates that the headteacher's motivation to inspect does not arise from any enjoyment of being on the receiving end of inspection. This is not surprisingly since surely nobody likes being scrutinised at work. Yet these headteachers have set out to be selected, trained and assessed as inspectors and are prepared to start as novices, in stark contrast to their standing as the professional lead in their school. Their feelings about being inspected as a headteacher cross the boundary with them as they move from headship into inspection, just as they take their experiences as an inspector back into their schools.

The headteachers Robinson (2012) interviewed, all of whom were from the primary phase, gave three reasons for undertaking new roles: a moral purpose, professional challenge and development, and the financial considerations. These broadly mirror the findings of the respondents in this study though financial considerations, while mentioned by a couple of the headteachers as being useful to supplement their school's income, were not a major factor in their decision to inspect.

In Robinson's study the headteachers were engaged in system leadership roles and most declared their main motivation for taking up these new roles was professional growth and challenge, underpinned by moral purpose. The next section considers this point further since it is one reason why headteachers cross a boundary to take on the role of school inspector.

Moral purpose

The headteachers see accountability and its associated demands as a key factor in how their identity as school leaders is defined (Cranston, 2007 & 2013) and this reflects moral purpose. As Deborah comments:

'I absolutely agree with the inspection process. There should be some kind of system of validation of schools which is reported. You're spending public money and you've got to be accountable for the quality of what's going on.'

Charles takes a similar stance:

'The last decade or so things have improved mightily...any external body that is here to validate us as we need to be seen at our best. I really do believe it helps us to improve. I'm very pro and would stand up in front of any audience to say, "We need an external system of accountability because otherwise we get what we had before and that isn't good enough".'

As Woods and Simkins (following Hargreaves, 2010 & 2011) argued:

'Underpinning the policy of dismantling local authorities is the idea of a 'self-improving school system' which is led by schools and built around school to school collaboration.' (2014: 334)

This is reflected by Maurice who comments:

'Inspection when it's done properly can provide a platform for schools and heads to move on.'

The headteachers sampled all see crossing the boundary between the two activity systems (headship and inspecting) to be of value (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Pont

et al.: 2008; Thomson, 2008) and this reflects their commitment to inspection as a tool for school improvement, in their own schools and others. This lends weight to Hargreaves (2005) who argued that that how leaders respond is important if change is to be successful, and sustainable. By inspecting my supposition is that the headteachers in the sample are not resisting the change agenda (Rayner, 2014; Reio, 2005) and the data suggests that in common with teaching (Hargreaves, 1998) inspecting is not simply about technical competence but is inseparable from moral purpose.

The headteachers stress the contribution inspecting makes to their leadership and to the improvement of the school they lead. These headteachers, like the others, are effectively, '*resident inspectors*' (Troman, 1997) since they are taking a professional stance with an underlying moral purpose by seeking to ensure the pupils in their school perform well.

Several of the headteachers gave examples of how they helped local schools and other headteachers informally by offering advice, while some went beyond this by giving training as well.

However, this is not universal and, for the headteachers sampled, is not done in a structured way, For instance, Robert comments:

'I'm amazed they don't use me more. My local cluster of schools will ask me questions and ask me to come in but that's not through the authority.'

Brenda expressed no interest in working with local headteachers on behalf of her local authority. Her interest in inspecting is very focussed and is about her school, and only her school:

'I've been selected to support others. In one of these schools the headteacher earns more than me. Why am I supporting him? I go on inspection to make my school better so I turned it down.'

Similarly, Diana says she would not help the local authority even if asked but like Robert she supports local schools informally. Diana actually gave a lengthy illustration of where she had drawn on her inspection knowledge about what inspectors look for when they look at a school's arrangements for safeguarding children.

However, during the interviews none of the headteachers went further than this localised and rather ad hoc support to suggest how they could be of more benefit to the wider system in a formal way, and they did not talk about a, '*collective educational agency*' (Mulford et al.: 2009: 417). That is not to say they do not think about it. Olive commented on how important it is for more headteachers to inspect.

"I keep banging on that we ought to have more people doing this, "you ought to do this...you ought to sign up for it. We need more of us in there". They may talk about me behind my back but they can't argue with me to my face. I'm saying, "Get in there".'

This reflects the fact that the headteachers care a great deal about their identity as inspectors, an important job of work for them and several commented on how they value the work of their colleagues back in their own school which enables them to absent themselves to inspect. They did not refer to any problems caused by their absence from school while inspecting. Neither did they raise any concerns about being, '*surplus to requirement*' (Macbeath, 2005) in their schools, although realistically this was not likely to be voiced.

In summary, the headteachers sampled illustrate how their active engagement in inspection impacts well on their school as well as benefiting them professionally. There are several examples in the data citing how the headteachers bring their learning back into their school, how it affects how they lead it and how learning through inspecting is used for school improvement. This suggests their acceptance of the performativity culture, embracing the part that inspection plays in it.

Governors also have relevance, including as we move into the future as more and more headteachers are released to inspect. This too involves their moral purpose and acceptance of inspection as a means of improvement, of their own school and others. Some of them have a place in the middle tier already as national leaders of governance, but exploration of this is for another place. Suffice to note here that national leaders of governance are organised by the national college of teaching and leadership as part of its teaching schools and system leadership programme.

The next section illustrates how inspecting may be seen as a boundary practice.

5.3. Boundary practices

In this section the argument made is that the headteachers engage in a boundary practice where inspection has become a practice of its own as a result of the effort that is required to sustain it (Wenger, 1998). Headteacher inspectors often find themselves brokering, where they introduce elements of one practice into another. As such they have the capacity to be catalysts for change and become system leaders, a point I explore in the next chapter.

The section throws light on what knowledge the headteachers claim in order to take on the identity of school inspector. It focuses on some of the pertinent concepts: boundary crossing, brokering, boundary qualities, boundary artefacts and then considers the challenges in crossing this particular boundary.

Boundary crossing

The headteachers, as boundary crossers, have a foot in two camps. They have legitimacy as the professional lead in their schools. All but one lead good or outstanding schools and this supports their expert status. As inspectors they have legitimacy through selection, training, and engagement in inspection practice over time. Like the headteachers cited by Bush (2013) these headteacher inspectors have, *'positioned themselves as proactive leadership professionals, not reactive managers'* (p. 128). They are standing outside the experience of headship and are able to look at it from the standpoint as inspectors. Their legitimacy is underpinned by the political impetus to increase their number.

Brokering

The act of brokering is exemplified when the headteachers explain the rationale for inspectors' judgements to the school's staff. It is seen when they manage the expectations of the inspected headteachers who often, not unsurprisingly given the stakes, think a higher inspection grade is merited. The headteachers also contextualise things for other inspectors and in doing so help to explain and clarify the context of a school's performance.

Wenger (1998) argued that engagement is experienced as tacit collegueship or unspoken practices of collaboration. The data shows some evidence for the former. One of the features of headteachers' engagement in inspection practice is the relationship between them and the headteachers they inspect, and several perceive the relationship to be markedly different from that between the headteachers and other inspectors. The evidence includes several examples where the inspected headteachers more readily confide or engage in conversation with them, rather than other inspectors. We do not actually know, and it is a potential research area, but the very large majority of those interviewed say this is what distinguishes them from other inspectors.

For example, as Deborah comments:

'There's a lot of looks that go between you...sometimes they confide things in you on inspection because there's that camaraderie...you know what it's like.'

Similarly, Maurice commented:

'They do confide in me...off the record, head to head, 'how do you think I'm doing?'

At the same time, the data does not show collaboration. On the contrary, one of the things that cause dissonance with several of the headteachers is their frustrations with some lead inspectors whom they see as not being rigorous, or tough, enough in their judgements.

The data shows that the headteachers mediate while on inspection. For instance, Olive comments that one discussion with a headteacher, *'Moved into a counselling thing'*, while Christine gives an example where she suggests she made a real connection with a teacher she had observed teaching where pupils' learning was judged to be inadequate:

'I pulled very strongly on my experience as a head. I think there was some sort of acceptance that I was speaking to her as a head rather than an inspector.'

By drawing on their day to day knowledge of what it is currently like in schools the headteachers illustrate how they help to facilitate a connection between people who are on either side of the boundary, in this case teachers and inspectors. By doing so they serve to build bridges and connect both sides (Fisher & Atkinson-Grosjean, 2002). My interpretation of the data shows that all but one of the

headteachers exemplify how they help to manage the divergent discourses (Walker & Nocon, 2007) across the boundary between the inspected and the inspectors.

Overall, from the data it appears that headteacher inspectors meet several of Wenger's different forms of brokering (1998: 235). Most who do not engage in any other practice outside of their own school are boundary spanners since they take care of one specific boundary over time. However, while this may have been the case for the sample, since then more headteachers have taken up inspecting, many of whom are also National Leaders of Education. Headteacher inspectors are boundary roamers in the sense that they move from one inspection to another or from one school to another, moving knowledge, although they do not create connections. Headteacher inspectors also act as boundary outposts in the sense that they bring back news and explore new territories.

Wenger (1998) argued that some individuals thrive on being brokers and since headteachers' have no obligation to inspect but do so voluntarily, my presumption is that they are well disposed to do so. How they fare is another matter since individuals who cross boundaries not only bridge the gap between worlds but, and at the same time, represent the division between the related worlds (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011).

Boundary qualities

As inspectors the headteachers sampled are called upon to judge the performance of schools led by their peers. This is not without its pitfalls and the data shows that certain qualities, possibly skills, are necessary, such as a degree of toughness and a willingness to be isolated. These are qualities that other headteachers might also possess.

This is because, as inspectors, while they bridge the gap between worlds they also represent the division between the related worlds (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011).

This comes across most clearly when the headteachers cite examples of the frostiness encountered from some of their peers. In fact seven of those sampled, or more than half, report a degree of hostility from other headteachers. This includes both from those they inspect and from headteachers of schools in their locality.

Use of the inspection artefacts as boundary objects

My view is that the key Ofsted documents, principally the *School Inspection Handbook*, are artefacts and serve as mediators of activity (Vygotsky, 1978). They underpin the process of inspection because they are the coda for inspectors against which they measure the evidence they gather and the data shows how the use of these documents underpins their identity as inspectors.

These artefacts are at the core of the headteachers' work as inspectors. They are used on a regular basis through training and on inspection. They also play a significant part in forming their identity as headteachers as boundary crossers when they bring their content and norms back from inspecting into their school. Seven of the headteachers comment that the *School Inspection Handbook* is routinely used in their own schools.

The key inspection documents represent the interface between the domains of headship (schools) and Ofsted and serve as anchor for meaning within each domain. They satisfy the information requirements of each world and their use is pivotal in generating knowledge across the boundary. It is likely that every headteacher has a copy of the *School Inspection Handbook* to hand. As such not only do the boundary objects provide a common frame of reference for communication but they are potentially an important means of changing practice in schools. This is because, as well as being routinely used by inspectors, including serving practitioners, week in week out, these artefacts are now used by most, possibly all, headteachers to support the evaluation of their school's performance.

In common use, the inspection artefacts are generic because they are applicable as boundary objects to all state funded schools and in practice the *School Inspection Handbook* is robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites when used by inspectors. This is because it is designed by Ofsted to be relevant to all schools, from the small rural primary school through to a secondary academy with many students, perhaps on multi sites. It becomes strongly structured in individual site use because the descriptors in it are applied by inspectors to make their first-hand, school-specific judgements.

In daily use by schools the *School Inspection Handbook* can be adapted by schools to address their local needs and constraints. As such not only are they used as guidance documents for inspectors but underpin the narrative of schooling in today's performativity culture, used as management development tools to influence schools between inspections. Arguably, in this way they also serve to control by becoming embedded in a school's work.

The data indicates that the headteachers sampled welcome these publicly accessible artefacts, which serve multiple constituencies. Because of this they are an important means of transforming knowledge since they change practice across the knowledge domain that spans schools and inspection. In effect they function as a bridge (Nitzgen, 2004) between schools and inspectors in their capacity as agents of central government. As Rose comments, '*I gain because I get an insight into the Framework.*'

The meaning of the inspection documents, as boundary objects, is not always clear and may need interpreting and explaining to those who do not understand the context (Bakker et al.: 2006). My view is that this is pertinent to the inspection setting where headteacher inspectors use their professional judgement in interpreting the inspection artefacts and helping to explain, or broker, inspection judgements to schools, principally to other headteachers. Akkerman and Bakker (2011) identified co-ordination as one of the mechanisms defining learning at the

boundary. In the context inspection the use of boundary objects by headteacher inspectors may be viewed as mediating artefacts. This applies most often where there is contention.

My interpretation of the data is that the headteachers generally do not find their use of the artefacts places them in a conflicted position. This is because they find using the documents helpful, lending objectivity to the inspection process. Inspectors fall back on the *School Inspection Handbook* and some of the headteachers cite how as boundary brokers they use the boundary objects to rationalise judgements to the headteachers, including when explaining to them why a higher grade is not given. As Helen comments:

'I don't find a conflict when I'm inspecting but I do understand and empathise with a school that are trying to pitch for a judgement they just can't get. I am able to tell them why they can't get it and why we need to apply the evaluation schedule.'

This is something that is typically tackled by the lead inspector, rather than Helen, who is teaming. It reveals something of the different relationship current practitioners think they have with the headteachers they inspect, certainly in Helen's case.

In practice, the *School Inspection Handbook* provides a common frame of reference for communication about knowledge and practice not only for schools and school inspectors but also for the public. This is because it, and the other Ofsted documents, are freely available on-line, a significant improvement on the practice of inspection before Ofsted. Then, Her Majesty's Inspectorate inspected schools but their mechanisms were largely unknown, their findings were not published and reporting did not fall within the public domain.

The next section is about the challenges faced by headteachers who also inspect.

The challenges faced by headteachers who inspect

My interpretation of the data shows that there are several challenges faced by the headteachers when they move back and forth between these two domains since the boundary between any two activity systems encompasses difficulties of action and interaction across them (Edwards, Lunt & Stamou, 2010).

Crossing the boundary between headship and inspection is not always straightforward since boundaries can create, '*disconnections and misunderstanding*' (Wenger, 1998: 233). Headteachers who inspect, in common with all boundary crossers, run the risk of not being accepted by those on the other side of the boundary, in this case the teachers of the schools they inspect, including their headteachers. However, the data shows little evidence of this.

Moving back and forth across the boundary between headship and inspection leads to learning by introducing into practice elements of each, many of which are positive. However, one issue arising from the data is the danger of unsettling their own staff by bringing back ideas from inspections. Three headteachers comment on this, one quarter of the sample. Robert, for example, describes how learning on inspection can cause problems, demonstrating that the boundary in the middle of two activity systems of school and inspection reflects the difficulty of interaction. He comments,

'One of the things from doing inspection is the words we are using. Often teachers write, 'Making good progress.' We had a bit of a do about that and it got us into hot water because teachers realise the kids haven't made the progress they should have done. Then we get the backlash from parents who said, "Last time you said progress was good." This is an example of how inspection can come back in to school and bite you.'

In other words, the use of the Ofsted terminology proved uncomfortable in Robert's own school, and he adds:

'At school I have to be careful not to be too inspectorial. I find that I look at things with a much more critical eye. If I walk into a class and do lesson observations staff can get a little bit twitchy because they know that I've got an inspector's hat on. Which might be a good thing or it might not. Sometimes the staff say, "what has he seen now"? I have to be careful not to overburden my staff.'

One of the hurdles to be faced is the reification of their competence and a point to emerge from the data is the implication that the headteachers' credibility is at risk if their own school's performance is not judged to be good or outstanding. Credibility gives them an edge and is what distinguishes and differentiates them from other inspectors. Deborah, for example, cites the additional pressure she feels to be accurate in the assessments of her own school's performance:

'As an inspector I can't face having somebody coming and shoot down my judgements.'

This strikes at the core of Deborah's credibility as a headteacher because she is acknowledging that her judgements about her own school and its performance need to be accurate and validated as such by inspectors. Diana makes a related point, *'I am more vulnerable because we're just a satisfactory school.'* The use of, *'satisfactory'* (a grade 3 or 'requires improvement') is significant in reflecting Diana's anxiety because headteachers who inspect are expected to lead a good or outstanding school. Otherwise their circumstances are looked into by the contractors, on behalf of Ofsted. An exception may be made if, for instance, the headteacher was appointed to bring a school out of a category of concern and decisions are made on a case by case basis.

Staff of the inspected schools may use internet engines to research the inspectors' own schools, which they might look at alongside the inspectors' curricula vitae they receive the afternoon before the inspectors' visit. Intuitively, one supposes the teachers of the inspected schools would not be impressed if inspectors' leadership was 'requiring improvement' or 'inadequate'. Serving practitioners will be aware of this.

Charles says he would not take up a headship of a less than good school because it might jeopardise his accreditation as an inspector. This issue may become more prevalent as more headteachers inspect, increasing the possibility that they may lead schools that have a less than good inspection outcome, for one reason or another and this has implications for the expansion of the practitioner workforce.

However, of more strategic significance from the data is that several headteachers express elements of dissonance with the inspection discourse as they see it practised from within. Powerful professionals are often resistant to managerial intervention and organisational controls (Evetts, 2011) and several of the headteachers reflect on some of the negative aspects of inspection with strong views about how some inspectors go about their work. This mirrors their general dissatisfaction with the inspections of their own schools, in spite of inspection outcomes which were mostly positive.

5.4. Dual identities

This section shows that inspecting has an impact on the headteachers' identity. Mindful of the issues earmarked when contextualising the study (chapter 2), it focusses on: identity formation, communities of practice, accountabilities and roles, the figured world of inspection, knowledge and learning, team-working, empathy, capture, sameness, leading inspections, limitations, support for a dual identity and identity conflict. The section throws light on how the professional practices of headteachers change as a result of their inspection work.

Identity formation

The headteachers in the sample, all qualified teachers, have moved through the teaching ranks and my presumption is that this progression is a result of their ability and capability as successful teachers and middle managers. This infers that by the time they become inspectors they may reasonably be regarded as experts in their field. Certainly, they are the professional leaders in their school. Additionally, they almost invariably lead good or outstanding schools. Their expert status underpins their professional identity and as headteachers they are powerful professionals who enjoy relative autonomy over their working practices.

Inspection work is an experience of identity for the headteachers and entails a process and a place (Wenger, 1998). The headteachers' views about how inspection fits in with their professional lives lend weight to the view that professional identity is negotiated in the course of an individual's biography.

Identity is influenced by prospects and goals (Vähäsantanen et al.: 2008). One of the headteachers sampled, for example, considers that being an inspector was pivotal in the governors' decision to appoint him to his current headship. Others view inspecting as something to move into so that they might continue to work part-time once they leave headship, when they cease to be practitioners.

The data reveals how the headteachers view their identity as expressed by their perceptions of themselves (Vähäsantanen et al.: 2008). As Robert comments:

'I am a headteacher first and foremost and today's outstanding report is tomorrow's chip paper. Schools turn around very quickly.'

Robert is being pragmatic. He is vocalising that though his school received an outstanding judgement at its last inspection there are no guarantees about its next one. His priority is clear.

The data shows that the headteachers in the sample do not consider themselves as expert inspectors. This is because their knowledge about the practice of inspection is limited compared to some others, especially the non-serving practitioners who may be inspecting on a more regular basis, perhaps even weekly. Their knowledge develops over time through practice and is both collective and situated (Sole & Edmondson, 2002) since it involves team working on specific school sites. Headteachers may decide to move on to leading inspections or not. Three of the sample did lead at one time, but no longer do so. Others have little intention of progressing to leading and in fact several of those interviewed were firm about this since it is perceived as being fraught with challenges, mostly related to how they manage their time.

Communities of Practice

Wenger's (1998) constructivist view of identity formation has the role of community as an integral part. He argued that an individual's identity is formed in the context of communities of practice: by taking part in meaningful activities and interactions, by engaging in community-building conversations, by sharing artefacts and by the negotiation of new situations. My view is that the headteachers' role as inspectors meets each of these criteria in some way.

Inspection is a meaningful activity, and even those who are not advocates of its practice, would probably not doubt that. Interactions with the staff of the schools they inspect are at the core of inspection, as are the many shared conversations with team members. While interaction and conversations are the bedrock of an inspection team's work, the *School Inspection Handbook* is the inspectors' key artefact and it is where explicit knowledge resides (Bruni et al.: 2007). Each and every inspection event is new and unique, while each outcome is negotiated over the course of the inspection, with the evidence presented by schools considered by inspectors. Wenger also argued that identity formation implies sustained intensity

and relations of mutuality. In my experience an inspection day is an intense experience, for all, the inspected and the inspectors.

Inspection also aligns with Wenger's (1998) notion of engagement since it entails a process of transforming the knowledge the headteachers take with them in to an inspection event. Engagement also involves tacit colleagueship and unspoken practices of collaboration and the data shows how much the headteachers value being part of a team, in spite of some reservations.

Inspecting lends itself to imagination too where the headteachers reflect back on their practice as headteacher and where they project their identities forward. The data includes several instances where the headteachers use the learning gained in their own schools, and where they reflect on leading inspections or inspecting more upon retirement.

Wenger's concept of alignment is also pertinent since inspectors are able to place their actions in a wider context. The headteachers' comments about the need for accountability and how inspection contributes to school improvement reflects their moral purpose. Their comments relating to power (Foucault, 1990) show that they are pleased to step down from leading their school to the role as team inspector but they do resent the instances when their evidence is not given what they consider its due credence by some lead inspectors.

