University of Reading

Founder and successor CEOs' perceptions and experiences of leadership development and succession in Multi Academy Trusts

Timothy Gilson

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Institute of Education

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Declaration

Declaration: I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Tim Gilson

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Abstract

The English education system is at a moment of significant structural change. Over 40% of schools are academy trusts and these now educate more than half of the children in English state schools. In 2022 the government set a clear policy direction in The Schools Bill for all schools to be in a 'strong trust' that either serves a minimum of 7,500 pupils or runs at least 10 schools; while the actual Bill has now been abandoned the ambition appears to remain. This is going to require existing trusts to grow and non-academy schools to convert. Many trusts are still led by their founding Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and many of those founders are at or near the point of retirement.

While there is a growing body of research into Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), there is very little on MAT-founding CEOs and the impact of their succession on the system. Therefore, this study addresses this knowledge gap by considering CEO perceptions of succession planning, leadership development and MAT culture.

This study focusses on the perceptions of 14 academy trust CEOs about founding CEOs, succession planning, their professional development and culture in trusts. The study is rooted in a constructivist, interpretive approach and adopts a qualitative methodology. It is based on detailed semi-structured interviews.

The study reveals that many trust CEOs have not considered succession planning for their post in detail with their trust boards. The CEOs in this sample are divided on whether their successor should be a qualified teacher and experienced headteacher. The CEOs reflect on their professional development and the study makes a number of recommendations about how prospective trust CEOs should be prepared for the role;

these include, time in a role that operates across more than one school or outside the mainstream school system, a focus on developing and supporting strong professional and personal networks, the inclusion of coaching and/or mentoring and the need for consideration of how organisational culture develops in academy trusts as they grow and move away from the founder.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore the perceptions of academy trust CEOs on either side of a leadership succession and capture the views of founder and successor trust leaders. It will consider the role of leadership training and development in preparing CEOs for their role and examine how school/trust culture is impacted by the succession from founder CEO to the next generation.

The English education system is at a crucial tipping point in terms of the move towards a fully academised system as laid out in the now defunct 2022 Schools Bill (DfE, 2022a, p. 7). Many academy trust CEOs are at the point of retirement, possibly accelerated by the impact of the COVID pandemic on school and trust leaders (Thomson et al., 2021). There is a growing understanding that the system needs to get to grips with succession planning for those founding CEOs and develop a leadership development framework to ensure that the next generation of leaders are equipped for the challenge (Bush, 2011, 2022). In the midst of this there remains a scepticism about the ethics and culture of academy trusts (Greany & McGinity, 2021b) and therefore understanding how cultural transmission through this period of time effects the schools and trusts is essential for the profession.

This thesis uses the definition of academies from the New Schools network (NSN) (2015) “Academies are publicly funded, independent schools, held accountable through a legally binding ‘funding agreement’. These schools have more freedom and

control over curriculum design, school hours and term dates, and staff pay and conditions" (New Schools Network, 2015, p. 3).

MATs are defined as "charities that have responsibility for running a number of academies. They cannot, as charities, be run for financial profit and any surplus must be reinvested in the trust" (Department for Education, 2021b).

1.2 Identifying the problem

The concept of the "Self-Improving School System" (Hargreaves, 2010, 2012; Hill, 2011) has been central to school policy since it was proposed by Hargreaves in 2010, and the responsibility for this improvement now rests largely with academy trusts and their CEOs. The increasingly fragmented school system in England (West & Wolfe, 2019) that has come about due to the development of academy trusts and the declining role of local authorities in school oversight (Greany & Higham, 2018), coupled with the abolition of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) (Ellis et al., 2021) means that the imperative for trust leader succession planning and an appropriate leadership development pipeline has become urgent and rests largely with individual trust and teaching school hub leaders (Male, 2022). This thesis contributes to the profession's need for a new leadership development programme for MAT leadership by offering the views of 14 trust CEOs on what has been effective for preparing them to either establish or take over an academy trust.