Accountabilities and roles

Headteachers who inspect are held accountable in two worlds, as headteachers in their school and as inspectors within teams, leading to identities that are multiple and complex (Beijaard et al.: 2004) and involve multiple goals (Goffman, 1959). As headteachers they are accountable to their school's governing body, its staff, parents and pupils/students. At the same time as inspectors they are accountable to the lead inspectors with whom they work, the contractors who engage them

(until 31 August 2015) and Ofsted. Ultimately, their accountability to Ofsted as the government's agency and whose badge they carry on inspection is secured through the rigour and robustness of the inspection judgements to which they contribute. It might be expected that these accountability pressures lead to some ambiguity or discomfort (Jones, 2008) but the data indicates this is not the case. The headteachers' moral compasses are set firm in spite of some conflict (Mishler, 1999; Curry-Johnson, 2001).

The data reflects how the headteachers say they reacted to being inspected and how this influences the way they inspect. For example, Brenda demonstrates the importance of understanding the context of headship:

"When heads say to me that they have excluded pupils, I understand completely."

The implication is that as serving practitioners the headteachers have a clear knowledge and understanding of the significance of such issues in schools. This influences the view Rose has about how her identity as a headteacher influences her work as inspector:

'The way I inspect comes from the fact that I'm a serving practitioner. As a serving head it makes me go and look in the cracks. I would never walk in a school and presume because it was 'nice' they've got it covered.'

This point is also a criticism of other inspectors who are not serving headteachers. Rose is suggesting that other inspectors may be easily duped and comments on the way she brings the experience of headship to inspection:

'There's credibility that you know what they're going through on a day to day basis because you're doing it as well'. She adds, 'I wouldn't say, "this is

what I've done". What I would say is, "this was hard to implement, how did you go about it"?'

This helps to illustrate how identity is mediated through the way individuals are comfortable or constrained in their dual role. Rose is typical of the sample. There is no constraint and she seems comfortable in both roles.

Adopting a dual identity in this way, as inspector as well as headteacher, enables the headteachers to face the challenge of negotiating and combining ingredients from different contexts (Engeström et al.: 1995).

The figured world of inspection

Some characteristics of figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) can be seen in the findings from the data. Inspecting on behalf of Ofsted is a cultural phenomenon to which my focus group are recruited into. The practice of inspection develops, and will probably do so increasingly as their number rise, through their inspection work. As inspectors, the headteachers are deployed to landscapes of activity (Urrieta Jr, 2007) on inspection teams. These inspection events function as contexts of meaning within which social encounters have significance and inspection outcomes are important. The headteachers' membership of inspection teams in particular times and places, does matter, both to themselves and others, including other headteachers.

These inspection teams are socially organised by Ofsted, currently through their agents, the inspection contractors, and are reproduced over time, although they are seldom replicated exactly since team compositions are routinely changed. Inspection is populated by familiar social types (Urrieta Jr. 2007) since the headteachers work with other qualified inspectors in settings with which they are generally familiar, even though not with the specific setting of the schools they inspect. Increasingly the typical inspector is a serving practitioner. As inspectors

the headteachers learn to relate to other team members in ways that are different to any relationship they have in their role as headteachers in their own schools.

Urrieta Jr.'s (2007) point about figured worlds being created by, '*contentious work*' (p.109) is also pertinent to inspection. This is because inspection practice embraces elements of inspection such as judgements that may be contested: by schools, and other headteachers, questionable relationships with some team and lead inspectors, and with some local headteachers.

Knowledge and learning

The work of headteacher inspectors involves the kinds of knowledge that is carried out in organizations, like Ofsted, which host hierarchical and geographical peripheries. The widely dispersed geographically inspection teams are part of the hierarchical structure of Ofsted. There is interchangeability, with some inspectors working as both team and lead inspectors.

The knowledge each serving headteacher brings to inspection practice will develop over time (Yanow, 2004) and will be different depending on a range of factors such as their experience(s) of headship and of being inspected, as well as of inspecting. While they are considered successful headteachers, as inspectors they begin as novices rather than experts. The challenges for them are heightened since headteachers invariably inspect for only a few days a year, perhaps only two days or one inspection a term, or at most possibly three inspections a term or up to 18 days a year. This is typified by the headteachers in my sample.

The data shows that the headteachers interviewed consider their expert knowledge of headship to be very relevant in their interactions across the boundary when in role as inspectors. They say that it is what makes them credible, lending weight to the relational or positional aspects of learning (Handley et al.: 2006; Holland et al.: 1998). The headteachers say it is what differentiates them from inspectors who

are not currently working in schools. They are sure their status as serving practitioners is appreciated by teachers and headteachers, as well as other inspectors. Their participation moves from one where it is legitimately peripheral (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as novice team inspectors to where it increases in engagement and complexity, perhaps as lead inspectors.

At the same time the staff and governors of their own schools appreciate the learning they bring back and share, not least with an eye on the school's next inspection. Their learning is situated since it is in part a product of inspection, the context and culture (Brown et al.: 1989).

The expert knowledge headteachers bring to inspecting is placed alongside the boundary objects and in this way learning for them takes place in practice (Holland et al.: 1998; Kirpal, 2004). It is site specific and dispersed (Sole & Edmondson, 2002) as headteachers make the transition from novice to expert in the domain of inspection. Inspection has an explicit beginning and end time (Contu and Wilmott, 2003) and the headteachers develop their learning in practice as distinct from learning through acquiring a theoretical understanding of inspection, or from only viewing inspection from being inspected.

Knowing about inspection is created through a continuous dialogue between explicit and tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994). This distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge is helpful (Hegarty, 2000) since the knowledge underpinning school inspections is both explicit and tacit. In the inspection setting explicit knowledge is objective and generally applicable, publicly available in systematic and propositional language and located in the school inspection artefacts, principally the *School Inspection Handbook*.

This is different from tacit knowledge which is reflected in inspection practice or the application of the inspection rubric by headteacher inspectors and other members of the team during the inspection visits. It is also tacit because, as

several of the headteachers exemplify to their consternation, there is an element of subjectivity since it is premised on inspectors using their professional judgement in an emotional enterprise in the high stakes context of inspection. This reflects the situatedness (Brown et al.: 1989) of an inspection event and contributes to the main charge against it, that of inconsistency.

The use of the inspection artefacts is important in generating new knowledge across boundaries (Carlile, 2002 & 2004). Indeed, seven or more than a half, of the headteachers refer to the use of the *School Inspection Handbook* in their own schools. For instance, Deborah illustrates how knowing the criteria through inspecting influences her daily work as a headteacher:

'To start to know those key features and to have them embedded in my mind when I am walking round my school...completely sharpened my focus and understanding of how things fit together.'

This exemplifies well how headteachers develop their knowledge through their visits to the schools they inspect and their work with their fellow inspectors, and this is valuable to their own organisation. As such knowing and doing are reciprocal where knowledge is situated and progressively developed through activity (Brown et al., 1989).

This knowledge develops as headteacher inspectors use the *School Inspection Handbook* in different school sites over time. It is this acquisition of knowledge through practice that is one of the key attributes valued by headteachers. As Helen (secondary) comments:

'I like the parameters. You've got the confidence to work within it because you say to the school, "Have you read the schedule, look what it says, you haven't got that, you haven't done it, so you can't get it". I feel comfortable having the framework to work with.'

Making a similar point while also drawing out the contribution of these boundary objects to school improvement, Maurice comments:

'It is helpful the Framework is out there and all the heads have got one and know it quite well. That's really raised leadership standards.'

Knowledge of inspection has built up for more than a century, although for only a couple of decades or so under the Ofsted regime. Knowledge resides within Ofsted and Her Majesty's Inspectorate, and also within the school inspector workforce which now includes an increasing number of headteachers. People develop knowledge that is valuable to an organisation and which it harnesses (Blackler, 1995). Organisations, in this case Ofsted, articulate and amplify that knowledge (Nonaka, 1994). In the case of inspection this is primarily but not only achieved through Her Majesty's Inspector of School's Annual Report to Parliament. While organisational knowledge lies within Ofsted, new knowledge is developed by individuals and harnessing this is important for the system, a point pertinent to system leadership.

Team-working

This section helps to illustrate how headteachers characterise their relationships with other inspectors. The data shows that the headteachers mostly enjoy good working relations with other inspectors and welcome the interactions. This resonates with Kelchterman & Ballet (2006) who, in the context of training settings, argued that headteachers' participation in events is often motivated by the possibility of meeting and exchanging ideas with their peers.

My interpretation of the data is that one of the reasons the headteachers value being members of an inspection team is because headship is quite an isolated position at times. Several comment that working as team inspectors contrasts to

headship where they are very much the leader of the team. Headteachers, working as team inspectors, always work with at least one other inspector.

Helen illustrates well how she finds it helpful to have relations with other inspectors which are sustained over time:

'If I seek advice about inspecting it will be colleagues I'm on inspection with. On my last inspection I knew the whole team bar one and that was useful because I felt able to ask, and it is much more of a professional dialogue.'

The data suggests that several of the headteachers are impressed with the inspection skills displayed by most other inspectors with whom they work, if not all of them. Several talk about, '*admire*' to characterise their view about non-serving practitioners, who unlike themselves often inspect on a more regular basis. Since the headteachers usually only complete a relatively few inspection days a year learning and knowing about the practice will not be speedy, especially should they not go on to lead inspections where they would gain a more complete overview of the process. For example, although she has inspected for some time Helen comments:

'I still feel wet behind the ears in terms of my ability to inspect even though I've done seventy odd schools.'

However, several of the headteachers expressed critical views about the conduct of some inspectors with whom they work, especially some lead inspectors. This lends weight to the view that Ofsted inspection is sometimes characterised by dislocation (Clarke & Ozga, 2011) while also mirroring the critical views of inspection practice as reflected by many commentators (Bell & Rowley, 2002; Bush, 2013; Fielding et al.: 1998; Hargreaves, 2004; Hughes et al.: 1997; Thomson, 2010; Waldegrave & Simons, 2014).

The next sections help to illustrate how the headteachers interviewed characterise their relationships with the teachers and headteachers of the schools they inspect.

Empathy

The data shows that ten of the 12 headteachers, the great majority, draw out their unique relationships with teachers in the schools they inspect, especially the headteachers. For instance, Maurice comments:

'There's more, "How is it going? How am I doing"? They do confide in me, off the record, head to head.'

Similarly, Deborah reports:

'There are a lot of looks between you and sometimes they confide things in you because there's that camaraderie.'

Several headteachers refer to an '*empathy*' with the teachers they inspect and suggest they think teachers are more relaxed with them than they are with other inspectors. Several go out of their way to let the teachers know that they are serving practitioners. As Olive comments:

'I always say, "I was in my own school yesterday, I'll be back in my own school again on Friday".'

While Christine says:

'My introduction will be, "I'm a serving head, I know what it's like, I've just been done myself quite recently".'

In practice many teachers will probably know they are headteacher inspectors since all inspectors' mini curriculum vitae are sent to the school after the notification call.

However, while most of the headteachers provide examples of empathy with those whom they inspect, some do not and vocalise impatience with the inspected. Having an emotional attachment is a, '*double edged sword*' according to Maurice, who feels that headteachers have not prepared their school for inspection well.

Deborah comments:

'Often I think, "you deserve to get only satisfactory at best for leadership and management".'

As a serving practitioner, Deborah knows how hard won an inspection judgment is and she is frustrated when a headteacher's performance does not meet her expectations. This is an example of how practitioners are frustrated, not with the inspection rubric but with the performance of the inspected school's headteacher. It seems that Deborah is looking for the school to do better and is discomforted by the headteacher's performance. Of course, we do not know whether non-practitioners experience similar frustrations and this is another potential research area.

Capture

There is a groundswell of opinion that inspection needs to change partly because of schools' antagonism to much of the current additional inspector workforce as well as the perceived inconsistency between inspection teams. This has led to the initiative to recruit and deploy headteachers and other serving practitioners. The data reflects that there is a potential difficulty in reconciling roles as both

headteacher and inspector but this is not to say that capture takes place by the inspected schools.

Ofsted, presently through the contractors, try to ensure that inspectors declare their interests. Preclusions are then put in place to prevent inspectors inspecting schools where they have a relationship. This is a challenge given the short notice of inspections, where relationships may not come to light until the notification call or even until inspectors turn up on the inspection day. As more headteachers inspect over time even more care will need to be taken about this issue.

In the context of inspection the argument is that outsiders tend to be tougher inspectors and achieve the required relational distance (Hood et al.: 1999) between themselves and those they inspect. It follows that if inspectors are not insiders (fellow professionals) the level of formality is greater and judgements tougher. The extension of this argument is that while outsiders are more likely not to become too close to those inspect they are most in danger of alienating them (Boyne et al.: 2002). If many of the commentators are to be believed, this seems to have happened over the years.

There is certainly empathy. For instance, Maurice comments:

'That's where I come in and say, "It's all right, you're doing alright, don't worry".'

Along similar lines Deborah says:

'There are a lot of looks between you and sometimes they confide things in you because there's that camaraderie.'

However, there is no regular and long-term relationship between people in the inspectorate and the organisations that they visit (Boyne et al.: 2002) and the

headteachers in the sample indicated their awareness of the need to ensure their inclination to be empathetic to teachers does not impact on their inspection judgements. While they recognise their empathy is a strength and it is what distinguishes them from non-practitioners, there is an awareness of the importance of maintaining the required relational distance, especially between themselves and the inspected headteachers.

The evidence from this small scale study suggests that empathy does not lead to capture, rather the headteachers are anything but captured by the schools they inspect. Indeed, six of the headteachers, half of the sample, cite instances of frostiness exhibited towards them by some of the inspected headteachers.

Additionally, the data reflects instances where the headteachers were critical of the inspected school's performance in some way indicating that the headteachers sampled are not captured by the schools they inspect. Frank, for instance, offers the following comment about some of his headteacher peers:

'It is sometimes like drawing teeth. We are in the game and sometimes even the best headteachers are not on the same wavelength...I've tried to use the headship side of things in a positive way. However hard the message the crucial part is that they feel the inspection is being done with them, their context is understood, and that you are dealing right with people.'

Deborah also expresses frustration with her headteacher peers commenting, *'A number of heads of schools haven't got a handle on their data.'*

Overall, for headteacher inspectors, maintaining the appropriate distance with teachers in the inspected schools, and especially their headteachers, is crucial to the integrity of inspection. While this study does not show capture to be an issue

the sample size does not rule capture out and the possibility does exist. The issue is complex and may merit further research.

There is another aspect of capture. The headteachers sampled choose to inspect and the data reveals their commitment to inspection and inspecting. All of them are, to a degree, captured by Ofsted. In some cases there are misgivings, for instance, about the fairness of the inspection criteria when applied to schools in challenging contexts.

The data shows that the headteachers are careful to take their Ofsted 'hat' off when returning to their school. Several comment on how they are conscious of the need not to alienate their staff by returning from inspecting overly enthusiastic with ideas they wish their staff to implement. Some of the headteachers comment explicitly that they do not act like inspectors when they are back in their school, while others say that they do move into inspection mode back in their own schools, for instance, by adapting the Ofsted methodology to quality assure its performance.

Sameness

Intuitively one might suppose there would be a sense of sameness (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000) among headteacher inspectors because they are a well-defined sub-group within the inspector workforce. No other sub-group amongst inspectors has such a high profile at this time. The fact that the headteachers are part of such a sub-group might be expected to manifest itself in solidarity, shared dispositions or in collective action.

However, these do not come across strongly in the data and where such notions exist it is only in a general sense. Most typically this is when the headteachers infer or draw out the advantages they bring to the practice of inspection as serving practitioners in comparison to others. The respondents see themselves as being

different to non-practitioners but did not talk overtly about being a sub-group with clear and distinct links or ties. As one comments, '*It is not as if we are part of a "Cosa Nostra".*'

This might be because, as several note they seldom work with other headteachers on inspection and even when they do, inspection is so busy there is little time to socialise. Sometimes because of the inspection tariff, an inspector may only attend for the first of the two days, and will likely be heavily timetabled from 08:00 until 18:00, the typical first inspection day. It may also be because at the time of the interviews there were still relatively very few practitioners. However, things will have moved on since. The frequency of contact with other headteachers is likely to change as their numbers increase.

Leading inspections

While the headteachers have a mostly positive view about their inspection work, tellingly eight, two thirds, of the headteachers express no desire to move on from their role as team inspectors to leading inspections. Financial gain, status and power all seem insufficient to overcome what they perceive as the challenges of leading inspections. In fact, three of the sample once led inspections but no longer do so. This reluctance to step up has implications for the strategic management of inspections especially when the composition of the contracted inspector workforce is predominantly comprised of headteachers. Those that have led in the past say they have no intention of doing so again, and certainly not while still a serving headteacher.

Various reasons are given, but the headteachers' lack of enthusiasm is striking with comments such as, '*not unless I'm forced*', '*dread*', '*daunted*' and '*panic*'. Factors deterring the headteachers from leading are time management, keeping up to date with the changes to the *School Inspection Handbook* and inspection protocols, writing the inspection report and addressing complaints.

Limitations to headteachers' role as inspectors

There are limits to what headteachers can achieve as inspectors. Currently, about 80 per cent of contracted inspectors inspect for less than 20 days a year. They are also expected to spend 5 days training each year. Headteachers may do more, but most do less. Assuming two days on an inspection as team inspector, this is the equivalent of between three to ten inspections a year, while managing their day job. If they lead they will inspect fewer schools since a typical lead is a commitment of four days as things stand. Because of this it may be that inspection for headteachers will invariably take second place to headship. Keeping up to date is cited by many of the headteachers as a key issue for them to consider when committing to inspecting.

Support for a dual identity

The headteachers interviewed buy into most aspects of the inspection discourse and are engaged by it. Nonetheless, while inspection is an important role for them, for several reasons it is not one that usurps their substantive identity as headteacher. Inspecting complements and supplements their headship. It contributes significantly to the headteachers' identity as professionals and they all see their inspection work as an achievement. As Helen says:

'Although its only twenty days it's a very important part of what makes me the professional.'

Maintaining a dual identity requires a supportive structural framework, and achieving the right balance in the inspector pool as well as inspector deployment will take careful management by Ofsted.

This is because the release of headteachers from schools can be difficult. As well as undertaking fewer inspections than other additional inspectors they also tend to

withdraw more often from inspections at short notice because of unplanned events in their school. These issues may affect the number of inspectors required, the cost of maintaining serving practitioners as 'fit and proper' against their activity levels and the management of their performance. These factors may lead to higher maintenance costs and may result in a larger workforce than would otherwise be needed. This increases the potential for inconsistency, the very issue raised by many commentators and headteachers as being one of the problems with current inspection practice.

Identity conflict

Serving practitioners will play a key role in inspection as it moves forward into its next phase of development and so in this section I reflect further on some of the aspects of inspecting the headteachers say they do not align with. Some dissonance is not surprising given the industrial scale of the enterprise that is inspection. Nonetheless, it is important for the policy makers to know these things.

In fact, the data reveals that most of the headteachers express some measure of disquiet about inspection and inspecting, and several instances are cited which suggest that the headteachers' involvement in inspection necessitate their suppressing some of the core elements of their professional identity (Baxter, 2011a).

The data shows that some of the headteachers are frustrated by the inspection rubric as set out in the *School Inspection Handbook*. Several voice concerns that schools which are characterised by endemic low standards and/or are facing challenging economic circumstances are disadvantaged by the Ofsted inspection rubric because, in their view, they find it harder than others to get to good or outstanding. The argument is that this is because the Ofsted grade descriptors in the *School Inspection Handbook* do not take into account contextual value added factors.

As Robert comments:

'I've felt the judgements are harsh on one or two occasions. I've thought, "what would I do with these kids? Could I do any better, probably not?'

Making a similar point Frank says:

'The main conflict is what is a realistic expectation for a school to achieve because it is far easier for schools in the leafy suburbs to get outstanding.'

These comments illustrate some headteachers' non alignment with some aspects of inspection practice and reflect that professionals may face boundaries between different perspectives and practice (Akkerman, 2011a) and that boundaries may be questioned (Uemer et al.: 2004). Further research might usefully focus on what impact over time more headteachers inspecting has on the content of the *School Inspection Handbook*.

While generally respecting the expertise of other inspectors, seven (more than half) are frustrated with the conduct and acumen of some other team inspectors. Furthermore, half are concerned about some of the inconsistent practice they witness, especially on the part of some lead inspectors. An analysis of the data shows that one of the main issues causing the dissonance experienced by the headteachers is the inconsistency in the application of the inspection artefacts by some of the lead inspectors with whom they work.

The data evidence indicates that some inspection grades are affected by non-objective criteria with four, or a third of the sample, commenting that some lead inspectors are dismissive of the evidence presented to them. Their comments reflect their frustrations that their inspection judgements are not always given credence, and their opinions are challenged and/or dismissed. This frustration centres on the inconsistencies some of the headteachers say they experience when

some lead inspectors fail to follow through on the critical evidence presented to them.

Several of the headteachers say that some lead inspectors use the evidence provided to them selectively, and to the school's advantage. Several instances are cited where their otherwise critical and contrary evidence such as about the quality of teaching was dismissed by some lead inspectors. For example, an inadequate judgement had been made by Maurice and the teacher was revisited by the lead inspector who saw improvement. This was a source of some irritation to Maurice since he saw it as undermining and he expresses cynicism about what he suggests is the contrived (and better) inspection outcome for the school.

Rose found herself being under pressure to make a particular judgement grade:

'I was very naïve at the time. I was new to it. I thought, "Perhaps he's trying to mentor, coach me and make sure". It wasn't until I'd done another couple that I started to reflect and really took exception to it, and now I'd just say "No".'

Similarly, Olive comments on the pressure exerted by some lead inspectors:

'The lead inspector will be saying, "Well this is satisfactory", and I have to keep my trap shut. I've been on the odd one where the judgements always have to match and think, "I'm never going to be happy about this".'

Maurice makes the point succinctly:

'An outstanding school and they were going for outstanding again. I saw two requiring improvement lessons and I was pretty much told to lose the evidence. I felt undermined.'

In effect, the two '*requiring improvement*' judgements following the lesson observations by Maurice may have jeopardised the overall outstanding judgement. This is because the inspection rubric requires that the quality of teaching and learning must be outstanding for a school's overall effectiveness to be outstanding. The lead inspector, for whatever reason, chose to discount the evidence presented by Maurice.

These examples demonstrate conflict where a serving practitioner is minded to make more critical judgements other inspectors, in this instance the lead inspector. Olive appears to taking a subservient position and is, keeping her, '*trap shut*', but acknowledging that she is, '*never going to be happy*'. This reflects the point that in practice the *School Inspection Handbook* is not absolute. Rather, it is interpreted and sometimes negotiated, and leads to inconsistency; but this is not surprising. This reveals the central dilemma of inspection as it is currently practised: sending inspectors into schools to see what is actually happening at first hand as opposed to inspecting from a desk, and relying solely on data which is inevitably out of date.

Challenge is healthy and Ofsted expects inspectors to challenge each other professionally. Nonetheless, the headteachers express concern when their evidence or judgements do not seem to fit in with what the lead inspector wants. Their sense of right and wrong and moral purpose is challenged, suggesting there is not solidarity or shared dispositions on all inspection teams, throwing into question the corporate nature of some inspection judgements.

The unease the headteachers experience at first hand highlights an element of conflict and non-alignment with their identity as inspector. It is contrary to the notion of capture and if anything, the data evidence suggests that headteachers take a harder line than other inspectors and certainly more than some lead inspectors. It lends weight to the view that crossing this boundary calls for personal fortitude (Landa, 2008) since the headteachers' judgements are not

always held in as high regard as they had expected, not by the schools they inspect but by some lead inspectors. Presumably, this is something they are not used to in their headship.

These instances undermine the integrity of inspection and may go some way to explain why Maurice notes, '*I think the grades are inflated*', illustrating his doubts about the robustness of inspection judgements. The implications are significant for the policy makers and Ofsted's quality assurance processes, which will be taken back under direct control from September 2015.

Nonetheless, the headteachers appear to be sanguine even when disgruntled about some judgements. Perhaps this is because of their novice position as inspectors, the fear of rocking the boat and getting negative feedback from the lead inspector which they perceive may have consequences for their future engagement, or even a lack of confidence in their inspectorial role, all of which are referenced in the data.

The next section raises some points about what the future may hold for headteacher inspectors.

Looking ahead

Reform agendas may elicit proactive attempts to influence working conditions (Kelchtermann, 2005) and these 12 headteachers have considered how worthwhile it is to inspect and how much time and effort it will take to make these major changes to their working lives. They have gone on to engage in a boundary practice, rather than engage in a boundary encounter or boundary periphery (Wenger 1998). The headteachers sampled take the view that inspecting has a positive impact on their performance as headteachers and is professionally beneficial. Inspecting is something they do through choice and is an example of headteachers' management of boundaries (Morgan, 2006).

Wenger (1998) argued that boundaries are important because they connect communities and the data shows that the headteachers share common views, for instance their commitment to inspection as a means of school and self-improvement, as well as a shared language. However, the data shows that headteacher inspectors do not necessarily see themselves as part of a community. This may change as more of them become inspectors. However, as brokers they are in a position to transfer best practice by being able to see practice in one group that will be useful to the other. In other words, to synthesise practice by being familiar with both groups and able to identify new beliefs and behaviours that combine elements from both groups.

The headteachers are positive about the prospect of more of them inspecting and some do what they can to encourage other headteachers to join the inspector ranks. Several also mention that they would welcome being inspected by another practitioner. However, Robinson's work (2012) shows a considerable animosity on the part of headteachers to engage in inspection. Robinson's respondents were a different sample to my own but she found that:

'The judgemental role of Ofsted without consequential school improvement was abhorrent for headteachers.' (2012: 69)

Robinson cites two interviews. The first, Headteacher 17, who used to inspect, commented:

'I didn't like the Ofsted role. I did a few inspections and I didn't like it at all. I found the whole punitive aspect of the role difficult.' (2012: 69)

The second, Headteacher 5, commented:

'I wouldn't do it, because I don't like the relationship between Ofsted inspectors and schools.' (2012: 69)

This legacy of mistrust, a common thread of the Ofsted discourse, may diminish over time. Indeed, Robinson also notes that there are exceptions to this negative view of Ofsted. She cites 'headteacher 18' who *'waves the flag'* (p. 69) for Ofsted, as well as headteacher 12 who:

'Had a pragmatic approach and inspects schools because she gains useful information to improve her own school.' (2012: 69)

Crucially, one might suppose that more headteacher inspectors would, as Hargreaves argued, help inspectors generally:

'To earn their reputation for trustworthiness which would be a gain for both them and for teachers.' (2008: 61)

Which I also suppose is one of the main reasons for the major structural changes taking place in inspection delivery from September 2015.

Nonetheless, all of the headteachers in this study's sample display a commitment to the principle of inspection. They say they add to the inspection event both through their empathy with schools, in support of other inspectors, and the robustness of their judgements. The recurring theme is the demonstration of their disposition to enter this work. Their sense of commitment to the duality of their professional lives, as headteacher and inspector, resonates. This systemic leadership orientation (Boylan, 2013) is significant for any consideration that headteachers use their experiences as inspectors strategically.

Significantly any disenchantment headteachers may have about inspecting, or indeed inspection, does not appear to impact markedly on their views about the value of an inspection process overall or their place within it, and the next section

considers the synergy between headteachers inspecting and having a place in the leadership of the wider system.

5.5. System leadership

Following initial analysis of the interview data I arrived at a new insight, that there are grounds to consider headteachers who inspect as potential system leaders within the English school system. This section is therefore used to discuss the concept of system leadership, which has a growing significance for educational policy (Boylan, 2013; Hargreaves, 2010; Higham et al, 2009; Hopkins, 2006 & 2007; Hopkins & Higham, 2007; NCTL, 2012).

The context following the government's 2010 White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, is:

'To create a self-improving system, built on the premise that teachers learn best from one another and should be more in control of their professional and institutional development.' (Hargreaves, 2011: 4)

It is relevant in view of the research data to consider whether or not headteacher inspectors might be seen as system leaders, either formally sanctioned or informally opportunistic (Boylan, 2013; MacBeath 2005). While system leaders may well prove significant there is uncertainty about which groups fall within its umbrella. The argument I make is that headteacher inspectors have some of the key characteristics of system leaders as currently understood, and have the potential to embrace the role given the right conditions.

Headteacher inspectors as system leaders

I am mindful that system leadership means different things to different people, and my interpretation of the data from this study is that working across the

boundary between headship and inspector reflects a strong moral purpose. It is a very important aspect of their professional identity as they engage with other schools as inspectors.

Fullan (2003; 2004a; 2004b; 2005) placed moral purpose at the core of the new leadership and he saw it as a commitment to raising the bar and closing the gap in achievement; by treating people with respect; and by improving the environment of other schools. My interpretation of this study's data is that the headteachers interviewed meet the first two aspects.

The headteachers interviewed see inspection as a driver of school improvement, both of their own schools through their inspecting activities, and the schools they inspect. In these ways they may be considered to support improvement as system reinforcers, or by using inspection protocols while inspecting, as system implementers. These are nuances on any role headteachers have within the umbrella of system leadership, and this is an area for possible research as indicated later in chapter 6. Either role may have a place for such education professionals in the post panoptic era.

The headteachers provide examples where they support other schools local to their own. They do this by letting other headteachers know about the detail of the inspection rubric, by one-off pieces of advice or, as in one case, training a school's senior and middle leaders on the nuances of lesson observations from an inspector's viewpoint. None of the examples offered by the headteachers involved the local authority as a mediator, lending weight to the idea that there is a gap to be filled in the middle tier. But the issue remains - are they system leaders?

The data shows that several of the headteachers lend weight to the link between the personal, the school and the system. For example, Brenda comments, *'I pick up a lot from other schools and bring it here'*, while Rose comments: *'I thought*

that doing this I would carry on learning and it would be something I would enjoy, and I've got something to give back.'

Charles, of all the headteachers interviewed, best summarises the bigger picture:

'Any external body that is here to validate us is good...I really do believe it helps us to improve...otherwise we get what we had before and that isn't good enough.'

Treating people with respect is the aspect of the work that the headteachers interviewed are most concerned about, some significantly. This arises from their first-hand experience of being inspected and inspecting. They are annoyed when they see inspectors being brusque with teachers. As Charles comments:

'I have not enjoyed the manner of some people, the way they've conducted themselves. I wouldn't have done that; it does not fit well with me.'

Robinson (2012) argued that headteachers manage the inspection of their schools not just for the sake of the school but, *'also to gain validation as leaders to pursue wider roles'* (p. 172). While the headteachers sampled saw a direct link between inspecting and the improvement of their own school, none mentioned looking for a *'wider role'*, other than they would be interested in inspecting when they retired from headship, in which case they would no longer be serving practitioners.

Nonetheless, the commitment to school improvement, primarily but not exclusively in their own school, indicates that collectively the headteachers interviewed are not exercising *'paradoxical leadership'* (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008). They are not opting out but rather are choosing to opt in to the Ofsted discourse, a fundamental part of which is the drive for improvement in the school system, and beyond the

gates of their own school. This is in spite of, and in some cases because of, their own experiences of being inspected.

While their motivations, commitment and disenchantment with various aspects of inspection vary, collectively the headteachers' participation in the role as inspector validates their commitment to effective educational change. As Higham and Matthews argued, for system leaders the:

'Critical personality traits are those to do with caring, resilience, persistence and optimism.' (2009: 131)

While Rose commented that she has something to give back to the system, system improvement seems to be much more of a driving force for Charles:

'We need an external system of accountability because otherwise we get what we got before and that isn't good enough.'

This strikes at the core of the work of an inspector. Higham et al. (2009) noted that system leaders exercise a good deal of agency and as agents of reform they are not simply upholders of the status quo. The evidence from this study suggests that headteacher inspectors may fit this description.

However, none of the headteachers made reference to system leadership and they did not see themselves as system leaders. This may reflect the time, and/or the fact that none considered that they were leaders of anything other than their schools. However, the headteachers interviewed may have moved on since the field study, and I did not ask them since it was not part of the research design, but the possibility that they might exercise such a role has not been put to them as a group.

Engagement with other schools within the system

The evidence shows that headteachers who inspect are involved in the improvement of schools at a macro level reflecting Fullan's argument that:

'New theoreticians are leaders who work intensely in their own schools, or national agencies, and at the same time connect with and participate in the bigger picture.' (2004b: 7)

Headteacher inspectors, *'work intensely in their own schools'* and also work for a *'national agency'*, Ofsted, contributing to the, *'bigger picture'*. They are, *'active participants in a wider social project of creating a better education system'* (Close & Raynor, 2010: 221). Significantly, headteacher inspectors are to become integral to the agency of Ofsted, through which schools in England develop within the wider system, or so it may be argued.

Higham et al. focussed on school-led system leadership in practice and argued that:

'A system leader is a headteacher or senior teacher who works directly for the success and well-being of students in other schools as well as his or her own.' (2009: 2)

The pivotal word is *'directly'*. It is unclear what tangible outcomes occur as a direct result of inspection, let alone headteachers' active engagement as inspectors. This is because it is not easy to disentangle inspection from other contributory factors. At micro level some outcomes are measurable because a school is left with areas for improvement following its inspection, and the next inspection will check to see if these have been actioned. Nonetheless, the thread linking inspection to a school's performance remains unclear.

Higham et al. (2009) also argued that system leadership implies a substantive engagement with other schools or agencies in order to bring about system transformation. Clearly, as things stand headteacher inspectors invariably only inspect a school once, and are only there for one or two days, cannot be considered to have a substantive engagement. However, substantive may be seen as an elastic concept if one interprets it in terms of impact rather than time period, but again this depends on drawing an empirical link with inspection and outcomes. Furthermore, there is no evidence of the impact of headteacher inspectors as distinct from other inspector groups.

Fullan referred to the mobilisation of a critical mass of leaders at all levels of the system who work intensely in their own organisations, and at the same time participate in the bigger picture:

'School leaders need to take direct action by sharing knowledge and learning with other schools and by taking on explicit assignments to promote system improvement.' (2004b: 14-15)

Although inspection is not, *'an explicit assignment to promote school improvement'* the data shows that some of the headteacher inspectors share knowledge and learning on inspection, and when back in their schools. They share their knowledge with other inspectors and the staff of the schools they inspect, especially their headteachers. They share learning with their own staff, conscious of not overloading them, and offer support to some local headteachers, or groups of headteachers, including those considering joining the ranks of inspectors and to whom they give encouragement. Some provide general advice, perhaps seen by some as the resident inspector in the area, sometimes free gratis and sometimes for payment for organised activities such as training. However, this *'sharing knowledge'* is variable and is often limited to a just a select few local headteachers. It is not the norm for those sampled. In some cases the headteachers keep their inspection activities to themselves.

None of the headteachers sampled say the support they give is done through the brokerage of the local authority and while they get good support from their governors, their perception is that their local authorities do not see their involvement in inspection as a resource to be tapped into, but I did not ask them. Six headteachers, half of the sample, express their disappointment with the indifference they meet from their local authorities. As Robert commented, *'I'm amazed they (the local authority) don't use me more but my local cluster of schools will ask me questions and ask me to come in'*.

Two of the 12 headteachers were asked to support local headteachers more formally. One declined since the headteacher she was asked to support earned more, while the other declined since he did not want to be seen as representing Ofsted.

Robinson used the term, system advisers, rather than system leaders, to characterise primary headteachers who, *'have roles with agencies such as Ofsted'* (2012: 155) and who, *'Are not directly involved in finding solutions for raising the level of provision in an individual school other than their own.'* (2012: 156).

Significantly, Robinson does not see system advisers as system leaders since while they are involved in school improvement as inspectors the headteachers are necessarily detached from the schools they inspect. As inspectors they are obliged to be objective to make inspection judgements. Even if there were to be emotional attachment, it is only short lived and not substantive.

Robinson (2011 & 2012) argued that system leaders are directly involved in finding solutions for improving outcomes in schools other than their own. Headteacher inspectors are not there to find solutions. Their task is to make judgements. Lead inspectors, in particular, find out a great deal about a school and they leave its leaders with areas for improvement but they do not *'find solutions'*. After all, if they were to do so, the next inspection team would be inspecting the advice of

their predecessors. So, while inspectors seek to improve outcomes they are not, '*directly involved*', and certainly not over time.

Hopkins & Higham (2007) drew out the centrality of strategic capability, where system leaders build operational principles leading to tangible outcomes based on their moral purpose. While the motivation to improve schools, their own schools and others, comes through the transcripts there is no causal link to any tangible outcomes as a result of the headteachers' inspection work. Also, headteachers, including those amongst them who inspect, have not to date or at least until the appointment of a serving headteacher to the post as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, played a major role in defining Ofsted's operational principles.

This may change as practitioners form a significant proportion of the inspection workforce from September 2015. Indeed, in his speech to the Association of School and College Leaders, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector said:

'The profession must take more ownership of inspection. There is not much future for Ofsted unless there are shared ambitions and goals by those who are inspected, and those who do the inspecting.' (Ofsted, 21 March 2014)

So while Hopkins and Higham (2007), for instance, had seen system leadership as a form of leadership where a headteacher undertakes a wider system role and in doing so is almost as concerned with the performance and outcomes of other schools as with his or her own school, the evidence from this study suggests this is a step too far. Indeed, the study offers evidence that roles beyond their schools were a strand of their repertoire rather than a key feature of it (Boylan, 2013; Robinson 2011).

An Interpretation of system leadership

My interpretation of the data from this study is that headteachers who inspect display, *interschool leadership*' (Boylan, 2013: 2). This is because they hold a formally designated role, as school inspectors and this involves, '*changing the practice of school leaders in recipient schools*' (2013: 2). One might argue that some of schools' practice is changed before inspection either in anticipation or preparation, while mostly it is changed as a result of inspection, either through the areas for improvement in the published report, or informally as a result of the discussions with inspectors over the course of the inspection visit. However, I do not think that this, '*change*' can necessarily be regarded as, '*supportive*' (2013: 2) even if that is the intent. The headteachers sampled did not regard the inspection(s) of their own schools was particularly '*supportive*'. The views of many commentators suggest that were inspection more '*supportive*' there would be less dislocation between the inspectorate and the inspected.

While a case may be made for headteacher inspectors meeting Boylan's first meaning, at least in part, they do not to offer '*systemic leadership*' (2013: 2). This is because as inspectors they are not involved '*collaboratively*' (2013: 2). Similarly, they do not meet Boylan's third meaning '*leadership of the school system*' since as headteacher inspectors they are not, '*mobilized to enact change from the top down*' (2013: 2). Although not formal or part of their remit as inspectors I suggest that headteacher inspectors, like other inspectors, do play a role as agents of Ofsted by policing one of its agendas, that of school improvement. As such, what they do has a moral purpose. My view is that they are well-positioned to '*enact change*' across the system.

In this regard, membership of a network would bring headteacher inspectors nearer to '*interschool leadership*' (Boylan, 2013: 2) in the sense that such a role would be quasi formal. It would also embrace '*systemic leadership*' (2013: 2) since the role would be active and inter school. My view is that this would promote

centrally designated policy goals in which school leaders are '*mobilized to enact change*' (2013: 2). Indeed, it is effectively already underway through the drive to recruit headteachers from good or outstanding schools to take up the inspection mantle and offer more scope to re-focus inspection.

Hopkins et al. argued that, '*It is not clear what system leadership roles are being undertaken*' (2009: 21) and the data from this study suggests that while headteachers who inspect share some characteristics as system leaders, notably their moral purpose and commitment to school improvement, at the present time their role as headteachers who inspect does not sit entirely comfortably within the generally accepted meaning of system leadership.

So, my view from the evidence is that while headteacher inspectors currently are not leaders within the school system they are well placed as shapers of it, especially given their significance within the inspector workforce which is growing at a fast pace.

However, there is no obvious co-ordination of headteacher inspectors as a separate cadre, and at the time of writing there are no public pronouncements about central government's intentions. At the time of writing therefore headteachers who inspect may be better described as system implementers or system reinforcers.

Currently headteacher inspectors occupy an, as yet, undetermined position somewhere in the new middle tier between schools and central government which continues to steer the system.

5.6. Chapter summary

This chapter has explained why these 12 headteachers chose to inspect, recounting their own generally disappointing experiences of being inspected. It has

drawn out the moral purposes behind their decisions to inspect and shown how they are generally accepting of the principle of inspection.

The chapter has explained how inspecting for these 12 headteachers is a boundary practice and it has visited some of the key dimensions involved, including some of the challenges the headteachers face in crossing this particular boundary. The chapter shows how these headteachers act as boundary brokers in some instances.

The chapter also shows how the identity of these 12 headteachers is changed in some way by inspecting, and it has considered some of the pertinent issues such as the knowledge they bring to inspection and the learning they take from practising it, the concept of sameness and whether headteachers who inspect form a community of practice or are captured in some way, either by the schools they inspect, or by the inspectorate.

The chapter has concluded by making some points about whether head teacher inspectors fill a role within the leadership of the system and, if they do not presently, whether they may do so at some time in the future.

Finally, while illustrating points through the use of original and summary data I acknowledge that each headteacher expressed a personal view to me at a particular point in their headship and in their engagement as inspectors. One never knows whether what the respondents actually do is the same as they revealed to me. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that they bring the knowledge, skills and understanding they have as full time headteachers across the boundary into inspection. They take back what they learn from their practice. This includes what they see and experience in the schools they inspect and what they learn from working with other inspectors. This has an impact on their identity. The data shows that while subscribing to inspection in this proactive manner the

headteachers also have misgivings. Some are significant and pose questions about the integrity of the inspection process, but the positives outweigh the negatives.

The final chapter draws together my concluding thoughts.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter begins with a summary of the study's findings which are matched to the research questions. It then looks at the implications of the research in the context of the change agenda, the leadership of inspections, the barriers faced by headteachers who inspect and the challenges they face, their potential as system leaders and considers the strengths and weaknesses of the research tools used. It then offers possible further lines of enquiry and draws out its contribution to knowledge, sets out how the study's objectives are met and ends with some final comments.

6.2. Summary of findings

From the outset I did not seek to ally with any one theory but rather to set out what emerged from the data. As a framework I used the concepts of boundaries and identities and in this section I revisit the key findings that emerged. Overall, the use of headteachers as inspectors seems to be a win-win scenario for them and the school system generally, but there are pitfalls to be aware of.

This section of the chapter summarises what the headteachers had to say about why they cross a boundary to inspect and use the inspection artefacts, their dual identities as headteacher and inspector, their contribution to inspection and their relationships. The section links the key points to the five research questions.

Research question 1: Why do headteachers cross a boundary and take on the role of school inspector?

The data indicates that headteachers who choose to inspect buy into the Ofsted discourse. As individuals, in common with other professionals, headteachers have agency to pursue the goals they value (Archer 1996 & 2000; Day et al.: 2005) and one of the challenges is recognising that self-interest and altruism can be

combined (Close, 2013). For headteachers, taking up the role as an inspector is a careful decision, based upon how worthwhile a role it is to have and how much time and effort it will take to adopt. It will be time-consuming, and it might have negative consequences, for instance should they fail the inspector training or fail to meet the required standards.

The headteachers express a sense of achievement in becoming an inspector and satisfaction in the role. The data shows that it is important for them to maintain this dual identity, spanning the boundary between headship and inspection. Involvement in inspection involves learning. The headteachers exemplify how they learn something new about their own and others' practices and use their experiences as inspectors to benchmark their own school's performance, not only against the *School Inspection Handbook* but also against other schools. In this way, learning enables the headteachers to keep abreast of national developments and good practice, while at the same time managing the demands of headship.