There is a broad consensus that the English education system is in the midst of a dramatic and contentious period of structural reform (Baxter & John, 2021; Constantinides, 2022; Culpin & Male, 2022; Greany & McGinity, 2021a; C. Simon et al., 2021). The development of MATs has produced a complex patchwork of school

structures that the government is now trying to rationalise with its stated aim of a fully academised system based on strong academy trusts of no less than 10 schools or 7,500 students (DfE, 2022b). The system is also facing the retirement of the CEOs who founded academy trusts over the next five years as they reach their late fifties and early sixties. This demographic change is exacerbated by the increase in early retirement plans by school leaders, partly as a result of the challenges of leading schools and trusts through the COVID pandemic, with 36% of school leaders recently saying that they intend to retire early (Thomson et al., 2021), contributing to high numbers of unfilled vacancies for headships and school leadership roles (Harris & Jones, 2022). The need for a new generation of trust leaders as the "founders" in the system retire is acute and being increasingly recognised as such (Culpin & Male, 2022).

While there is a growing body of literature relating to MATs much of this is recent and produced by academics from outside the system. There is very little research carried out by trust CEOs into the nature of trusts and the challenges they face. This study has a claim for originality in that it focusses specifically on CEOs on both sides of the first succession event in MATs and considers their professional career history and the culture of the organisations they founded or inherited.

MATs have become the dominant structure for school organisation and there is a clear political commitment for them to increase their reach in a drive towards a fully academised school system (Culpin & Male, 2022) with all schools/academies in "strong" trusts by 2030. By January 2022 there were 9837 academy trusts in England catering for a majority of the school age population (Culpin & Male, 2022).

MATs are still controversial structures and there is strong ideological resistance to them amongst some in the teaching profession and on the left of politics with concerns about their public accountability, school and professional autonomy and the behaviour of some academy trust CEOs (Vinall, 2022). There is also little consensus about whether academies per se actually raise standards for children (Bernardinelli et al., 2018; C. Simon et al., 2021); the evidence for this is complicated given that most trusts have grown quickly in the past 5–10 years and therefore have little chance of demonstrating improved performance in individual schools. This has been further complicated since 2019 by the absence of robust performance data due to the pandemic and the complexity of working out the differential impact of the pandemic within and between different educational jurisdictions and structures (Zierer, 2021).

This study is significant as it contributes to our understanding of an important moment in the English education system; the transition from founders to successors in the development of a fully academised system (Thomson et al., 2021). At present we know very little about founding trust CEOs and their experiences of creating the academy structures. In understanding the future structure of the school system, it is valuable to understand the background, motivations and careers of those CEOs who founded academy trusts and the impact they had on the next generation of trust leaders. The parallels with the much more extensive business literature on founder succession events are informative as is the notion of this as a significant moment of risk and change (Wasserman, 2003).

In order to develop a strong "self-improving" system (Hargreaves, 2011) it is important that the system can develop a pipeline of effective CEOs with the necessary

skills and experience to lead the larger more complex trusts of the future. Currently we do not know enough about what makes effective Academy CEO training and how to prepare for succession events. The existing continuing professional development (CPD) model is based largely on long-established preparation for school headship (Bush, 1998) which it is increasingly clear is a very different sort of leadership (Culpin & Male, 2022). This study makes a number of recommendations for the training of CEOs based on the experiences and views of 14 CEOs and a review of the literature. This is timely as it was recently announced that the Department for Education (DfE) has commissioned an expert group of MAT leaders to advise ministers on the content of a new "multi-academy trust leadership offer" (Department for Education, 2022a). While this study does not make claims to generalisability, both the detailed exploration of serving CEO perceptions and the review of the wider literature offer some perspectives that may be of value for practitioners and policy makers.

1.2.1 Originality

This study has a claim for originality in five main areas that are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

1. The focus on MAT CEOs on either side of a leadership succession. The contribution of business literature is considered in identifying the importance of succession planning for founding CEO succession and trusts.
2. This study is one of the first to explore the similarities and differences in character between founding CEOs in academy trusts and founding CEOs in family firms. The impact of training and development for CEOs is explored.

3. The importance of cultural transmission through succession events in academy trusts. The literature relating to leadership and school culture is examined.

4. The methodology is original in that it is based the views of CEOs on either side of leadership succession with both founders and successor CEOs interviewed. The use of purposive sampling allows founder and successor CEOs to examine their different perspectives.

5. The author believes that this is the first study to bring these three interrelated concepts together to provide a theoretical lens to study MAT leadership and particularly the immediately significant issue of CEO succession in trusts.