This point is illustrated by how the headteachers come to see things from a wider perspective, one of the key motivating factors. They cite the development of their skills of leadership, including in the management of change and in the rigour of their evaluation of their own school's performance. They enjoy inspecting and believe they make a marked difference to the inspection process, helping the schools they inspect, especially their headteachers. They also give support to some of their headteacher peers when back in their local area.

Research question 2: What knowledge do headteachers claim in order to take on the identity of inspector?

The interview data collectively lend weight to the assertion that professional identities consist of sub identities that more or less harmonise, in this instance headteacher and inspector. This is because the headteachers illustrate how through inspecting they feel that they make contributions both to the practice of

inspection and to the leadership of their school. If their schools are viewed as high performing, through inspection, this reflects well on their personal capability as leaders.

Taking on a dual identity as inspector alongside headship requires an element of reconciliation since their generally positive view of inspection and inspecting can be at odds with their disappointment with the inspection(s) of their own school. They use emotive words, demonstrating that ecology of practice can throw up contradictions and dilemmas. The widespread disaffection with their own experiences on the receiving end of inspection is notable given that, with one exception, the headteachers lead and manage either good or outstanding schools. Also of note is their perception that their expertise as a current practitioner is sometimes less than well regarded by some lead inspectors. We do not know if this is actually the case because I did not ask any of the lead inspectors since this was not part of the research design.

In spite of the challenges they face, the headteachers have developed an addition to their identity which motivates them. This improves their performance and job satisfaction as headteachers. It is likely that more headteachers will be in the same situation over the coming years and this marries with Wenger's (1998) notion of identities as, '*trajectories*'.

Learning takes place at the boundary at both individual and organisational level, and in practice each time a headteacher inspects s/he moves across from her/his own institution to another, for one or two days at a time. The data provides many illustrations of how their headship and inspection work overlap, to the benefit of all involved: the inspectors with whom they work, the teachers in the schools they inspect and especially their headteachers, their own schools, and themselves as professionals.

In terms of the new knowledge developed, several of the headteachers indicate how they use the information gained through inspecting to improve provision in their own school and how inspecting affirms their practice. Sometimes the practice in their own schools holds its own against others, while less often, the practice in their schools is not to the standard they see when inspecting. They also bring back ideas to use, or adapt to use in their schools.

Research question 3: How do headteachers construct their engagement in the inspection process?

The headteachers say they add value to inspection practice and their contribution is distinctive. They show how headteachers bring a current knowledge base to inspection which they say is valued by most, not all, other inspectors and schools. The data shows that the headteachers consider the up to date knowledge underpinning their identity is particularly important when compared to other inspectors whom they say soon lose touch with practice in schools, sometimes becoming insensitive to the demands of headship.

The issue of how inspectors conduct themselves is a recurring theme of their trajectories through inspection, striking at the heart of their identity. The data shows they use their knowledge of schools and the empathy they have with teachers and headteachers to mediate what is sometimes, perhaps often, the adversarial nature of inspection as it is now. The headteachers say they achieve this by the way they conduct themselves on inspection and by the way they broker between the school and the other inspectors.

My interpretation of the data is that headteacher inspectors are able to move into the space between the inspected and the inspection team but this is by default since it is not planned and is not part of their formally stated role on inspection teams. However, there is an element of dissonance with inspection and inspecting as outlined in the next few paragraphs

Research question 4: How do the professional practices of headteacher inspectors change as a result of their inspection work?

The headteachers illustrate how their leadership changes as a result of inspecting, thinking more carefully about how their own school compares with others. They often cite examples of good practice they see elsewhere which they bring back, usually to adapt, but they also cite examples of how going into other schools reaffirms the practice in their own. The headteachers illustrate the benefits for the staff of their own schools but are conscious about bringing back too many ideas in case they cause undue stress.

Their involvement in inspection is overlooked by their local authorities, and this is of concern to some of the headteachers. On the other hand their governors are invariably very supportive, recognising its benefits to their school.

The data places the boundary objects, principally the *School Inspection Handbook*, at the core of inspection practice and these objects are unsurprisingly very important to the work of the headteacher's school. Together with the *Inspection Framework*, the *School Inspection Handbook* inhabits the intersecting worlds of schools and inspection and meets the information requirements of both groups. In this way the culture of performativity is articulated over time, and as such Ofsted, and the headteacher inspectors as their agents in this context, plays a critical role in amplifying inspection knowledge through these boundary objects.

Ofsted seeks to secure understanding by schools and inspectors through frequent revisions to these documents and through dissemination of the information. The move to take inspection back to the centre, from September 2015, reflects a wish to exert firmer control over this body of organisational knowledge, and to counter the prevailing concerns about the inconsistency of inspection practice, a perennial issue to date. However, one of the points that several of the headteachers make is

that they find it difficult to keep up with the pace of change to the inspection rubric. This is a reason why the headteachers choose not to lead inspections. However, there are elements where dissonance with inspecting and inspection arise. While the often contentious context in which headteacher inspectors operate allow diverse practices to co-operate efficiently even in the absence of consensus (Star, 2010), but my interpretation of the data is that inspection is a site of potential conflict. While dialogue is established between inspectors and schools to maintain the flow of work, the context is challenging. This is reflected by Robert:

'Most headteachers probably think it (inspection) is a good thing, but I think we're all fearful of it because there's so much at stake, it's all pressure.'

This context leads to tensions and is a source of some of the concerns the headteachers have about their inspection work. It is evidenced by their strong feelings about the inconsistency of the practice they sometimes experience at first hand. This is mostly about the way some inspectors go about their work as well as how some of the evidence the headteachers find on inspection is, in their view, not given due credence by some lead inspectors. This contrasts with the supposition that the headteachers know much that there is to know about the nature of their craft as the professional lead in their schools, where they may reasonably be described as more expert than novice. However we do not know this since the research design did not include the views other inspectors, including lead inspectors, have about the judgements of headteacher inspectors.

Nonetheless, the data contains instances where the headteachers see themselves as more challenging inspectors than others. Several examples are cited where some of their critical judgements are, they say, too readily dismissed by some lead inspectors who for whatever reason elect to adopt a less critical stance. This demonstrates the moral dimension to the headteachers' inspection activities, a significant point since this moral purpose underpins system leadership. The inconsistency and perceived incorrect judgements of some lead inspectors is a

source of some angst for several of these headteachers. It reflects that, as headteachers, they may have higher expectations than fellow inspectors.

The dissatisfaction about expectations, with the headteachers' standards sometimes being higher than others', at least as expressed in the data, represent a risk to the regulatory efficacy of the inspectorate. It brings into focus the inconsistency of inspection in spite of the boundary objects that underpin inspection practice. Perhaps this is not surprising given the almost industrial scale of inspection. The relationships between headteachers and other inspectors may change if more of them become lead inspectors.

Fundamentally though, the evidence from this small scale study suggests that headship and inspection are coherent and fit well together. The headteachers' commitment to inspection as a source of improvement for their own schools and others outweighs any dissonance they have.

Research question 5: How do headteachers characterise their relationships with other inspectors, the teachers and headteachers of the schools they inspect, and of their own schools, and others?

The data shows that inspection is highly emotional labour. The headteachers are very concerned about how inspection is actually carried out, and the conduct of inspectors is vital. It is the way some other inspectors act and behave that, in the interviews, irritated the headteachers the most, and brought out the strongest emotions.

How close relationships are between inspectors on teams will clearly depend on individuals and circumstances. The headteachers enjoy mostly good relationships with other inspectors, but they are also sometimes dismissive and critical of them, especially those who unlike themselves are not working in schools. They are particularly concerned where they see and experience conduct which they regard

as insensitive. Such conduct is most often cited by the headteachers when it emanates from the lead inspector. It mostly occurs when the headteachers do not think their views and opinions are valued as inspectors. In fact, several cite indifferent relationships with some lead inspectors.

Relationships with local headteachers are complex. They are met with some coolness, even hostility by some, but who are also keen to tap into their inside knowledge of inspection. Some headteachers also give direct support to other schools and this too lends weight to the argument for considering them as system leaders.

These tensions illustrate how crossing the boundary between headship and inspection calls for personal fortitude. The strong feelings expressed reveal the ambiguity most of the headteachers have about the actual practice of inspection, while revealing some of the obstacles to be overcome. Nonetheless, even where they express discontent about some inspectors, in particular some lead inspectors, the headteachers maintain a sense of perspective and balance about their inspection work, underlining the importance of boundary skills.

The data suggests that the headteachers' standards appear to be higher than some other inspectors and they seem to want to adhere to the inspection rubric more scrupulously. This point is relevant to the concept of capture and whether headteachers are likely to be captured by the schools they inspect. The data give no indication of this; on the contrary. Ofsted should find this reassuring as it moves into its new phase, heavily dependent upon serving practitioners. However, the issue of capture remains pertinent since the numbers of serving practitioners are rapidly increasing and this makes the possibility more likely, necessitating checks and balances.

6.3. Implications of the research

I suggest that this study is topical since as I add the finishing touches to it, Ofsted is reviewing its whole approach to school inspection, to take effect from September 2015. Most inspections will be conducted by a member of Her Majesty's Inspectorate, a serving school leader on full or part-time secondment to Ofsted or a serving practitioner working for up to 16 days a year while holding down a headship. This fits the profile of the subjects of this study.

My belief, having spent some time reading around the area, is that these boundary crossers will create social capital (McCormick et al.: 2010) since they build capacity within the leadership of the school system in England. Whilst acknowledging the concept of system leadership is problematic if applied to headteachers who inspect, some of the pitfalls might be addressed once a critical mass is reached, and a national service of headteacher inspectors is in place.

The next sections reflect further on the changes that are taking place, thoughts on headteachers leading inspections and some of the barriers they face, before concluding with some thoughts about headteacher inspectors as a cadre of system leaders.

The change agenda

Few would challenge the view that effective educational change requires professional dialogue and the development of a spirit of working together with a common purpose and towards agreed ends. However much Ofsted seeks change, as long as it is perceived by schools as an agent of national government with the authority to require schools to act in certain ways, then its capacity to effect systematic and long-term change will always remain problematic. Taking headteachers on board as inspectors is a key step since their hands-on learning on inspection, as well as their contribution to it, encourages them to identify best

practice. This facilitates professional reflection, affirmation of practice in their own schools, and the offer of support to others.

Reform agendas that impose different normative beliefs may not only trigger intense feelings but also elicit micro-political actions of resistance or active attempts to influence and change things (Kelchtermans, 2005). Accountability exercises may be seen by some headteachers to be distractions, while others may see the opportunities. The interviewees are but a small sample of the relatively few headteachers to date who have chosen to inspect and by embracing the culture of compliancy (Ball, 2000) they are taking an active as opposed to a subversive role in the change agenda, and are seeking better ways of working.

Headteacher inspectors are learning to adopt and develop perspectives through their inspection practice, and are, '*thinking paradoxically*' (Close & Raynor, 2010: 217) because they are effectively standing outside the experience of their headship and looking at school improvement from the contrasting standpoint as an inspector. This an important point when considering their potential as system leaders. Indeed, Woods and Simkins argued that social actors need to be more entrepreneurial and that:

'Choices have to be made about the kind of identity and agency that players in the system want to aspire to.' (2014: 336)

However, while these twelve headteachers are committed to their inspection work, we should be cautious since we cannot assume that all headteacher inspectors hold the same or similar views. As one of the headteachers commented headteachers generally, and those of them who choose to inspect, are not all part of one, '*Cosa Nostra*'.

Leading inspections

In practice, few headteachers are trained and willing to lead inspections. Currently this compares with non-serving practitioners, some of whom inspect on a weekly basis. Some of the headteachers interviewed did lead inspections but no longer do so. Significantly, two thirds of the headteachers are adamant they do not wish to lead and this is potentially significant for policy makers. Those who do lead are typically those preparing for retirement or second careers, in which case they cease to be serving practitioners. On the evidence of the data there is little evidence of this situation changing.

Headteachers are very familiar, and even expert, in schooling as the leading educational professionals in their establishments. They are not as familiar with the practice of inspection. How much inspecting they manage to accomplish and the experiences they gain will influence how quickly they move along the continuum from novice to expert inspector, and to lead teams. For instance, it is a possibility that a headteacher fulfilling a commitment of 16 days a year, may inspect only good schools and they may not experience outstanding schools, schools requiring improvement or inadequate schools. In these instances their benchmarking experiences will be narrower.

Other factors, even where they reside, may also limit serving practitioners' range of experiences since they are usually deployed within a reasonable journey time. Usually around an hour each way is acceptable since this avoids the necessity and expense of at least one overnight stay.

Barriers to headteachers inspecting and the challenges they face

Many of the obstacles headteachers need to overcome if they are to inspect are practical and the most significant is managing their time. However, potentially more damaging to their identity would be if they fail the Ofsted training or if their

own school receives a requiring improvement or even worse an inadequate grade at its inspection. Either has the potential to damage their credibility both as headteacher and inspector. It is significant that several of the headteachers interviewed do not publicise the fact that they inspect and keep a low profile in their localities.

Another barrier to attracting serving practitioners is the cost of bringing them out of school. Governing bodies have to be persuaded that the added value for the school is significant enough to agree release. Policy Exchange (2014) argued that day rates are not high enough to attract the calibre of professionals required. At the moment the daily pay rate differential between team inspectors and lead inspector is negligible but the data also shows that Ofsted would have to make adjustments to workloads as well as finances to encourage more practitioners to lead teams.

Policy Exchange also cites evidence that headteachers are reluctant to train due to its cost, currently over £3,000, which usually falls on their school. Additionally, for serving practitioners the cost of public liability insurance in relation to their activity levels is expensive.

Some of these points were acknowledged by the Education Select Committee in its report on inspection (Education Select Committee Report, 17 April 2011) which noted there are many barriers for serving practitioners, especially in small schools because it can be difficult to release headteachers, especially too often. As reported to me it is also hard for them to keep up to speed with the ever-changing world of inspection. Also, if headteachers lead inspections it is more challenging for them to write the reports because they are not accustomed to doing it that often, and they may need to field any issue that may arise in their schools during their absence.

Challenges

Some headteachers are not keen to embrace inspection. Only two of the headteachers in the roundtable cited by Policy Exchange (2014) were trained inspectors. The reasons these two headteachers gave for inspecting were negative since both felt that they had bad experiences of Ofsted and owed it to their colleagues to sign up and try to do better, mirroring the findings of some of the headteachers in this study. The reasons Policy Exchange set out for headteachers being unwilling to become inspectors included the up-front costs to their schools, some did not want to be part of the Ofsted brand and they did not have the time. This latter point also mirrors the findings of this study.

Analysis of the data reveals some of the obstacles the headteachers would need to overcome were they to adopt a wider system role. This includes the possibility of failure to pass the training and to sign off successfully as inspectors, or for their school to be downgraded from outstanding or good at an inspection. The impact of headteacher inspectors is also dependent on their schools accepting that the inspection regime uses them in this way.

Headteacher inspectors also need to be accepted by their headteacher peers, and there is evidence in this study's data that is not always the case. For instance, Brenda felt a sense of hostility from other headteachers and her words suggest there is no sense of community:

'Not all headteachers see us as real inspectors. Some worry that we know too much.'

Others expressed similar concerns, but on the other hand several headteachers commented that they work with their local schools and some were very positive about their relationships with other headteachers and illustrate how they are useful to them. For example, both Rose and Frank illustrate how they advise local

headteachers about changes to the inspection rubric. My interpretation of the data is that most, if not all, of the headteachers would be willing to support others more formally, especially if the climate of inspection is improved and the fear of being, '*bad mouthed*' (to cite Rose) is eradicated. As Rose also comments:

'I could help a lot of schools locally and I could say, "Look here's the advice, here's the new framework, here's some ideas and what's going to be looked at", and I think it would benefit a lot of schools locally.'

My presumption is that other headteachers approached them because they were thought to have an understanding of the current quality control standards, but I do not know this since the views of other headteachers was not part of the research design.

Chapman argued that,

'In order to generate sustainable improvements the inspection process must provide post-inspection support to facilitate the change process...local, regional and national networks could be built to share ideas and best practice...combined with a gentle shift in the balance from pressure to support...increase the possibilities for school improvement that the current model has failed to yield.' (2002: 270)

Should headteacher inspectors move into a system leadership role, knowledge transfer will be one of the issues to be addressed by the policy makers, This is a key factor since this group of inspectors are currently not part of any formal network. McCormick et al (2010) argued that an important aspect of effective brokerage is the establishment not only of relationships between individuals but also of links between networks.

The Oxford English Dictionary describes a network, as a, '*group or system of interconnected people or things*' (Chapman & Hadfield, 2010: 310). Traditionally networks of schools are currently where system leaders work, how they work and where they learn to lead beyond their own context and where they are, '*nurtured, supported and promoted by the systems that they build around themselves*' (Ballantyne et al.: 2006: 2).

This study is not about networks but network theories bring possibilities to the issue of how teachers and schools share knowledge about practice, especially through networks beyond organisations. Simply to note here that it may be timely to consider the establishment of a network for headteacher inspectors. A network or networks of headteacher inspectors would most likely not be school-based, but would nonetheless face the same challenges as school-based networks: constitution, relationships, purpose and identity (Chapman & Hadfield, 2010).

The impact of headteacher inspectors would be dependent upon schools accepting the inspection regime exploiting them in this way (Hatcher, 2008). Hatcher argued that system leaders are holders of knowledge and practice which conform to government agendas and are a new way of continuing centralized control. On the other hand, Higham et al. (2009) argued that system leadership is not a cynical government ploy to exert increasing control over the system.

One of the research questions was to explore how the professional practices of headteacher inspectors change as result of their inspection work. While recognising that headteacher inspectors do not fully meet the characteristics of system leaders, in the next few paragraphs I consider their potential to embrace a system leadership role. I reflect on some of the strategic changes necessary for them to do so, and the challenges.

Headteacher inspectors as potential system leaders

Following the appointment of a new chief inspector in October 2012, Exley (2014) argued that, '*The inspectorate has been in a state of near-permanent revolution*'. These include changes made to defuse criticism from headteachers who have repeatedly expressed concerns about inconsistent inspection judgements and poorly prepared inspectors. As I put the finishing touches to this thesis headteachers are beginning to take a key, perhaps pivotal, role in the inspectorate. This relatively new cadre of headteachers who are inspectors, some of whom are also National or Local Leaders of Education, adds a new dimension to the knowledge base of the school system.

Robinson (2012) argued that headteachers who may be considered as system leaders need an inspection regime because success for headteachers is measured by the Ofsted inspection of their own school since this validates the effectiveness of their leadership. This legitimises their system leadership role.

There is room for change. Building a leadership pipeline, perhaps using school groups as the basis for deploying school leaders to different leadership assignments, is a possible way of supporting their professional development, as well as support for the whole system's development.

As reported in *The Guardian* (8 March 2014), the Association of School and College Leaders proposed that Ofsted stops using inspectors contracted from the private sector and adopts a lower key approach to inspections. The association argued that this would reduce the unhealthy extent to which the threat of inspection dominates many school leaders' work and makes teachers afraid to try new approaches. This view is supported by Policy Exchange. In a paper on the future of school inspections in England (2014: 41-42) this Think Tank noted that the idea of headteachers inspecting was supported by headteachers with many saying they felt it essential for inspection teams to include a serving headteacher.

The changes were signalled by the Education Select Committee in 2011 and are timely. Ofsted has been in existence for more than two decades and the landscape in which it operates is very different to what it once was. Ceasing to outsource its inspectors from September 2015 will give Ofsted more control of its directly contracted workforce, with more serving practitioners and fewer additional inspectors. This is a natural progression from the strategic and focused recruitment of serving practitioners over recent years.

This fast changing picture was summarised by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in his letter to all schools:

'Ofsted's inspections have done much to raise standards in schools since its inception in 1992. However, now is the right time to review how Ofsted inspects so that all children in England have the opportunity to receive a good or outstanding education.' (HMCI Wilshaw, July 2014)

Some would go further. *The Sunday Times* reporting on the National Association of Headteachers annual conference noted that:

'The union has backed plans to trial self-regulation, with heads inspecting each other's schools. It hopes this could replace Ofsted.' (19 May 2013: 9)

There is another viewpoint to be considered here, as argued by Courtney (2014), which is that in panopticism discipline through surveillance is transparent and, *'necessary to effect predictable and desired behaviours'* (2014: 16). In post-panopticism, *'Ofsted inspectors are positioned within a matrix of uncertainty'* (2014: 16). By definition this would apply to the headteachers amongst them.

Courtney referred to, *'the values based commitment many (inspectors) bring to improving children's lives through inspection'* (2014:16), resonating with my own

sample of 12 headteachers. However, in post panopticism Courtney refers to inspectors as 'colluders' whose,

'Good intentions are cynically exploited to conceal the regime's goal of demonstrating its authority, especially over the socio-economically disadvantaged...even as they attempt to enforce the latest criteria, inspectors misrecognise their inadvertent complicity in a game whose rules have changed to satisfy themselves of their moral rectitude' (2014: 16).

The study data did not reveal that the headteachers in this small scale study recognised this in any significant way, while I do acknowledge that the point was not pursued during the interviews. It was not part of the study's objectives and frankly it was not something I had considered at that point. Suffice to note that there were a few instances where the headteachers expressed some dissonance with the inspection framework which made it difficult, in their view, for schools in challenging circumstances to secure good inspection judgements.

In any event, I suggest that in the future headteacher inspectors might be considered, alongside the groups already cited (Boylan, 2013; Hopkins, 2006; Hopkins and Higham, 2007; Higham et al.: 2009) as system leaders, providing the appropriate structures are put in place.