1.3 Key concepts and conceptual framework

This study takes as its basis a constructivist and interpretivist approach leading to a qualitative approach to methodology. It seeks to understand the career histories, values and personal beliefs of 14 academy trust CEOs as they reflect on their professional development, impact on organisational culture and how these relate to a leadership succession event.

1.3.1 Founding CEOs

There continues to be a considerable body of research examining the role, impact, and nature of founding CEOs in business. A recent literature review of 221 articles from 24 academic journals (Abebe et al., 2020) highlighted the continued interest in this field and provides an interesting summary of current research evidence. A number of the main themes that are explored in this study are identified; the formal

education/training and prior experience of the founding CEO, the lasting impact on organisational culture and the particular characteristics of the founding CEO in an area such as appetite for risk and entrepreneurial skills (Hongdiyanto, 2018; McConaughy & Phillips, 1999). This review in line with the wider body of research discussed in Chapter 2 shows that both the character and impact of a founder is different from successor CEOs in many ways (Hendricks et al., 2022), although it has to be acknowledged it is not possible to show conclusively whether firms perform better under a founder than a successor or professional CEO (Abebe et al., 2020). In a study of regulatory filings by founder-led firms in the US and drawing on a wide review of previous literature, Hendricks et al. (2022) identify over optimism as a clear specific founder CEO character trait with evidence to support assertions that founders are more tolerant of risk and are able to take a longer term view of investment decisions (Hendricks et al., 2022).

The notion of stewardship is discussed (Caldwell et al., 2008; Chrisman, 2019) in relation to academy trust founding CEOs.

1.3.2 CEO succession

At the heart of this study is a consideration of the impact of and readiness for CEO succession in academy trusts. This is considered in the light of the business literature around founder succession events, succession events in schools and the personal experience of the 14 CEOs in this data set. CEO succession is a significant area of study, as the literature suggests that in business, founder CEO succession may be the most important point in the history of a firm (Cragun Ormonde et al., 2016; Wasserman, 2003). It is also important in that the education system faces a significant

succession/retirement moment for trust CEOs. Whether or not this represents a "crisis" is debated but evidence from the main school leaders' unions suggests that there is a higher than expected and usual level of retirement by school leaders, possibly due to the pressure of leading through the COVID pandemic (Thomson et al., 2021).

The literature relating to founder CEO succession events in business and leadership succession in schools is discussed fully in the literature review.

Each of the 14 CEOs in this study reflect on CEO succession in their trusts, either how it impacted on their appointment if they are successor CEOs or the degree to which it is being discussed and planned in the case of founders.

There is evidence that some public bodies have established succession planning frameworks in place; however, Fusarelli et al. (2018) assert that "The practice of succession planning is not as common in education" (Fusarelli et al., 2018, p. 291). Based on her study in the US they make the case for a structured programme of talent management and aspiring principal training (Fusarelli et al., 2018).

There is a limited amount of research into succession planning in schools, some of which identifies succession planning as a key component of school leadership (Cruickshank, 2018). This is particularly important at a time when recruitment and retention is so challenging for schools (Foster, 2018) to the extent that it has been referred to as a leadership crisis (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2005).

There is evidence that there is a lack of clarity about how to manage leadership succession and a disconnect between the sitting or departing headteacher and the senior and middle leaders aspiring to headship (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2005). The role

of school boards in the US in succession planning for school principals has also been examined (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018). There are limited parallels between the US and Canadian systems and that of the UK, in that much of the research into principal succession in North America is rooted in a time when schools districts and school boards were very powerful and school principals could be moved between schools or promoted to school superintendent roles in a way that has no real comparison in the UK.

1.3.3 CEO professional development

One of the national policy responses to the shortage of suitably qualified candidates willing and able to take on the role of trust CEO from the retiring founders has been the development of training courses (Bolam, 2003; Caldwell et al., 2003). The National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL) (DfE, 2019; Lambert, 2018) forms part of a suite of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) for school leaders that have been through many iterations over the past 30 years and can be traced back to the HEADLAMP programme in 1995 and the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in 1997 (Bush, 2008; Law & Glover, 2001).

Professional qualifications are a significant theme in the literature relating to founder CEOs in business that suggests that professional qualifications such as Masters in Business Administration (MBAs) can have a positive impact on performance (King et al., 2016) and on CEO credibility (Little & Green, 2021; C. Simon et al., 2019). The 14 CEOs in this study all reflect on the professional qualifications and training that they have undertaken in their progression to CEO and the impact of those programmes.