They would need to be managed strategically rather than as now where they simply move from one inspection to the next. The possibility of a more co-ordinated role may be far more realistic once they are contracted directly by Ofsted rather than through the independent contractors. Boundary crossing headteachers who inspect receive no public recognition for their role in changing established educational practice, and this too would need to change.

The most significant challenge for inspection is ensuring consistency of practice, unsurprising given that there are over twenty thousand schools to be inspected at

one time or another, currently at about 8,000 each year. The presumption is that engaging more serving practitioners who, over time, become expert in inspection practice will foster consistency.

At the time of the interviews the headteachers in the sample did not work with other serving practitioners on any regular basis. However, as the number of serving practitioners in the inspection workforce increases, the frequency of their working together will almost inevitably increase. Indeed, the situation is already changing since most inspection teams have at least one practitioner.

Working with different inspectors may support knowledge transfer and as Wenger et al. (2002) argued, double-knit organizations are characterized by a multi-membership learning cycle in which the creation of knowledge and its application commute between teams. This has the potential to tip the balance into headteacher inspectors taking a more substantive role in some guise yet to be determined.

The inspection system would also gain more value from the use of headteachers if they led inspections, where they have the most impact. However my interpretation of the data is that few serving practitioners are likely to be happy to undertake inspection leadership, mainly because it calls for more preparation and follow-up time than they feel able to provide, as things are currently organised.

McCormick noted that in England, '*schools have access to a relatively small advice size*' (2005: 113), and the years since then have seen the hastening demise of local education authorities, alongside the development of, for example federations and academy chains. The lack of local authority interest in headteachers inspecting, shown in my data is perhaps not untypical as well as unsurprising in the light of their other priorities. Nonetheless, it suggests that in the current political and budgetary landscape any co-ordination of headteacher inspectors would need to be orchestrated by another body or bodies, perhaps through emergent formal and/or informal networks (Hargreaves, 2003). This raises

questions about strategic structures, leadership and interconnection (Boylan, 2013) alongside some of the other challenges that I consider in the next section.

Chapman (2010) argued that networks improve access to expertise. They provide the structures that bring together groups of practitioners and provide the facilitation they need to learn from each other's insights and understandings. They simultaneously improve the quality of professional development and support the transfer of knowledge and practice.

Pont et al. (2008) argued that system leadership needs to come from the headteachers and the agencies or mediating organisations. They cited the National College and it seems there may be a place for such an organisation to develop a network of headteachers who inspect. In which case a step change would be made, headteacher inspectors would meet more of the characteristics of *system leaders* since they would facilitate change, '*by engaging in the wider system in a meaningful way*' (Hopkins, 2007: 160) and also more closely mirroring Boylan's (2013) typologies. Indeed, it has been argued that all headteachers should have inspection experience (The National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2012).

Whatever emerges over the next year or so, the path is set for cohorts of headteachers to be skilled in the practice of inspection. This is crucial since the study data lends weight to the view that the outcomes of inspection literally hinge on the capacity of the inspectors (Boyne et al.: 2002). As Robinson, following her study of primary headteachers, argued in the context of inspection:

'The greater knowledge serving practitioners have about the system more informed their choices can be about acting in the best interests of their schools.' (2012: 193)

The purpose of the next sections is to draw out the strengths of the methodology of the study and the methods used and also to reflect on its limitations.

6.4. Reflections on methodology and methods

I had sole ownership of the research throughout, choosing and designing the enquiry as well as collecting and analysing the data. I did not begin the study with a preconceived theory in mind but instead allowed theory to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1988). I was not searching for a particular truth that would give a universal understanding about those headteachers who also inspect since it was my understanding that amongst the headteachers I interviewed I would encounter a variety of constructed realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The sample I chose to interview had an impact upon reliability but they were selected because they had experienced the phenomenon of interest and were willing to share their perceptions with me. None of the headteachers approached declined, and I suggest this was because they had an inherent interest in the topic. I had no previous connection in any capacity with any of the sample and my view is that they were keen to be interviewed because nobody had asked them about their inspection work before in a structured way.

I appreciated the willingness of the headteachers since I had thought they may have seen participation as threatening, especially if they were to offer any negative views, which most did. They may have been persuaded by my written and verbal assurances but I suggest that they felt they had something to say and were glad to be asked their views. All of those sampled took the study seriously, with some bringing notes to the interview. They were keen to get their points across, both positive and negative. I assured anonymity and confidentiality, which I was able to guarantee. In short, the headteachers had little to gain from participation.

Good informants to the research process have certain characteristics (Dobbert, 1982). They appear comfortable and unstrained in interactions with the researcher, are generally open and truthful although they may have certain areas about which they will not speak or where they will cover up, they provide solid answers with good detail, they stay on the topic, they are thoughtful and willing to reflect on what they say. The tapes of the interviews demonstrate these characteristics well and are reflected in the transcripts. I sought dependability by ensuring that at every stage I remained faithful to the words spoken, as represented in the verbatim transcripts of the taped interviews.

To be credible the outcome of the research must be different from the descriptive accounts of the experiences provided by participants because each has only contributed a part of the story. I then sought confirmability after analysis by presenting to the headteacher an aggregate of all participants' perspectives and I asked them if I had got it right. Judging by their written responses the synopsis contained many aspects of the participants' world they recognised (Nolan & Behi, 1995) and evoked feelings of recognition and authenticity (Nielson, 1995).

When taking the synopsis of the findings back to the headteachers I also gave them the opportunity to modify them and I took into account their further comments in my analysis. Their responses to the synopsis were very supportive, with no dissent, and these are set out in appendix [iv]. For instance, Olive comments:

'Absolutely fascinating, I had no idea that my feelings were shared more widely. I would say this is an accurate and comprehensive summary.'

The decision to interview a small number of 12 headteachers took into account the maximum number of headteacher inspectors then available to me, approximately 60, and taking into account those whom I had some contact with and/or knowledge of. This left me with a pool of about 24 headteachers to choose from.

However, I was sufficiently satisfied with the quantity in the transcripts, at 85,000 words, and the quality of the data that I did not consider there was a need to interview more individuals. At least as important as sample size is the diligence and integrity of the researcher (Pyett, 2003).

In any event validity, *'is not a numbers game'* (Diefenbach 2009: 883) and there is no way of determining which number is sufficient and it does not follow that more interviewees would provide more trustworthy or representative data. If one were to construct a representative sample of headteachers, the sample size would be likely to be so large as to preclude intensive analysis (Silverman, 2000).

I might have interviewed the same 12 headteachers again but not all of them were available since four, a third, had ceased inspecting for various reasons and/or retired from headship within a relatively short time after the interview. At that time I did not consider that I would gain any more information to warrant a second interview.

With the passage of time, having now written the thesis, reviewed gaps in knowledge and considered potential research areas I am in a position to make a further interview worthwhile, but it would inevitably take different directions to the focus of the aim and objectives of this research.

This has been a learning journey for me and the next section offers some possible areas for further research.

6.5. Further research

The purpose of this section is to revisit some of the issues uncovered from these first findings of headteachers who inspect, and which might merit further study. The questions set out below are in no particular order:

How might headteacher inspectors who see themselves as having a system leadership role describe themselves further? (e.g. as system implementers or system reinforcers)?

Is there potential for headteachers who inspect to form a cadre of system leaders?

Do headteachers who inspect constitute a community of practice?

Are headteachers who inspect captured by the school's they inspect?

Are headteachers who inspect captured by Ofsted?

What do schools think about headteachers who inspect?

What do other inspectors think about headteachers who inspect?

How do headteacher inspectors' inspection judgements compare and contrast with those of other sub groups of inspectors?

Is there as correlation between the larger numbers of headteachers who inspect and with satisfaction rates and complaints?

Is there a correlation between inspection outcomes of schools following their headteacher's engagement as an inspector?

Do headteacher inspectors have any impact on the content of the *School Inspection Handbook*?

In the penultimate section of this chapter I set out my claims to knowledge.

6.6. Claims to knowledge

I submit that this study has made a contribution to the literatures on boundaries, identities and system leadership by illustrating these issues in a previously unresearched context. The study illustrates some things we did not previously know about headteachers who inspect and their lived world as inspectors. It lends an analysis as well as an understanding of the work of a group of people that has not been done before, and who have a foot in two camps, headship and inspection.

The study shows the headteachers interviewed view crossing the boundary between the two activities to be of value both to themselves and to others. Their acumen is thought to be highly relevant by schools, especially when compared to other inspectors who are not serving practitioners.

The study has Implications for the future deployment of headteachers as inspectors. This is reflected in how they embrace the inspection discourse, which is not uncritical. The attainment and ongoing maintenance of the role as an inspector is a decision carefully made since there are several obstacles to overcome.

The expert knowledge brought to inspection practice by headteachers is considered to be highly relevant by decision-makers. The study sets up and contributes to a debate about headteachers who inspect as system leaders, recognising that none of those interviewed gave an indication that they saw crossing the boundary between the activities in these terms.

More than two decades since Ofsted came into existence, *The Sunday Times* reporting on the National Association of Headteachers' 2013 annual conference, was still reporting that headteachers, '*Live in fear of Ofsted inspectors and their judgements*' (19 May 2013). However, Ofsted has since September 2014 moved to a situation where the aim was to have a serving practitioner on every inspection

team. Furthermore, from September 2015 practitioners will form a significant cohort of the inspector workforce.

I suggest that we are now in the position that Akkerman and Bakker defined as a process of '*identification*' (2011: 142) where lines of demarcation between practices are uncertain and there is overlap between practices. This seems to describe the often contested boundary in which headteacher inspectors operate.

The study also addresses some questions pertinent to the key social science issues, from the perspective of headteacher inspectors, including those relating to their place as inspectors in the performativity culture, their leadership of the wider school system, and social relationships, including with other headteachers and other inspectors.

6.7. Final comments

This chapter has summarised the study's findings and considered its contribution to knowledge. It has considered the implications of the research as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the research tools used. The chapter has also offered some possible further lines of enquiry.

I submit this study adds value because we do not normally hear the voice of inspectors, and even less about the headteachers amongst them. The thesis describes and analyses how a small sample of headteachers interprets their agency as inspectors. It does so in the context of the changes in the English school system since the Education Reform Act of 1998 and the debates about inspection and its impact. From its outset the study used the concepts of boundaries and identities as theoretical frameworks. More recently and following further reading and analysis, the study also offers a contribution about the leadership of the English school system at a macro level.

The evidence from this small scale study suggests that the headteachers interviewed are not captured by the schools they inspect and sometimes take a tougher stance than others. They are sometimes disenchanted with some of the inspectors with whom they have worked, especially some lead inspectors who, they say, have not given enough credence to their, often critical, views.

The more the relationship between inspectors and the inspected is characterised by trust (Wiebes, 1998; Leeuw, 2002) fostered through the engagement of headteacher inspectors the greater the probability that the inspectorate will take into account the aspects of educational quality that matter for schools. It is telling that the headteachers sampled were mostly dissatisfied with the inspection(s) of their own schools even though the outcomes were positive. However, I think there is a solid foundation from which to build since Christine and Rose seemed to broadly sum up what the other headteachers collectively think. Christine talked of inspecting being a, '*humbling experience*', while Rose regards it as a, '*privilege*'.

The view that headteachers should be supported and trained to raise educational standards (Bell et al.: 2003) is incontestable and the involvement of headteachers as inspectors is a positive demonstration of one of the means of securing this. As more headteachers move into inspection alongside Her Majesty's Inspectors their identity and boundary work has the potential to evolve. Perhaps this will contribute to inspection transforming itself into a new phase of its development, some two decades or so since Ofsted came into being.

The changes taking place which are placing current practitioners at the heart of inspection have been explored, and some possibilities offered for the future, and some changes that may support headteacher inspectors more substantive role within the school system. The concept of system leadership is evolving and this study adds to its literature. My analysis of the study data indicates that headteachers who inspect meet some characteristics. It also shows that they do

not meet others. The case to consider headteachers who inspect as system leaders therefore is not made, but this research is a contribution to the debate.

The growing number of headteacher inspectors may fill a gap by contributing to the development of a leadership pipeline. For instance, as a cohort of school leaders who are deployed to different leadership assignments, at the same time supporting their continuing professional development. Their accountability would be just one of the many issues to be determined.

While the headteachers who inspect have, to date, been underutilised the potential to harness and develop their potential is significant. Strategic leadership would be required and it may be that headteachers themselves would need to drive the agenda for this step change. Fortunately, it is possible for people to receive appreciation for their innovative role in changing established professional practices in the longer term (Jones, 2010) and my view is that headteacher inspectors may receive such recognition by taking their place alongside other cadres in the leadership of the education system. The capacity, developing at a fast pace, is there to be harnessed.

Through the voices of the interviewees my view is that, while headteacher inspectors are not currently regarded as system leaders, they are in the process of creating a new professional identity. They are a relatively new cadre within the school system and seem to have the moral purpose that underpins system leadership as instanced by Higham et al.:

'School leaders are not system leaders simply because of the role they play but because of the values, commitment and approach they bring to the task.' (2009: 27)

Although the number of headteacher inspectors is increasing rapidly, they are not strategically managed in any formal way, such as through a network. My view is

that a network of practitioner inspectors would need to be, '*systematically planned and supported*' (Chapman & Hadfield, 2010: 309).

The study draws to a close in the last few paragraphs by reflecting on its original objectives.

How the study's objectives are met

The first objective of the study was to understand why some headteachers cross boundaries to inspect, how they apply their professional knowledge to inspection practice and what they learn. The data indicates that the headteachers inspect for several reasons and they all think inspection is an important mechanism which contributes to school improvement. They inspect to improve their own school including in preparation for its own inspection and know this will also benefit them professionally. The headteachers also have an overarching commitment to improve the quality of education generally, and this includes other schools. This is important in the debate about whether or not headteacher inspectors may be seen as system leaders.

The study's second objective was to explore headteachers perceptions of their impact on inspection practice and the influence their engagement has on their identity, the schools they inspect and on their own school. The data indicates that headteachers are very aware that involvement in inspection helps to improve their professional expertise. They are confident they add value to inspection practice through the knowledge and empathy they bring to it, benefiting both the schools and other inspectors. The headteachers acknowledge that the many benefits gained outweigh the disadvantages. They pick up good ideas from seeing the work of others, but more often it helps them to affirm the practice in their own schools. In effect, they use inspecting to benchmark the performance of their own school.

The third objective was to explore how headteachers engage with other inspectors, the teachers and headteachers of the schools they inspect, the staff of their own school, and significant others, including other headteachers. The data indicates the headteachers enjoy mixed relationships with their fellow inspectors. Mostly these are positive but several have misgivings about some of the team inspectors who are not serving practitioners. This is because they think these inspectors are out of touch with what is going on in schools, which happens quickly. Several of the headteachers also express concerns about the conduct of some lead inspectors and some of these concerns are very strongly felt. This disenchantment arises when the headteachers' professional judgements are not given due credence, as they see it. Invariably this occurs when their own judgements are harsher than others and the lead inspectors' softer approach irks them.

Finally, I bring the study to a close with something I read at its outset, which seems like a long time ago, but which still resonates with me.

Some might argue that headteachers who join the inspection workforce which seeks to control may be viewed as mercenaries (Price, 1998) in line with Caesar's tactic in using those who had deserted from Marc Antony's army:

*'Plant those that have revolted in the
Van, That Antony may seem to spend his fury
Upon himself.'*

(Antony and Cleopatra, iv.6, 8-10)

While this is one point of view I do not subscribe to it. Rather, in common with Laar, my argument is that being an Ofsted inspector is:

*'Honourable work...and for those who do it well, the majority, inspection is a
worthy occupation...inspection carried out by skilled professionals can be a*

positive force, enhancing the performance of teachers, and thus the education of pupils, and improving public understanding.' (1996: 24)

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Further information about school inspections:

The common inspection framework

This sets out the statutory basis for inspections carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended). It summarises the main features of school inspections and describes how the general principles and processes of inspection are applied to maintained schools, academies and some other types of schools in England.

Reference No. 150065, Ofsted, June 2015; www.Ofsted.gov.uk/resources/150065.

School inspection handbook

This describes the main activities undertaken during inspections of schools in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. It sets out the evaluation criteria that inspectors use to make judgements and on which they report.

Reference No. 150066, Ofsted, June 2015; www.gov.uk/Ofsted/resources/150066.

Word count: 64,000

Appendices

The format of school inspections

English maintained schools and academies are inspected according to a set of criteria driven by their performance and these inspections are carried out under Section 5 of the 2005 Education Act (Parliament, 2005). Most inspections are deemed Section 5 under the Act and do not normally last longer than two days. They are staffed according to a 'tariff' which is the number of inspector days on site plus two days for the lead inspector to prepare for the inspection and to write the inspection report. The tariff is basically driven by the number of pupils on roll in the school. There is some discretion but consistency is the determining factor having regard to the particular characteristics of individual schools. For small primary schools it may be just the one inspector for one day, while for large secondary schools there may be up to five inspectors for two days. Most average size primary schools will have two inspectors, a lead inspector and a team inspector, both on site for two days. Schools receive notice of their inspection at or after midday on the working day before the start of the inspection.

Following the telephone call the lead inspector prepares joining instructions for the team and while they are not required to be shared with the school, they may be. The joining instructions will include an analysis of information available from the school's data and website, as well as provisional inspection timetables and the inspection trails to be followed during the visit. It is not just schools that receive little notice before an inspection visit since team inspectors receive the joining instructions some time during the afternoon on the day before the inspection.

On site, inspectors spend most of their time observing lessons and gathering other first-hand evidence to inform their judgements, focusing on features of learning. Evidence will include discussions with pupils, staff, governors and parents, listening to pupils read and scrutinising their written work. Inspectors also examine the

school's records and documentation including that relating to pupils' achievement and their safety.

Inspectors use three key inspection documents: First, *The Framework for School Inspection* [Reference No. 120100, Ofsted, 2014; www.Ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120100] which sets out the statutory basis for inspections, summarises the main features of school inspections and describes how the general principles and processes of inspection are applied to maintained schools, academies and some other types of schools in England; second, the *School Inspection Handbook* [Reference No. 120101, Ofsted, 2014; www.Ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120101] which provides instructions and guidance for inspectors conducting inspections, sets out what inspectors must do and what schools can expect, and provides guidance for inspectors on making their judgements; and third, *Inspecting Safeguarding in Maintained Schools and Academies* [Reference No. 140143, Ofsted, 2014; www.Ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140143] which supports inspectors in reviewing a school's safeguarding arrangements when carrying out inspections.

Together these three documents require inspectors to focus on what the school needs to do to improve and to engage in professional dialogue with the headteacher and others to help them to understand the inspection judgements. My premise is that the basic principles set out in Bentham's (1787) *Panopticon* (hierarchical observations, the normalising of judgements and examination) mirror the regime of school inspection (Wilcox & Gray, 1996).

After the inspection team has reached its conclusions the judgements will be presented, and briefly explained, to representatives of those responsible for governance at the school and the senior leadership team. The lead inspector must ensure the school is clear about the grades awarded for each of the four required judgements - on the leadership and management of the school, the behaviour and safety of pupils, quality of teaching and achievement of pupils - as well as the

summative judgement on the school's overall effectiveness. Immediately following the inspection, the lead inspector will write a report of about 1400 words setting out the inspection findings. This report is sent to the school soon after the inspection for a factual accuracy check, and then it is published so that it is available to all parents, and placed in the public domain on the Ofsted website. The report stays with the school until its next inspection.

Until September 2015 the contractors managed their own inspector recruitment and throughout the stages of the process potential inspectors are assessed on their educational experience, their skills in analysing and evaluating data and other information, and their ability to make and communicate judgements. Ofsted prescribes the qualifications and experience required by inspectors, the initial and continuing training they should receive, and the standards they are required to meet. Much of the training is secured through distance learning and is self-assessed. Ofsted publishes the names of additional inspectors and quality assures inspections by visiting a sample of schools during inspection and reviewing a sample of inspection reports.

After September 2015 all school inspections are taken back in-house, with Ofsted directly managing the inspection workforce, including the Ofsted inspectors who are not directly employed (formerly the additional inspectors) such as headteachers.

Letter to potential interviewees

Address & Telephone number

hmoreton@student.shuspace.ac.uk

Name

Headteacher

Address

Date

Dear

Invitation to participate in education research

I am currently studying for a doctor of education degree at Sheffield Hallam University. The work involves original research. My topic is about headteachers who are also school inspectors. This is an original piece of work. CfBT have given permission to conduct this research.

The study of headteachers who inspect schools is important since while it may be argued that the use of serving practitioners adds value to the inspection process there is no substantive academic research of this strategy. As a first step, therefore, it is worthwhile to explore the perceptions of the relatively few headteachers working as inspectors. I hope the insights gained may inform the practice of the inspection service providers and Ofsted.

I would be pleased if you were to agree to participate in the field work for the study. The work would involve a semi-structured interview with recorded audio. The content of the interview will be similar to the professional issues discussed by inspectors in the course of their work.

I will conduct the research against a background of the highest ethical responsibility. The study's procedures and ethics are as follows:

1. The interview would last about an hour, and would take place at a time and place convenient to you. You would incur no expense other than giving the time.
2. Research participants' anonymity will be protected by not using names or initials, and which will not be annotated to the interview tapes or the transcriptions.
3. Participants' identities will be confidential. Responses will be anonymised. I will ensure that in contextualising data it will not be possible to identify participants. My computer is security encrypted to comply with government (Ofsted) regulations. The transcriptions of the interviews will be stored on the computer. I have selected a sample drawn from the list of practitioner inspectors.
4. The dissertation will be presented to Sheffield Hallam University in the autumn of 2013 or spring 2014. At that point the findings of the research will be in the public domain. A copy of the dissertation will be made available to CfBT, and Ofsted, if they ask for it. I will also provide all participants with a personal copy.
5. You will have the opportunity to comment on the draft dissertation and you will receive a copy of the completed research. You would have the right to

withdraw from the enquiry at any time, for whatever reason and without question. In which case information you had provided up to that time would be deleted from the record.

6. You would have telephone (07795 358391) and email (hmoreton@student.shuspace.ac.uk) access to me at all times to discuss any concerns.

I do hope you will agree to participate in what was a worthwhile research project. If so, may I ask you to complete and return the consent form which is appended, ideally as soon as possible?

I have kept this letter brief but I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have. As would my director of studies: Tim Simkins, professor of education management. He may be contacted at CEIR, unit 7, science park, Sheffield Hallam university, Sheffield S1 1WB. Tim's email address is: t.j.simkins@shuspace.ac.uk

If you do not agree to participate, then may I thank you for your time so far. In the meantime I attach a brief information sheet setting out the context further.

With best wishes

Henry Moreton

Information sheet

What is the research about?

I hope to create understanding of why and how practitioners learn, develop and use the knowledge, skills and expertise they need to undertake inspection; to examine practitioners' perceptions of the impact of their inspection work on themselves and their practice and to examine practitioners' views about how they engage with the 'community' of inspectors.

What is involved for you?

The research strategy is to conduct two interviews with a small sample of practitioner inspectors. A semi-structured interview method will be used to allow the main questions to be explored, but also enable replies to be clarified and understanding to be deepened through follow up questions. I will record comments during interview by using a digital recorder. The aim of data analysis will be to produce a systematic recording of the themes and issues addressed in the interviews, and then to link them together under a reasonably exhaustive category system.

What will happen to the interview transcripts?

Anonymity will be guaranteed. The names of participants will be anonymised and the details of this securely stored in a different location to the data. Another party, including CfBT, will not know or be able to find out who the participants are. In order to validate my interpretation of the data a copy of the draft dissertation will be sent to each respondent. Each will also receive a final copy after publication.

Can I withdraw from the study?

You would have the right to withdraw from the enquiry at any time, for whatever reason and without question. Information you had provided up to that time would be deleted from the record.

Henry Moreton

Consent form

Please answer the following questions by circling your response and return to:

hmoreton@student.shuspace.ac.uk

I have been fully informed about the purposes of the research, the approach to be taken and the procedures set in place to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. yes no

I understand that material from my interview will contribute to a publicly available dissertation and may also be used in other academic and professional publications. yes no

Your signature will certify that you have voluntarily decided to take part in this research study having read and understood the information sheet for participants. It will also certify that you have had adequate opportunity to discuss the study with the researcher and that all questions have been answered to your satisfaction.

Signed by participant:

Date:

Name: (block letters)

Signature of researcher:

date:

Interview script

Introduction

- Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study
- This interview should take about one hour
- Check time availability
- Ask permission to tape
- Explain purpose of the research
- Explain purpose of the interview.

The research questions and the key issues I wished to cover:

Tell me a little about your career to date.

Tell me about the context of your current school.

Tell me about your experience(s) of *being inspected*, and how this impacts on your practice as an inspector.

Why did you decide to become an inspector?

Did you have to overcome any barriers to become an inspector?

What knowledge and skills do you bring to inspection as a practitioner?

What do you see as the key things you have learned as a result of your inspection work?

How have you changed since becoming an inspector?

What do you like about inspecting?

What do you not like about inspecting?

How have your views about inspection changed, if at all, since being an inspector?

Tell me about how the roles of headteacher and inspector complement each other.

Tell me about how the roles of headteacher and inspector conflict with each other.

Tell me about what it is like when you switch between your roles as headteacher and inspector.

What do you think the main differences are for practitioner inspectors?

To whom do you most identify with now – other headteachers or inspectors, or both?

How do you now describe yourself professionally?

What do you think about the idea that all headteachers should be trained how to inspect? And inspect?

Would you prefer to be inspected by a practitioner or non-practitioner?

Can you give me some examples of how being a headteacher makes a positive difference when inspecting?

Are there any negative examples?

What are the advantages to you in being both headteacher and inspector?

What are the challenges for you in being both headteacher and inspector?

Who do you seek advice from about inspecting, and what is that typically about?

When inspecting do you relate to other practitioners in the same way as you do to inspectors who are not headteachers; or are there differences? Are you able to give examples?

Concept	Areas for questions
Context and Values	<p>Tell me a little about how your career to date.</p> <p>Tell me about the context of your current school.</p> <p>Tell me about your experience(s) of <i>being inspected</i>; and how this impacts on your practice as an inspector.</p> <p>Why did you decide to become an inspector?</p> <p>Did you have to overcome any barriers to become an inspector?</p> <p>What knowledge and skills do you bring to inspection as a practitioner?</p> <p>What do you see as the key things you have you learned as a result of your inspection work?</p> <p>How have you changed since becoming an inspector?</p> <p>What do you like about inspecting?</p>

	<p>What do you not like about inspecting?</p> <p>How have your views about inspection changed, if at all, since being an inspector?</p>
Identity and role	<p>Tell me about how the roles of headteacher and inspector <i>complement</i> each other.</p> <p>Tell me about how the roles of headteacher and inspector <i>conflict</i> with each other.</p> <p>Tell me about what it is like when you switch between your roles as headteacher and inspector.</p> <p>What do you think the main differences are for practitioner inspectors?</p> <p>To whom do you most identify with now – other headteachers or inspectors, or both?</p> <p>How do you now describe yourself professionally?</p>
Learning and Knowledge	<p>What do you think about the idea that all headteachers should be trained how to inspect? And inspect?</p> <p>Would you prefer to be inspected by a practitioner or non-practitioner?</p> <p>Can you give me some examples of how being a headteacher makes a positive difference when inspecting?</p> <p>And any negative examples?</p>

	<p>What are the <i>advantages</i> to you in being both headteacher and inspector?</p> <p>What are the <i>challenges</i> for you in being both headteacher and inspector?</p> <p>Who do you seek advice from about inspecting, and what is that typically about?</p> <p>When inspecting do you relate to other practitioners in the same way as you do to inspectors who are not headteachers; or are there differences?</p> <p>Are you able to give any examples?</p>
--	---

Interview diary

Interview 1

- Really much better than questionnaire
- Retiring end of 2012
- Had made notes and prepared.
- Not at all bothered about confidentiality issues.
- Retiring at the end of term (difficulties with GB and LA; retirement is early and unplanned
- Questions ok...some repetition?
- Brisk...about 50 focussed minutes.
- Keen to show me the school afterwards
- Interview during school day
- Seems totally unaffected by our professional relationship
- Has clear views...unafraid to speak mind
- Purposeful....very little waffle etc.
- Glad sent questions beforehand
- Not entirely comfortable with the tape...self-conscious?
- Took 5 hours to transcribe 40 minutes

Interview 2

- Over an hour – very talkative
- Covered some of the latter questions early doors
- Like first interviewee uninterested about protocols regarding confidentiality- just keen to talk
- Had not prepared any notes
- Plenty of good exemplars
- Busy – interview at 18:00 after a meeting with his SMT (of 13)
- I became concerned at the time at 70 minutes

- Too long because of my interjections

Interview 3

- Busy HT
- Started as DHT
- Academy status next term + reverts to VP (substantive post)
- Subject, with staff, to TUPE
- Very talkative
- Covered latter questions early doors
- Lots of good exemplars e.g. FFT data
- Unfazed by tape
- Retiring 2012
- Notes and offered to write up for me
- As previous two seems very happy to talk...recognises empathy

Interview 4

- Very successful – LIR every grade was 1
- Used to lead-no longer
- Leads pies
- RC
- Nice lunch provided
- The wariest of the four so far...seems more cautious

Interview 5

- Only one in a home so far
- Evening
- Good hour
- Huge primary school @730

- Had prepared some notes
- Good suggestions for questions – enjoy and not enjoy?
- Not bothered about confidentiality, etc.
- Eager just to talk
- Suggested some useful questions

Interview 6

- Second in home – looking after sick child
- New to inspecting-2010
- 35 days a year
- Persuading GB is an issue
- Forthright and conversational
- CE (VC)
- Experience in one LA

Interview 7

- Long interview, 90 minutes
- In school, during the day
- Head had prepared word-processed notes – gave them readily
- Not bothered at all about confidentiality
- Forthright – quite critical of some AIs
- 20 days a year, since 2007

Interview 8

- Long – 77 minutes
- Notes given
- Showed around school

- 20 days – perhaps 16/17 – lots of problems – bereavements
- Critical of a couple of Als
- Keen to inspect on retirement...couple of years?
- Spouse, HT, retiring Easter
- Tour of the school

Interview 9

- Late notice
- Still sent questions
- Handwritten notes-referred to but kept
- Afterwards asked me what I thought about children's books
- History of SCC and satisfactory
- Current school is satisfactory – HT 7 years
- Black, female
- Uses maiden name for headship
- Asked my advice about written work of pupils
- Wanted me to tell her what I thought if their literacy levels, in Y5

Interview 10

- Large school
- 100% ethnic
- Three headships
- Trained as SIP
- Developing close links with local schools – moving away from LA
- Experienced inspector – s10
- Enthusiastic about interview
- Seems very frank
- Interested in what I've found out so far

Interview 11

- Tight for time, arrived 10 minutes early thankfully
- HT had meeting with staff following interview
- Head of two schools
- Head of ex SM – interim
- Open and seems frank
- No refreshments
- Not at all bothered about tape
- Probably the most rushed of the 11 to date
- Perhaps I'm getting better at this?

Interview 12

- Lunchtime – better quality time
- The only nursery HT
- No refreshments
- Very small LA
- Tight group of nursery heads
- Seems very lacking in confidence about leading – it is the data issue

A sample interview transcript

L is line number

I/R is interviewer / respondent

	2	3	4	5	6	7
L	I/ R	Verbatim record	Code or concept: In vivo and constructed	Category	Memo	Explanatory Notes
1	I	So, tell me about your career.				
2	R	It's fairly dull I'm afraid. I worked in X from college for two years, I then moved to X...a primary school...a Junior school.				
3	I	Did you do a degree?				
4	R	Yes I did a BEd, a BEd at X. So got a job straight away. Did two years...it was X in X.				BEd is a Batchelor of Education
5	I	Was it easy to get a job those days...because it's getting quite tight nowadays?				
6	R	I suppose it was...all the friends I know got jobs.				'Pools' were manages by

		It was the days of 'pools' as well. Although I didn't get a pool, I didn't get in.				local authorities; teachers joined and were then allocated to schools. Usually newly qualified teachers.
7	I	It's getting more difficult isn't it?				
8	R	It seems to be...yeah. I mean we had...we had...what did we have recently? We had a TA post...we had 80 applicants. We had 80 applicants for a teaching assistant. I think, at teacher and TA level there are lots of people going for jobs...it's higher up. Headship's a different story.	'Headship's a different story' (in vivo)	Identity		TA = teaching assistant.
9	I	Ok				
10	R	So yeah two years in x, six years at a school as science teacher...then I was advisory teacher.				

11	I	Right.				
12	R	In x.				
13	I	How long did you do that?				
14	R	Two years I did that.				
15	I	Was there an area of specialism?				
16	R	Science...primary science. And following from that I did an MSc actually.				
17	I	Part time, full time?				
18	R	Part time. So that was also while I was deputy. So that was quite tough.	Pride (constructed)	Identity		
19	I	Two evenings a week, that type of thing?				
20	R	Yeah, evenings and some tutorials at weekends as well. It was in X.				
21	I	Science related?				
22	R	It was education management. It was interesting. I enjoyed it. I'm glad I did it.	Pride (constructed)	Identity		
23	I	Have you thought about taking it further?				
24	R	I don't know really. I'm not, but I'm certainly not going to say, 'never'. There are things I'm				

		interested in researching, so maybe.				
25	I	You could go to a doctorate.				
26	R	Then got the deputy's job here.				
27	I	Right.				
28	R	Three years there...here rather and then got the headship. After three years.				Promoted to headship from deputy in the same school.
29	I	A bit of a whirlwind career?				
30	R	And then after...I was head for about two years and the new framework came in and we were the first in X to be inspected. In fact I was head for a year and then we got the first inspection and that was it. And after that I got approached by X just to sort of do a bit of work.	Pride (constructed)	Identity		
31	I	Who inspected you? What was the name of the lead inspector?				
32	R	What the first one, we've				

		had two?				
33	I	Can you remember the names?				
34	R	X was the second one.				
35	I	And the first?				
36	R	I can tell you...he's not on the circuit anymore I don't think. It wasn't the most pleasant experience I've ever had.	'Experience' (constructed)	Learning		Respondent goes to his files and picks on out. Bad experience of being inspected.
37	I	What the first one?				
38	R	X...X.				
39	I	He lives in Italy.				
40	R	Wasn't his fault. It was early...it was the first one.				
41	I	So this is in...				
42	R	2005...October 2005. And so I had a bit of a sleepless night. Because I didn't think we were getting a fair crack of the whip.	Disappointed (constructed)			This Inspection Framework started in September 2005.
43	I	What was the outcome?				
44	R	We got outstanding. They told me we were looking	Argues (constructed)	Identity		

		at 'good' at the end of the first day. I got them all together second day and said, 'look I don't think...I don't agree...I've looked at the framework and blah, blah, and I sort of did my best to get it there, and I think it was right what we got.	'Looked at the framework' (in vivo)	Knowledge		
45	I	So the SEF...you'd graded it as 'outstanding'?				
46	R	No...this is the problem.				
47	I	Ah...that's interesting. So you graded it as 'good'?				
48	R	Yeah I did.				
49	I	Fascinating.				
50	R	It was very early days you see...we had very little training from the authority.	Irritated (constructed) 'Little training' (in vivo)	Local authority Training		
51	I	Right...so you are saying it is 'good', they are agreeing with you and then you are arguing?				
52	R	And they said, 'well you said it's 'good'. And that brought into question my self-evaluation obviously.				

53	I	Fascinating.				
54	R	And I said, 'well, that's just the way we are'. Things have changed a lot. They have changed hugely in five, six years. Certainly have in my head anyway.	Confident (constructed)			
55	I	And the second one was 'outstanding?				
56	R	Yeah. We didn't get 'outstanding' teaching and learning in the first one. For the second one we got 'outstanding' across the board. And between that we had an HMI for curriculum innovation in '07.	Pride (constructed)	Identity		
57	I	A subject survey?				
58	R	Curriculum innovation...I think Ofsted rang the authority and asked them to recommend someone and they recommended us...and we got that call.	Pride (constructed)	Identity		
59	I	That would have been a survey. They call it an aspect.				
60	R	It wasn't a subject as				

		such.				
61	I	How did you do in that?				
62	R	It was judged 'outstanding', the curriculum'.	Pride (constructed)	Identity		
63	I	You need to go really don't you!				
64	R	We even had a visit...we had a visit from Bell, the chief HMI. Top man. After the first one as well. Because you know we were one of the first ones. That was interesting. And we had another HMI in '09 as well. In four years we've had four visits I suppose. And that was for good practice in literacy.	Pride (constructed)	Identity		Laughter. A former HMCI.
65	I	So your school is an outstanding school isn't it?				
66	R	It is...yeah. It is an outstanding school.	Pride (constructed)	Identity		
67	I	It's a Junior school isn't it?				
68	R	Yeah.				
69	I	How about the Infant school?				

70	R	That's a good school. Good.				
71	I	And your local secondary school...do you have one secondary school?				
72	R	No, we have a selective system here...11 plus. So we have the two grammars, boys and girls. And then we have a boys and girls all ability secondary school. X boys, X girls...we have X which is mixed, and then we have couple of Catholics as well. Our kids go to about seven or eight schools. Which makes transition a bit tricky.				
73	I	How many in your Year 6?				
74	R	65 now.				
75	I	Two classes?				
76	R	Yeah. Two form entry throughout. We were three.				
77	I	A funny number 65.				
78	R	Yeah...well.				
79	I	Could you take more?				
80	R	Yeah, we could take				

		more.				
81	I	So why, is it numbers?				
82	R	Yes. We've got 33 in school that didn't come from our infant school. We get a significant number in, who either move into the catchment or aren't happy in their current school.				
83	I	So, obviously a more than successful school. Do you think that your experience as a deputy and a head has led to you being 'tapped up' to becoming an inspector?				
84	R	I was definitely 'tapped up' to become an inspector, yeah. Following that inspection yeah, the first one. I don't think it was the intention particularly of X but I got called, I think it was part of a survey, a 'phone survey I think and she just said to me, 'have you thought about this', and my external SIP at the	Pride (constructed) 'Best professional development' (in vivo)	Identity-engagement Boundary crossing Learning		

		time, said it, 'was the best'...and he was an inspector, X. He just said to me, 'it was the best professional development you can have.				
85	I	Why did you decide...you'd been tapped up by other people, but why did you decide to become an inspector?				
86	R	I suppose it was for the challenge really. Challenge, good professional development. I suppose I wanted...yeah challenge...it was out of my comfort zone...that's what it was...that's what I fancied.	'Challenge' (in vivo) 'Development' (in vivo) 'Comfort zone' (in vivo)	Learning Identity-formation; alignment Boundary crossing		
87	I	And who runs the school in your absence?				
88	R	My deputy. But I'm not out...I'm only 'up to twenty days'. So I'm not out a huge amount.				
89	I	So that would have been since...when did you				

		qualify?				
90	R	2007.				
91	I	2007, so three years. So 60, 70 or so. And your deputy has been with you for that period.				
92	R	Yeah, I appointed her. She's stunning. So the school's basically...the systems are in place.	Comfortable (constructed)	Boundary		
93	I	What was the training like? A grade out of ten?				
94	R	I'd grade that training from X better than any training I've had since. I'd grade it about an eight I suppose.	Delighted (constructed)	Learning, characteristic of practice		
95	I	So the initial training?				
96	R	Yeah the initial training, and the shadowing, with X.				Shadowing an experienced lead inspector on a 'live' inspection is part of the training programme for new inspectors.
97	I	If there was one thing				

		what would you draw out of that initial training?				
98	R	Er...it was a long time ago...I suppose how to conduct yourself on an inspection. Because that's a really difficult thing to do. Walk into somebody else's school with that hat on...as a head, is a very, very stressful thing to do. And following X round and seeing how he dealt with people...I think that I gained more from that than anything else. Forget the technical stuff, I think it's the people.	'Stressful' (in vivo) 'People' (in vivo)	Learning Boundary crossing Identity formation-alignment		
99	I	I mean that's the heart of what I'm doing. Do you think that's the difference because you are a head going in to somebody else's school?				
100	R	What the...?				
101	I	Is that something that strikes you...are you aware of...as opposed to another inspector, for example. What is it then?				