1.3.4 Organisational culture

There are many definitions of organisational culture; most agree that shared beliefs, and shared assumptions of the members of the organisation (Van Houtte, 2005) are the common threads in most definitions (Schein, 2010). This chimes with the concept of "how people make sense of their everyday world" (Cohen, 2018, p. 21).

Some of the literature identifies areas such as rituals, ceremonies and symbols as particularly important (Deal & Peterson, 2016). The 2004 study by the Hay Group "A Culture for Learning" defined culture as "the shared beliefs and values of a school; what people agree is true and what people agree is right" (Hobby, 2004, p. 2).

This study does not use a single definition of school culture, rather as Prosser (1999) suggests, since definitions of culture are often very general and all embracing "they are of little worth and convey little in terms of the meanings attributed" (Prosser, 1999, p. 9) .

Reference is made to the work of Edgar Schein. Schein focusses on the role of leaders in establishing and driving cultural change and the role of the founding leader in forming and establishing an organisational culture (Schein, 2010); as outlined above the role of founder CEOs in MATs is at the centre of this study.

The influence of school and trust leaders on school culture is discussed along with the impact of principal succession on culture (Aravena, 2020; Hobby, 2004; Stoll, 1998).

These concepts are discussed and elaborated on further in the literature review and methodology sections. Figure 1 shows these concepts as a Venn diagram which locates this study at the point of intersection.

Figure 1 Key concepts and conceptual framework

1.3.5 Research questions

These theoretical areas led to the framing of three overarching research questions (RQs):

1. What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of succession planning in MATs?
2. What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of academy trust leadership development and how effective is it?
3. What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of organisational culture and how do they establish a positive trust culture while incorporating a number of schools with their own cultures?

1.4 Introduction to the research methodology

The methodology is examined in detail in Chapter 3. The study is constructivist, in that it is based on the belief that the individuals interviewed construct their understanding and what they mean based on their own beliefs, experiences and understanding in that it draws on individual experiences and human interaction in its paradigm and adopts a qualitative research methodology. The research is based on semi-structured interviews (Kallio et al., 2016b) with 14 CEOs of MATs. The purpose of such in-depth interviews was to identify the subjects' perceptions and feelings rather than to seek to establish objective facts about the organisations (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). All the interviews were carried out on Microsoft Teams due to the contact and travel restrictions in place due to the COVID pandemic. A small-scale pilot of the process was carried out with two CEOs (Bryman, 2016).

The CEOs that are the focus of this study were selected using purposive sampling. This is not a random sample and participants were selected as they met the overall aims of the study (Bryman, 2016) in that they were either founding or second-generation MAT CEOs and they lead trusts of varying sizes and make up. There is no intention to generalise from this sample to the whole MAT CEO population as the sample cannot be considered to represent the whole population of trust CEOs (Cohen, 2018). Fourteen CEOs were interviewed for this study with a focus on detailed "history-taking" and comparisons between the individual responses. There is an argument that this requires a relatively small sample size as depth of analysis is more important than numbers of respondents (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

1.5 Personal motivation and professional rationale

This thesis reflects the stage that I find myself at in a career in education that has so far lasted 33 years. I am the founder and CEO of a MAT of five secondary schools, in the midst of discussions with several local primary schools about how to respond to the 2022 schools' white paper (DfE, 2022a) and planning the next phase of the trust's growth. I am also at a stage in my career when I am engaged in discussions with my trust board about how to ensure that an effective process of succession planning is in place.

I have been involved in leadership development and continuing professional development throughout my career as both a participant through an MA in Educational Management Administration, NPQH, a Professional Certificate in Executive Coaching, as a tutor to four cohorts of the NPQEL, briefly as a tutor on a module of an Educational Leadership MA and most recently as a tutor on a new Executive Leadership programme. I have been a National Leader of Education (NLE), working to support school leaders, and an Ofsted inspector. This thesis therefore directly relates to my personal experience and those of my peers. The subjects of the interviews are all academy trust CEOs whom I have had some professional contact with prior to this study. They were interviewed via Teams between January 2020 and April 2020, during the COVID pandemic.