102	R	I think...I've written this down...it's a double edged sword, but I do think its...I think it's the empathy side of things, and I think that...and I'm not suggesting this is every inspector...but I've come across some inspectors who have clearly not worked in schools for some time, and become sort of cold and hardened to it. As you would, as a doctor would with a patient, for example, but I'm never like that because I've just come out of school the day before...and I've felt, 'God you're not really...you're not appreciating what that head's going through with the way that you're coming across to them.	'Empathy' (in vivo) Angry (constructed) 'Cold' (in vivo) 'Hardened' (in vivo) 'Appreciating' (in vivo)	Boundary Identity-negative alignment, not finding common ground Identity formation-alignment; reconciling different perspectives , walking boundaries		Respondent refers to his notes, which have been prepared for the interview
103	I	Do you sense that the recipient headteacher acts differently towards you because you're a				

		head?				
104	R	Yes. Definitely.				Very firm.
105	I	And again, any examples?				
106	R	There's more sort of, off the record, 'how's it going, how am I doing?' And I feel also that I...I don't know whether they do this with other inspectors, that's the trouble because I'm not there, but I...I...they do confide in me, head type thing, off the record, head to head, 'how do you think I'm doing', I've just said that, that type of thing.	'Confide' (in vivo) Empathy (constructed)	Identity formation-alignment; perspective		
107	I	So, you're a team inspector?				
108	R	Yeah.				
109	I	With a view to becoming a lead?				
110	R	Not really, no, not unless I'm forced.	'Unless I'm forced' (in vivo)	Identity formation		No wish to lead
111	I	Ok, for what reason?				
112	R	Selfishly I suppose, I love being in my school. I love	'Selfish' (in vivo)	Negative identity		For a LI, the standard

		<p>this job and I don't feel...if I'm out four days there are things that...even in a school like this that runs like clockwork most of the time. When you get back there's additional workload. Things that your deputy can't do. There's about 200 emails, for example. And four days out? Things can go wrong or there are lots of things to pick up when I get back.</p>	'Workload' (in vivo)	<p>formation-alignment</p> <p>Crossing boundary</p>		<p>tariff is four days.</p> <p>One day for the preparation of the PIB</p> <p>Two days in school</p> <p>One day for writing the report</p>
113	I	So literally you're away for two days and you get 200 emails?				
114	R	Not that many, I get about 50. But if I was out for four...				
115	I	So, 50 a day?				
116	R	Pretty much, yeah. And that's not including stuff from the LA, and rubbish stuff.	'Dismissive' (constructed)			
117	I	Seven years you have been doing this...how has your job as head changed				

		in seven years?				
118	R	How has it changed? Oh I think, sadly...although I may not come across as someone who is 'hands on', I am...I'm out there less. And that...I don't know that's something though that you just become. Or whether I'm forced to be here more. Because I certainly shouldn't be in here more. Things are going really well but I don't think I'm out there enough. I don't know. I'm still out there and visible, but not enough. I don't think.	Dissatisfied (constructed)	Negative identity formation-alignment Crossing boundary		
119	I	I ask the question in relation to the point you made earlier about a lot of inspectors don't have recent, up to date experience.				
120	R	I know a lot of them...but I don't have much experience myself.	'Experience' (constructed)	Knowledge		
121	I	I suppose that even if				

		you're a head that job changes even within a short period of time, within seven years. The job had changed.				
122	R	Well I had a head in here yesterday, and ex colleague who resigned in July and is now working for X, and she was saying that, already she feels out the loop. Which is very interesting isn't it. That's a term.	Knowledge (constructed)	Knowledge		
123	I	Six months.				
124	R	And already she was saying, 'fill me in, what's going on because I'm out the loop?	Knowledge (constructed)	Knowledge		
125	I	And that's out the loop of, the local authority?				
126	R	Initiative type stuff, but initiatives are what...I thinks that's a key thing because as a head, as a practitioner when you're going into a school and teachers are talking about, 'learning to learn' and collaborative learning	'Initiative' (in vivo) Dismissive (constructed)	Knowledge Identity		Critical of non-practitioners

		<p>techniques, and what makes a good lesson outstanding...sometimes it is that type of thing that pushes learning on. And you've got inspectors...you can see them...'what's that?' They have heard of 'talk partners' but do they know what 'peer coaching' is? do they know about 'peer marking', it's that sort of stuff that's really there in schools, in great schools. And how can they know that? I was actually saying to x, what is needed is heads who are inspectors to actually train inspectors who aren't in schools on things like that. And do a session here and there and you know...this is what's going on in schools at the moment, this is what these phrases are. You hear them. This</p>				
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		is what schools are all about, 'acronym city'. But inspectors can't. They can't know what they mean can they?				
127	I	In reality of course, as you know is...HMI get trained, some of us go along and get trained by them and we then deliver virtually verbatim the script.				
128	R	Yeah, I know. Some of the training I've been on has been awful.	'Training' (in vivo) 'Awful' (in vivo)	Learning	LA training 'awful'	
129	I	So, did you have to overcome any barriers to becoming an inspector?				
130	R	Yeah, working in a Junior school I suppose, and even before this I was an advisory teacher and I worked in a Junior school before this. EYFS was an issue for me so that become one of my performance targets and I think I went and visited	'Dread' (in vivo) 'Barrier' (in vivo) 'Worried' (in vivo)	Identity formation; alignment. Walking the boundary Knowledge and learning		Inspecting the Early Years Foundation Stage

		about five schools in X with colleagues, then I led on EYFS on an inspection. It's still not...because I'm not in there every day I still dread it when I get told to do that and that was a barrier for me. It was something I dreaded, so apart from that just the barrier of being a bit worried about going in and being on the other side isn't it.				
131	I	Do you tend as a team inspector to get asked to do the sorts of same things?				
132	R	Yeah.				
133	I	How do you feel about that?				
134	R	Provision. Pretty much.				
135	I	Do you have a view about that?				
136	R	I have done other things. I have done pretty much everything actually. Generally speaking, generally speaking I do	Confident (constructed)	Identity		

		tend to do provision. And ECM. Which...well actually I quite like it. That's what I'm all about anyway so...I don't mind looking at data as well. I can do that if I want to and just compare that to the PIB and some inspectors I now know and they let me do certain things and I think...no that's alright actually.				
137	I	Do you find that you work with a similar group of inspectors?				
138	R	Not really. But yeah I've had a spate of working with similar ones. But I kind of enjoy that and I also enjoy working with other people. I like the whole variety I suppose. I get quite excited on the way you know. Then you walk in here and think, 'what's this lead going to be like?' Yeah it's good because that's out of your comfort zone.	'Enjoy' (in vivo) 'Variety' (in vivo) 'Comfort zone' (in vivo)	Identity formation- imagination- generating new relations Identity formation- engagement -relations of mutuality Boundary		

139	I	And you don't know till you walk through that door do you?				
140	R	Of course you don't.				
141	I	And you know by break time?				
142	R	Yeah.				
143	I	Paper...you can have the best SEF in the world or the worst SEF, it means nothing does it? It is fascinating...and the people. It's getting through the barriers in such a short period of time to get people to trust you?				
144	R	It is yeah...I agree. I was with a lead the other week and he said, 'I never even talk to the head on the first morning because they are so nervous'. And I thought, 'well, that's great but I wish you'd told the head, because she's taking it as if you don't' like her, she thinks there's something	Anger (constructed) Empathy (constructed)	Identity formation- alignment; reconciling different perspectives		Angry at a lead inspector

		wrong, just tell her that it's deliberate, I'm not speaking to you because you're uppity, it's alright'. It's that kind of thing, putting yourself in the head's shoes. What are they thinking, and some inspectors just don't think like that because they are so far removed in a way.				
145	I	And I suppose they have so many other pressures.				
146	R	Of course they have. I can't criticise a lead can I, because I don't lead do I. And that's where I come in and say, 'it's all right, you're doing alright, don't worry.	Empathy (constructed)	Boundary Identity formation- alignment; reconciling different perspectives		
147	I	Fascinating. Ok. What knowledge and skills do you bring?				
148	R	Up to date current knowledge, initiatives, good practice, like I've already mentioned...positive learning strategies,	'Knowledge' (in vivo) Positive (in vivo)	Knowledge Learning Identity formation-		

		<p>assessment for learning. I know that inside out.</p> <p>How can someone who is not in school every day know what that is, really?</p> <p>You know, WALT and WILFs and objectives set and all that sort of stuff, and peer marking and I know all that, so I think just current practice I think that's what I mainly bring. Skills...that empathy I suppose that personal side of it...I think...well of my...its positive relationships isn't it. Another thing I like, I really get a kick out of is outstanding constructive feedback to teachers as well, on lessons because I do a lot of that here.</p> <p>And sort of pinpointing what it needs to be to be outstanding because I've heard other inspectors say things that are general, vague things...I like to just pinpoint stuff</p>	<p>Learning (in vivo)</p> <p>Strategies (in vivo)</p> <p>Practice (in vivo)</p> <p>Skills (in vivo)</p> <p>Empathy (in vivo)</p> <p>Relationships (in vivo)</p> <p>Constructive (in vivo)</p> <p>Feedback (in vivo)</p> <p>Useful (in vivo)</p> <p>Team (constructed)</p>	<p>relations of mutuality</p> <p>Identity formation- alignment; finding common ground, imposing views</p> <p>Identity formation- alignment; reconciling different perspectives</p> <p>Identity formation- alignment; creating boundary practices</p> <p>Boundary</p>		
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		for them. That goes down well, they find it useful.				
149	I	Have you seen many inadequate lessons?				
150	R	A couple.				
151	I	How do you feel about feeding that back?				
152	R	Er...I haven't ever fed back...because I've gone to leads and talked it though and this is where the frustration, the conflict thing comes in. And they've said, 'well it doesn't really fit the picture...could it be satisfactory?' And that's really, really got me. There's been a couple of occasions where that's...not necessarily at that level. There was one occasion, an outstanding school, recently judged outstanding and they were going for outstanding again a massive school, and I saw two satisfactory lessons and I was pretty	'Frustration' (in vivo) 'Conflict' (in vivo) Anger (constructed)	Negative example of identity in practice. Negative reification-competence Negative community membership Negative engagement -not community building conversation		Anger at some lead inspectors

		much told to lose the evidence.				
153	I	Oh it happens.				
154	R	And then I felt undermined because they were then observed again...first of all there were lots of tears...the head came in, 'you've upset my staff'. Well that's ok, 'I'm sorry, they totally agreed with the feedback, and they were satisfactory I can talk you through it if you want. And I did, and you are right they were upset'. And the leads going, 'well I'll go and watch them'. And lo and behold they weren't satisfactory then, they were good. That...that sort of gets you a bit. But that's the system. It's not the leads fault. They couldn't be outstanding otherwise.	'Undermined' (in vivo) Anger (constructed)	Identity Negative engagement -not community building conversations Negative example of identity in practice. Negative reification; competence, negative community membership Boundary crossing		Anger at a lead inspector
155	I	What should happen is that you do it without fear or favour and you				

		find what you find.				
156	R	Exactly. Well we're talking 12 classes per key stage...big school. You're going to find...that's 24 classes.				
157	I	But we're getting to the heart of inspection pedagogy. I see it all the time...they blitz literacy and numeracy first morning, come to the decisions whatever teaching and learning is...it's a bit of an act, a performance isn't it...without any regard to the rest of the evidence, and then they start looking at the books on the second morning which are rubbish. And you think, 'why didn't you spend an hour looking at the books first thing in the morning?'				
158	R	Because that's so revealing.	'Revealing' (in vivo)	Knowledge		
159	I	Because that is the long				

		term stuff that you can't turn on and turn off.				
160	R	Yeah, no act.				
161	I	I've been in situations years ago when you get this little note in the joining instructions, 'if you see anything dodgy see me first'. It make me think, 'why?' I've also been in situations where as a man, in all females teams, where I've been the 'baddy'. Where everybody else is great, apart from me. Even nowadays, even if you give a three, it's still not...you get tears on threes.				
162	R	Oh, I know.				
163	I	And that's the interesting part, convincing staff that you are not judging them. You are looking at the whole school, you are looking at the evaluation.				
164	R	They don't take that though do they?				
165	I	Because they'll get seen				

		once...every three, four, or five years, and for all its faults, the last inspection framework you were in there for three or four days and you saw every teacher...each primary teacher, or Junior teacher, six or seven times. At least then, you felt...but there you go.				
166	R	And actually you've touched on something there that I mean to tell you, and that something I find I can do well as a head, and not something that's anything to do with me personally, is the evaluation of scrutiny of books. Something I can do is look at a piece of writing and say, 'that's a 4A, that's a 5C, that's a 3A, whatever'. And that's not something...somebody that's not been in schools can do. That's something I think is really important,	Knowledge (constructed) 'Practitioners' (in vivo)	Knowledge		Benefit of being a practitioner; gives example of scrutiny of books

		the scrutiny of books. Because that says so much, if you're looking at current progress. You've got three years low attainment and the last year's good and, 'is that a blip?' You look at current progress. I think that practitioners can confidently look at books, and can go, 'yeah, they are on track for such and such'.				
167	I	And that is going to be so important when there are no SATs, for example.				
168	R	APP is another one, by the way. How many inspectors know what that is? So all that's current stuff isn't it.	Knowledge (constructed)	Knowledge		APP is assessing pupils' progress
169	I	Is there one thing, or a couple of things, that you have learned as an inspector?				
170	R	Obviously better understanding of the inspection framework. And judgements.	Learning (constructed)	Learning		

171	I	Because of the schedule, you keep going back to the Schedule?				
172	R	Of course. If you're inspecting it, you've got to know it haven't you. If you are a head you'll look at it maybe a year before you're due an inspection. So that's good. Obviously I'm seeing best practice. Seeing not so good practice.	Learning (constructed)	Learning		
173	I	But coming from a school like this, presumably you are going to see thing things and think, 'actually we're doing things a lot better'?				
174	R	Yeah. I don't see much better practice.				
175	I	But that in itself is going to be of some assurance?				
176	R	Yes it is. But I'm not learning then am I, I'm just coming back thinking, 'my God, I love my school and aren't I lucky type thing'. But leadership and	Learning (constructed)	Learning		

		management, I think I see some things I see some leaders I think I can, well I know I can learn from.				
177	I	But what is it about your school that makes it outstanding then?				
178	R	It's very difficult to put your finger on. It's easy to say, 'it's a cracking team', but I think it is. I think it's everybody, parents included. It could be tempting for me to stay here and see my career out. My career has been very narrow really in terms of where I've worked but going out...I was in a school in X on Tuesday. I'd never have seen that.	Pride (constructed) Learning (constructed)	Identity Learning		
179	I	Inspecting?				
180	R	Oh yeah. I'd never have seen what I saw on Tuesday if I wasn't an inspector. You know a school with one hundred per cent ethnic	Learning (constructed)	Learning		

		minorities. And actually a bit of research I'm interested in...every teacher was white, and every senior manager was white. And the only ethnics were TAs.				
181	I	Interesting.				
182	R	And all the inspectors were white. And that's the second school I've done, exactly the same. It thought, 'there's something wrong there.				
183	I	Fascinating, there's a bit of work there.				
184	R	What sort of aspirations are those kids getting?				
185	I	I was in a similar school in X.				
186	R	The work ethic of those kids, by the way...the potential. But what are they looking at? They're looking at white people in powerful positions. It gives me a global view to continue to answer your question. And I think my evaluation skills are a lot	'Evaluation' (in vivo) 'Skills' (in vivo) 'Sharper' (in vivo) 'Rigorous'	Learning Knowledge Boundary		

		<p>sharper. You know I've use the Ofsted framework...I've kind of used it...I've taken bits of it. And my own self-evaluation here I think is really tight and really rigorous and for example I do a mini...I do a mini inspection twice a year in two of my year groups. Like a proper...using the EFs with my deputy and a governor, and we sort of flit in and out, do some observations, we do some scrutiny, we do some chats with the kids, we talk to the staff, we interview...no it's great. And I wouldn't have done that...I wouldn't have known how to structure that. I might, but...</p>	(in vivo)			
187	I	How do the staff find that?				
188	R	They...it's, it's...they dread it. And they don't know when it is either. I				

		<p>tell them two days before. It's very similar in a way. They know which years it's going to be in but they generally speaking really appreciate the feedback...well not generally speaking...they do. The only one I'm thinking of...we had one recently and it was judged good, and there were tears and things but since then there has been a lot of positives in that year group so it's very constructive and they do I think enjoy the experience because it gives them feedback...proper feedback...formal.</p>				
189	I	Do you feel that they have confidence because of what you do as an inspector?				
190	R	Yeah, my deputy's told me that. Some of my governors have asked. I think the deputy knows	'Governors' (in vivo)			

		what's going on in the school, I know they do.				
191	I	Are you the only trained inspector on the staff?				
192	R	Yeah.				
193	I	What do you like about inspecting?				
194	R	Helping other heads. I like giving, as I've just said, the constructive feedback. And enabling people to move forward. I do like that. I know it sounds dead cheesy but inspection when it's done properly can really provide a platform for schools and heads to move on.	'Helping' (in vivo) 'Constructive' (in vivo) Empathy (constructed)	Identity in practice. Local-Global interplay-how engagement fits in the broader scheme of things Knowledge and Learning		
195	I	Did you think that before you were an inspector?				
196	R	No. No I didn't no. I honestly didn't. I was absolutely petrified of it. And I supposed being inspected really...I supposed it's increased my confidence about	'Absolutely petrified' (in vivo) 'Increased my confidence' (in vivo)	Identity Values Knowledge Boundary		

		<p>inspection and my own self-confidence in what I do. But yes I do...I mean there are exceptions obviously but I feel, I feel really...I feel that it's a very positive process. It can be a really horrible, negative process.</p> <p>Sometimes I feel a bit unfair, but generally speaking I've grown to really like it. But again, but I suppose the schools I'm doing now are mainly satisfactory ones where the heads are doing what they can and need our support, need that platform, need someone else to say, 'look I told you.</p>	<p>'Positive' (in vivo)</p> <p>'Really horrible, negative process' (in vivo)</p>			
197	I	I've had heads of schools that I've put into a category, thank me.				
198	R	I've never had that.				
199	I	And I've admired that. At the end of the day you can walk away.				
200	R	Yeah, you can walk away				

		once you've done it.				
201	I	You can't say that about headship.				
202	R	No, exactly.				
203	I	Actually, I'd not thought about it like that. I do agree it feels good driving away know that it's done. And that never happens on a normal day, ever. You've always got to finish that off tomorrow, or tonight, whatever.	'Normal day' (in vivo)	Boundary crossing		
204	R	It's big job, with a lot of pressure involved. As a result, I think a lot of people play safe and go for the easy grades.	'Pressure involved' (in vivo) Dismissive (constructed)	Values		Inspectors 'play safe'
205	I	I agree about that, from experience, yeah. As I said to you I've never fed back an inadequate lesson. I've not been allowed to'.				
206	R	I think the grades are inflated.	'Grades are inflated' (in vivo)	Values		Respondent thinks inspection

						grades are inflated
207	I	I agree with that.				
208	R	I tell you another thing I like about it...is that I get feedback. On my performance. I very rarely get feedback on my performance but as an inspector you get it about ten times...and that's good. Because I think people feed on that, don't they.	'Feedback' (in vivo) 'Performance' (in vivo)	Learning		Likes getting feedback on his inspection work
209	I	It stops a lot of people leading and they go back to teamwork, especially when they get their reports hammered. Even good writers, headteachers included. There's something about writing inspection reports isn't there. At the end of the day, you've got one day to do it, including getting together the evidence base, which is ridiculous. And the tyranny of readers, and a				

		<p>lot of that is confidence. Because you were there as an inspector, they weren't...going back to your point about feedback, there is a lot of it, all the time. The reality of course is that everybody is too kind to each other.</p>				
210	R	<p>I know. I was honest once. Well not once. I was honest when it was difficult once. As in brutally honest you know. And I got a call from the inspector saying, 'why didn't you broach this with me on the inspection?', and I said, 'well, because you never let me speak', which is what I said, 'you interrupted me, blah, blah, blah'. She was a secondary head doing an infant school, and I just felt it was awful and she, and I got this horrible email off her and then I</p>	<p>'Was honest once' (in vivo)</p> <p>'Difficult' (in vivo)</p> <p>Conflict (constructed)</p>	<p>Values</p> <p>Identity formation- engagement ; relations of mutuality</p>		<p>Fell out with a lead inspector</p>

		got a 'phone call and I thought, 'right, ok, I'm could end up working with her again or even end up in the same room with her again. There is that possibility. It's not very pleasant.				
211	I	That does happen and the schedulers would try to ensure this could be avoided. From our point of view feedback is important.				
212	R	It's because you know they are going to see it. I didn't mean just written. I tend to get more feedback on an inspection, just verbally as well. 'Thanks for that', or whatever you know, 'try this'. And I just find that useful. You don't get that as a head. It's quite an isolated job. I suppose it's being part of a team, isn't it. Whereas here, I'm less part of a team as such. I'm sort of a driver	'Feedback' (in vivo) 'Useful' (in vivo) 'An isolated job' (in vivo) 'Less part of a team' (in vivo)	Learning Identity formation- engagement ; relations of mutuality, sustained mutuality	Likes being part of a team.	As a head is a team leader rather than a team member.

		of it.				
213	I	You have a SIP don't you...its changing isn't it?				
214	R	I do until March. But then I'm going to make sure I'll have someone.				
215	I	Why?				
216	R	Well I've said that I think heads and governors are going to be very vulnerable if there's no one coming in to challenge them.	'Vulnerable' (in vivo)	Values		Importance of inspection
217	I	So are you going to buy someone in?				
218	R	I'll buy someone in, yeah.				
219	I	From one of the consultancies? Or somebody you know?				
220	R	Yeah somebody I know from inspecting actually.				
221	I	Because most of our inspectors do bits and pieces don't they.				
222	R	Yeah I think so.				
223	I	SIP work, consultancy...				
224	R	Last learning point as inspector is being able to gate keep and sort of know when to say no to	'Learning' (in vivo) 'Initiatives'	Learning		

		authority initiatives and stuff like that. I think you become more confident in being able to filter when you're an inspector, because you've got more of a global view and you know you've got more confidence in your own judgement. You know other heads say, 'bring it on I'll do it, I'll jump on', and I think just being able to see more schools and get that more global view and get that awareness of frameworks.	(in vivo) 'Confidence' (in vivo) 'Awareness' (in vivo)			
225	I	So you're getting a feel for what's important at any one time?				
226	R	It helps you prioritise and say no to things.	Confidence (constructed)	Identity Learning		Helps to prioritise.
227	I	Because you're getting information that other heads don't get?				
228	R	Through the website and through chatting to others heads on	'Chatting' (in vivo)	Learning		

		inspection, to other inspectors.				
239	I	Do you ever work with other headteachers?				
240	R	Yeah, I did on Tuesday. In X. That was rare actually, I must say. I'm normally the only head on inspection.	'Rare' (in vivo)	Boundary		Usually the only practitioner
241	I	You do primary schools don't you, you don't do secondaries or special schools...so it will be quite smallish teams won't they?				
242	R	Yeah, they are yeah.				
243	I	What do you not like about inspecting?				
244	R	I think I've touched on this already.				
245	I	The feedback thing?				
246	R	No...restricted by the framework. I'll give you an example. Seeing satisfactory teaching in an outstanding school and feeling guilty. And also being undermined when that evidence is hidden. I don't like that	'Restricted' ((in vivo) Frustration (constructed) 'Undermined' (in vivo)	Values Negative identity formation; negative engagement . Not community		Respondent checks notes. Undermined by lead inspector

		bit. You said, 'you were there, you saw it, say what you think'. You can't necessarily because it doesn't fit. I don't like that. And I hate the travel.	Anger (constructed)	building conversations.		
247	I	Do you?				
248	R	I don't like the travel.				
249	I	Do the schedulers keep you local?				
250	R	X, Y!				
251	I	You wouldn't want to be inspecting people that you know locally would you.				
252	R	Oh God, no.				
253	I	You'll have preclusions.				
254	R	I've got X which is five or six miles away, and Y which is the same. I've done one in X.				
255	I	Let the schedulers know.				
256	R	It's just the physical travel. Well that's an hour and a half, if I have to be there for eight that means I've got to get up at five, and then the next day I'm a head again.	Tiring (constructed0	Boundary		

		And even the same day with safeguarding I'm back at three you know. So, I'm not moaning it's just the fact.				
257	I	And you don't get paid for it either. There's additional expense isn't there.				
258	R	No but mainly what I don't like is the restriction about the framework.	'Restriction' (in vivo)	Values		Dislikes
259	I	What are the main differences for practitioners like yourself?				
260	R	Well again I think it's the knowledge and skills thing. It's the fact that I know exactly what's going on in schools. I know what these initiatives are. And they don't.	'Skills' (in vivo) 'Knowledge' (in vivo) 'Initiatives' (in vivo) Dismissive (constructed)	Knowledge		Clear about benefits over non practitioners
261	I	To whom do you most identify with, is it other headteachers?				

262	R	I went through a spate of not telling anyone I was in education at all. Not on holiday. Because they sort of immediately judge you don't they. It depends on the circumstances, but I don't mind telling people I'm a head.	'Judge' (in vivo)	Identity		Laughter
263	I	And how about an inspector?				
264	R	No I never say that. I don't know why I just don't see myself as an inspector. I'm more...I'm a head aren't I. I don't say I'm an inspector, no.	Identity (constructed)	Identity		Adamant
265	I	How do your colleagues feel about you, not colleagues, other headteachers locally?				
266	R	I think they think I've gone to the other side. But then I get asked to come and help them with dual observations and 'look at my SEF for me', so I think they secretly admire me for doing it	'Secretly admire me' (in vivo) 'Not embarrassed' (in vivo)	Identity formation-alignment; walking boundary and creating boundary practice		

		but there's a definite, 'I can't believe you're doing that' type thing, but you know I'm not embarrassed by that.		Boundary brokering Knowledge		
267	I	It's quite tough isn't it, the selection and training, a lot of people don't get through. So you are putting yourself forward a bit aren't you?				
268	R	On reflection I'm quite proud that I've done what I've done. It's an extremely nerve wracking process. Even now I get butterflies going in. At the time I remember sitting outside a school, the first one, about an hour and a half early. Really terrified thinking, 'what am I doing'?	'Proud' (in vivo) 'Extremely nerve-wracking' (in vivo) 'Really terrified' (in vivo)	Boundary brokering Identity formation-alignment; walking boundaries and creating boundary practices		Interesting and perhaps a surprising point about getting 'butterflies'.
269	I	Well, well, well.				Probably shouldn't have said this...but respondent didn't seem at all

						bothered or even notice.
270	R	Really frightened.	'Really frightened' (in vivo)	Boundary		
271	I	Yet you seem very confident.				
272	R	I'm not as confident as I appear. I was absolutely petrified.	'Absolutely petrified' (in vivo)	Boundary		
273	I	Fascinating.				
274	R	Because as a head I was petrified of Ofsted. It is so public. What about if it goes 'tits up' on an inspection? And how many people you'd let down. So that was terrifying, and to have that power yourself or some of it is equally scary. And that's actually key to what I said before about inspectors who have been out and get cold to it. They probably don't realise how scary a process it is for the	'Petrified of Ofsted' (in vivo) 'Terrifying' (in vivo) 'Power' (in vivo) 'Scary process' (in vivo) 'Unnecessarily brusque' (in vivo)	Boundary walking and creating boundary practices Identity formation-negative engagement and relations of mutuality		Very conscious of the power inspectors exercise. Anger at some inspectors

		heads. Some are unnecessarily brusque at times.	Anger (constructed)			
275	I	You're right, but also you can be over familiar.				
276	R	Oh yeah. In fact I've written that down somewhere here. That's a double edged sword...being a...having that empathy. And having an emotional attachment in a way. Because you could be tempted to say things that you shouldn't and that's very dangerous as well. So that's just something that I think.	'Empathy' (in vivo) 'Emotional attachment' (in vivo) 'Dangerous' (in vivo)	Values Identity. Negative alignment; not finding common ground Boundary		Respondent refers to his notes.
277	I	Especially if you don't agree with the way things are going.				
278	R	Oh yeah, you've got to be so careful. And the other disadvantage of being a head, by the way is comparing that school to yours. Because that's not what it's about is it. It's about framework and the schedule. And there is a	'Careful' (in vivo) Realistic (constructed) 'Far more advantages' (constructed)	Values Boundary walking and creating boundary practices Identity		

		temptation I think, 'God if one of mine did that', I know in my school, and get anecdotal and that's the double edged sword of it. That's where I suppose practicing heads could fall down a bit. But there are far more advantages I think.		formation-alignment.		
279	I	Because the downside of just doing twenty days is that it's not as easy to get a benchmark is it? It's hard, twenty days, to keep up to speed.				
280	R	It works out at two or three a term.				
281	I	Hard to keep up.				
282	R	Yeah but you don't get complacent either because it's a while since you did the last one. You do your homework, you really research it. I think it is helpful that the Framework is out there and all the heads I know have got one, and they know, they know it quite	'You don't get complacent' (constructed) 'Helpful' (in vivo) 'Raised leadership standards' (in vivo)	Learning Boundary Identity in practice-shared repertoire-tools/artefacts		

		well. I think that's really raised leadership standards.				
283	I	Do you think all headteachers should be trained to inspect?				
284	R	Well certainly I was and it's benefited me hugely, so why not? It's never going to happen though is it? It would really focus people's minds. Yeah, I've got skills I wouldn't have had.	'It's benefited me hugely' (in vivo) 'Focus people's minds' (in vivo)	Learning Boundary crossing		
285	I	How do you feel about being inspected by a practitioner?				
286	R	Yeah, I'd rather have a practitioner on the team. Yeah, definitely. Definitely...even though there are as I've said disadvantages to it because there are comparisons in your head. You're comparing it to your own place. It's just that, it's that empathy and you know, you've got the confidence	'Rather have a practitioner' (in vivo) 'Empathy' (in vivo) 'Confidence' (in vivo)	Identity Values		KS1=infants, ages 3-7. KS2=juniors, ages 7-11.

		that they know what they're talking about. My infant head colleague was inspected in the last week before Christmas. An infant school and inspectors constantly referred to key stage 2. 'Now can you take me to...where' key stage 2', three times.				
287	I	Oh dear.				
288	R	And she just lost confidence completely, and they said things and she thought, 'you don't understand this'. Again you wouldn't get that, if there was an infant head practitioner in that team she'd put them straight wouldn't she.				
289	I	Any negative examples?				
290	R	I've put on here, 'see above' it's the politics really.				Referring to the notes he'd made on the questions sent prior to interview.
291	I	Who do you seek advice				

		from about inspecting, if at all?				
292	R	Leads really. And additional inspectors. I don't really while I'm the job.	Advice (constructed)	Learning		Advice from leads and other inspectors
293	I	Do you use the X and Ofsted websites at all?				
294	R	I don't really.				
295	I	So, its people on the job whom you ask. What might this have been about...do you have an example?				
296	R	Yeah...but that's safeguarding though. It's about a style...it's 'how bad something has to be to put it into a category type of thing'. Especially where it's a limiting judgement. That's where I sometimes think, 'Oh my God', like when there's a stile going over the wall into the playground, public access, and I'm thinking...and I'm doing safeguarding, so it's that	Uncertainty (constructed)	Knowledge		

		kind of thing really.				
297	I	Challenges for you as a headteacher and inspector? You've alluded to it in terms of time really and your workload. That's what it seems to come down to doesn't it?				
298	R	I suppose so, yeah. And also...also...not be tempted to compare that school with your own school.	Understanding (constructed)	Knowledge Identity formation-alignment; walking boundaries		
299	I	You're an 'outstanding' school, have you been in schools better than this?				
300	R	I've not really. And that sounds really arrogant doesn't it. I've done one outstanding school...two outstanding schools...but they weren't really...I suppose one of them was extremely different to mine. I didn't think it was as good, and when I asked the head why his results were so	Pride (constructed)	Identity in practice-nexus of multimembership. Work of reconciliation		

		outstanding he said, 'I don't know'. And I thought, 'right ok'.				
301	I	Do head's check on you...do them 'Google' you to see where you're from?				
302	R	Oh I don't know.				
303	I	I bet they do. I bet once they get your CV and see that you're a head they'll look up where you're from.				
304	R	On the second day they've asked me which school I'm in. I've always been a bit reluctant, I never know what to say.	'Reluctant' (in vivo)	Identity Boundary		
305	I	Did you tell them?				
306	R	Second day, I'm leaving, why not?				
307	I	There's no point in not being honest is there really.				
308	R	They've only asked me because relationships have been good I suppose.	'Relationships' (in vivo)	Identity formation- alignment; uniting and inspiring		
309	I	There's nothing sinister				

		about it is there really.				
310	I	Supposing you'd come from a 'satisfactory' school?				
311	R	You can't can you? I thought you had to be good or better?				
312	I	How do you know that?				
313	R	Grapevine I think.				
314	I	I think it's only headteachers from schools in a category?				
314 B	R	But it could be a satisfactory school couldn't it, but leadership and management are good?				
315	I	Do you relate to all inspectors the same?				
316	R	I think you have different conversations with other practitioners.	'Different conversations' (in vivo)	Identity formation-engagement ; relations of mutuality		
317	I	Do you have time though?				
318	R	Not a lot but I do have conversations, yeah. On the walk round, for example. You have a	'Conversations' (in vivo)	Identity formation-engagement ; relations of		

		couple of minutes here and there I think, yeah.		mutuality		
319	I	Because it is quite manic isn't it?				
320	R	Oh God Yeah, it's very, very intense, I mean on Tuesday in X I was safeguarding and I was absolutely worn out when I got back. It's not just the travel it was the intensity of it.	'Absolutely worn out' (in vivo)	Identity		
321	I	Eight to one ish?				
323	R	I did observations as well...I was thrown in...he said, 'could you do some observations?' This HMI was good though.				
324	I	Do you find any difference for you working for an HMI lead and an additional inspector lead?				
325	R	Yeah. The HMI leads tend to be more...they're not by the book.	Inconsistency (constructed)	Values		
326	I	More idiosyncratic?				
327	R	They certainly don't play by the rules do they?				
328	I	More maverick?				

329	R	They are more maverick, but they are also more focussed as well I think. Its individual isn't it?	Inconsistent (constructed)			
330	I	More focussed in what way?				
331	R	Some of them are...well the one I had on Tuesday...very recent...and she was very, very...Knew her own mind...very sort of...to your face, 'don't do this'. Like a schoolmarm. You think well, 'I can appreciate that.'	Experience (constructed)	Values		
332	I	You are clear, you're not left with any uncertainty are you?				
333	R	Don't say the grade, don't tell me the grade until you prove to me why it's that', and that's really schoolmarm. Fair enough I thought and I like that in a way. And then she cracked and she was human as well. I don't know really I don't think it's fair to generalise that.	Realistic (constructed)	Values		

334	I	So it's all individual?				
335	R	I think so, vastly different depending on the individual. No matter what they are.	'Vastly different depending on the individual' (in vivo) Inconsistency (constructed)	Values		
336	I	Have you found that?				
337	R	Totally. Incredibly. Some leads make you observe when you're doing safeguarding, some say, 'absolutely not, you're doing safeguarding'. And you think well, and it's just their style.	Inconsistency (constructed)	Values		
338	I	As a practitioner do you find that a surprise in terms of variance?				
339	R	Worryingly so really. It's worrying.	'Worrying' (in vivo) Inconsistency (constructed)	Values Identity-negative formation and engagement		
340	I	From a head's point of view?				

341	R	What you're saying is, 'there's your framework, but it actually depends on your team, still'. Although you've still got the framework and have got to prove it, but the way you're treated...the relationship depends on the team.	'Depends on your team' (in vivo) Inconsistency (constructed)	Values Identity in practice- shared repertoire; artefacts/tools Identity formation- engagement ; mutual relations		
342	I	Do you find it frustrating just doing the one day?				
343	R	I don't like safeguarding. I don't like doing safeguarding but it's better than no day.	Dislikes (constructed)			
344	I	There's no fear of that is there? You'll get your twenty days won't you?				
345	R	I'd rather do safeguarding than not do...cos in a week like this with a lot going on I'd rather do one day.				
346	I	So your schedule as an inspector is very much				

		driven by your school?				
347	R	It's got to be hasn't it...this is very much my priority.	'Priority' (in vivo)	Identity		
348	I	So presumably that makes you less flexible for the schedulers?				
349	R	Very much so.				
350	I	I presume other practitioners are the same?				
351	R	And then things will come up. I'll book my schedule a term ahead and the authority will say, because they are like they are, they'll say, 'oh by the way there's this really important thing coming up on this day', and I'll have to ring the scheduler and you'll say, 'I'm really sorry but I didn't know about that, it's the authority.	Frustration (constructed)			
352	I	Does the authority use your skills as an inspector?				
353	R	No, they don't formally invite me. They invite me	'Colleagues who approach	Identity in practice-		

		to things but they don't say, 'you're an inspector come and do some work in this school for us'. It's more my colleagues who approach me, on the QT really.	me' (in vivo)	reification of competence Work of reconciliation and maintenance of an identity across boundaries		
354	I	Do you charge for that?				
355	R	No.				
356	I	Just a freebie?				
357	R	Yeah. They're local guys. Bit of a team we've got going.	Team (in vivo)	Identity in practice-work of reconciliation and maintenance of an identity across boundaries		
358	I	Do you have a community team, family of schools?				
359	R	Yeah. Cluster, twenty. We meet once every six weeks. And we do				

		projects together.				
360	I	Does the authority manage that?				
361	R	Oh no it's ours, we manage that. More and more. We're getting funding streams. Buying a purchasing company, moving away from the local authority.	'Moving away from the local authority' (in vivo)	Local Authority		
362	I	Are you?				
363	R	Well things are changing aren't they?				
364	I	Is there anything else you'd like to add?				
365	R	In terms of career progression I've been asked several times, 'what are you going to do next?' And I don't want a bigger school and I don't want another school really. Why would I? I'm not driven like that. And this, the Ofsted stuff really keeps me on my toes, and it takes me out of my comfort zone. So I think it's very important for that. Without it I	'Keeps me on my toes' (in vivo) 'Out of comfort zone' (in vivo)	Identity in practice. Trajectory-coherence through time. Temporal context in engagement . Generational encounter. Boundary		

		would be bored. I get bored and I might look to do something else. And I might then end up very unhappy.				
		END				

Summary of emergent findings sent to the interviewees, and their responses

	Advantages & Benefits	Disadvantages & Drawbacks	Conceptual Framework
1	Commitment to the principle of inspection and its positive impact on school improvement, including their own schools	Concerns about the inconsistent application of the Ofsted inspection <i>framework</i> and <i>handbook</i> by some inspectors and inspection teams	Identity & Boundary crossing
2	Positive impact on their performance as headteachers and professionally beneficial for them	As source of frustration for their own staff who are 'left behind' in the change agenda; a need to dampen their enthusiasm as headteacher because of its adverse effect on their own staff	Identity & Boundary crossing
3	The use of the Ofsted inspection documents such as the <i>framework</i>	Concerns that some schools are disadvantaged by	Boundary objects

	and <i>handbook</i> by schools as a tool for improvement	the Ofsted inspection <i>framework</i> and <i>handbook</i> because they find it harder than others to get to 'good' (grade 2)	
4	Their involvement lends credibility to inspection practice	Managing the expectations of the headteachers of the inspected schools, who think a higher 'grade' is merited	Boundary crossing
5	Their contribution to inspection teams due to their up to date knowledge of schooling, and normally leading 'good' or 'outstanding' schools	Frustrations with other team inspectors because they are not up to speed	Identity & Boundary crossing
6	Mostly good relationships with other team inspectors	Indifferent or worse relationships with some lead inspectors because they do not think their views and opinions are always valued	Identity & Boundary crossing
7	The staff of the	The need to ensure	Identity

	inspected schools, including the headteacher, value their presence on the inspection team	their inclination to be empathetic to school staff, especially the headteacher, does not impact on their inspection judgements	& Boundary crossing
8	The inspected headteachers often 'confide' in fellow practitioners	Maintaining the appropriate 'distance' with the staff of schools, especially other headteachers	Identity & Boundary crossing
9	Inspecting reaffirms the practice in their own school	Learning that some of the practice in their own schools is not as it should be	Identity & Learning
10	Support for other headteachers, including to become inspectors themselves	Hostility from other headteachers	Identity
11	Positive support from governors	Indifference from local authorities	Identity
12	-	Not wishing to lead inspections because of what they see, and hear from other inspectors. Concerns	Identity

		include writing the reports and receiving complaints	
13	-	Practical problems such as managing time are key, as are the potential difficulties should they fail the Ofsted training, or once qualified if their own school receives an adverse inspection outcome putting their status as inspector, and their 'credibility' at risk	Boundary crossing
14	-	Most have a sense of disappointment with the inspection(s) of their own schools, some significantly so	Identity
15	Leads to part time work after retirement	-	Identity

Responses

This synopsis was sent to all 12 interviewees with a covering email asking for their comments. Four no longer inspect or have retired. Eight responses were returned, as follows:

Christine *'Points that resonate particularly with me:*

Point 5: *'Always felt my contribution valued and well received by other inspectors. Having experienced non serving inspectors is essential to maintain balance. Their wealth of experience in managing situations especially when there are difficult messages to give are invaluable.'*

Point 7: *'Maintaining appropriate distance with staff and heads of other schools. This is crucial to maintain the integrity of inspection work.'*

Deborah *'I think this is a very accurate reflection of the conversation but some things have become more significant, especially with leading inspections now.'*

Point 1: *'The inconsistent application of the handbook by some lead inspectors, especially using the grade descriptors as a checklist (the guidance is explicit-the descriptors should not be used as a checklist. They must be applied using a 'best fit' approach which relies on the professional judgment of the inspection team). If schools don't meet every one then they don't meet the grade at all. Additional inspector led inspections are much better in lots of ways. Much more consistent application of the framework, much better relationships with the school, much more likely to see the whole picture and not*

be wholly data driven. HMI tend to get fixated on one aspect of attainment and won't engage in conversations about the whys and wherefores. It is tricky to engage with that, especially if they are lone inspectors. Lots of small schools in my local authority are small so have been single inspector inspections.'

Point 5: *'Frustration with team members and leads who have been out of school for some time, sometimes decades and who are so out of date with the current priorities for schools and the ever changing demands from the department for education'.*

Point 7: *'The appreciation level from schools having serving practitioners on the team has risen even further-you can feel the relief.'*

Point 12: *'Managing the time as a serving head when leading inspections is a killer, especially the writing and the back and forth on days 5 and 6 re the wording of the report. Most readers do not appreciate that you have work that must take precedence on those days and can be quite shirty if you don't respond to them immediately.'*

Point 14: *'A sense of disappointment in the inspection of my own school. Linked to massive discrepancy between the quality of HMI and ISP led ones. This is obvious from my own experiences but also from those of other headteacher colleagues.'*

Additional point: *'The inappropriateness of having one inspector inspections. No one to temper judgements or discuss and mediate in the case of the breakdown between the school and inspector. This leaves schools in a very vulnerable position and the headteacher massively frustrated with the process which lessens credibility of inspections on the whole.'*

Diana *'I have read what you have written a number of times. You have got it right.'*

Helen

Point 2: *'My staff bragged about the fact I was an inspector and it certainly gave me a lot of credibility with staff.'*

Point 12: *'The practicalities of having 4 days out of school.'*

Maurice *'Your summary is an accurate account of our conversation.'*

Olive *'Absolutely fascinating. I had no idea that my feelings were shared more widely. I would say this is an accurate and comprehensive summary.'*

Robert *'Spot on Henry'.'*

Rose *'Based on my experiences the advantages and benefits are well covered in the synopsis. When it comes to disadvantages and drawbacks one or two points I would make.'*

Point 3: *'Some headteachers do not believe the framework addresses the inequalities in children's prior experience or encourages inclusion.'*

Point 10: *'Hostility from other headteachers may include: headteachers who become inspectors may be judged badly by their peers and may be excluded from some headteacher meetings where headteachers share information in case it is leaked back to Ofsted. Sometimes this can be made worse by headteacher inspectors maintaining an appropriate distance; headteachers who have a lot of experience of improving schools but work in challenging schools feel excluded from being inspectors and therefore have a negative view of headteachers in good or outstanding schools who become inspectors; headteachers who fail the training spread disaffection with the system amongst other headteachers.'*

Point 12: *'Not willing to lead inspections: Headteachers understand the consequences of a poor inspection report on the school and its headteacher and they do not want to get the judgment wrong because of insufficient time alongside their other full time role.'*

Summary of EdD Assignments

The purpose of this appendix is to set out my prior work for the EdD, and specifically the assessed papers for part one, since this may help to illustrate what led me to this particular research.

For the first assignment, *Professionalism in Context: Theory and Practice* the title of my paper was, *Beyond rationality: the McDonaldisation of school inspections?* In it I explored the concepts of accountability and performativity, concluding that while the school inspection regime in England exhibits some qualities that are reconciled with Weber (1968) and Ritzer (1993, 1998, 2000, 2001 & 2002), others are at odds with it. For instance, there are parallels between inspection and bureaucratic rationality such as rigid technologies and the homogenisation of consumption, while at the same time inspectors and inspections are not easily controlled.

For the *Knowledge, Practice and Change in Education and Training* module my paper was titled, *School inspectors: a community of practice, a collectivity of practice, or a new group level epistemology?* Here, I sought to gauge whether school inspectors are matched to either of the two epistemologies. It led me to realise that understanding about the knowledge, learning and practice of school inspectors is limited and is a fertile ground to explore. I then began to think about the headteachers amongst them, since from my experiences at work I detected that significant policy changes were being mooted.

In the third paper, *Research methodologies in Professional Education* I explored the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning qualitative methods. In it I identified what qualitative methods are and how they differ from those in the quantitative paradigm and examined the criteria used to evaluate this methodology.

The fourth and final paper, for the module *Researching Professional Practice*, was to all intents and purposes a pilot study. It was titled, 'Headteachers as Inspectors' and in it I endeavoured to locate the role of headteachers who inspect, in order to see if it merited further study, while at the same time trialling a potential research method.