My motivations for embarking on a professional doctorate chime with those outlined by Wellington and Sikes (2006) in their study of the participants in the University of Sheffield EdD programme; a measure of previous academic underachievement, a desire to understand my profession in an academic/theoretical framework and a

sense of personal challenge (Wellington & Sikes, 2006). This sense of personal challenge and understanding of my personal history in relation to academic success (or otherwise) aligns with the notions of identity development and understanding identified in Leshem's study of doctoral students and their motivations (Leshem, 2020).

As a teacher I have deep respect for learning and academic achievement. I believe that my pursuit of a doctorate reflects a desire to improve my confidence and self-belief in a system where I am surrounded by academically successful colleagues. This is in line with the findings of Creaton and Anderson's 2021 study of 25 professional doctorate students which demonstrated three linked personal impact dimensions, skills, critical thinking and personal confidence (Creaton & Anderson, 2021). The notion of a doctorate as the logical continuation of life in education resonates with me.

The nature of the EdD programme is that it is designed for serving practitioners (Lindsay et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2018) and usually studied part-time over four or five years. My choice of EdD over a PhD was influenced by a number of factors, pre-eminently by my desire to be part of a group studying together and to have an element of taught face-to-face study and support in understanding the requirements of a research-based higher degree (Wellington & Sikes, 2006). Goodall et al. (2017) similarly identified the importance of social learning provided by an EdD as opposed to the isolation of a PhD; like me, they also identified that a university close to home was important when there was a requirement for face-to-face study (Goodall et al., 2017).

I was fortunate to be able to move from being a fulltime executive headteacher to a part-time CEO during the programme and this has given me some space in which to enjoy the intellectual challenge of academic study. I am also beginning to be asked to take on some educational consultancy and an element of my motivation for undertaking the EdD is that it might give some additional credibility to potential employers looking for consultancy work (Wellington & Sikes, 2006).

Achieving a doctorate confers a recognition of academic, rigorous study and an element of wisdom that feels important to me and offers a sense of a completion and recognition of a professional career in education and an academic journey. The notion of "doctorateness" as mastery of a specific field resonates with me (Trafford & Leshem, 2009).

1.6 Overview of the thesis structure

This thesis is presented in seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the thesis and provides an overview of the rationale and structure. It explains my reasons for undertaking the study and identifies the claim for originality. Chapter 2 presents a critical review of the literature that is relevant to the study and that led to the development of the research questions. In Chapter 3 the theoretical framework and research paradigms are defined, and the choice of methodology and specific methods are justified and examined. There is a consideration of the practicalities of conducting research in the COVID pandemic and a review of the ethical considerations. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are a discussion of the findings linked to the research questions and the literature; they include a detailed analysis of the interview transcripts. Chapter 7 offers the conclusions that are drawn from the discussion and the analysis; it makes

the case for this study's original contribution to academic knowledge. Chapter 7 also offers recommendations for the profession to consider in the light of this study and suggests areas that would benefit from further investigation. The thesis concludes with a reflection on the process of undertaking this EdD and considers how it has contributed to my personal and professional development.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to identify and synthesise the research literature that relates to the conceptual framework of this study. It adopts as a basis the definition of literature reviews given by (Cooper, 1988, p. 107): “First a literature review uses as its database reports of primary or original scholarship and does not report new primary scholarship itself … second, a literature review seeks to describe, summarize, evaluate , clarify and/or integrate the content of the primary reports.”

It is divided into distinct sections that represent fields of study. It is hoped that it will provide a framework for relating the findings of this study to studies that have gone before (Randolph, 2009). This style of review is defined as a narrative review in that it attempts to provide an overview of the area of study through a “reasonably comprehensive” consideration and critique as a precursor to conducting my research (Bryman, 2016).

This is intended to be a representative literature review in that it is more exhaustive in some areas than in others (Cooper, 1988). In the areas relating to the business world, founding CEOs, and CEO succession in family firms and in organisational culture, it is more representative and less exhaustive as there is a vast body of literature and it is less directly relevant to the main area of study. Regarding the research relating to MATs, school leadership and school culture, it is more comprehensive as there is both less literature and it is more directly relevant to this research.

Due to the limited amount of research available in some of the areas of interest, no date filter was applied to this review; however, wherever possible greater emphasis is placed on more recent literature. The sections on MATs and leadership development present a historical perspective in seeking to explain the development of the current landscape.

There are some key terms that are used interchangeably, such as headteacher and principal, which largely indicate the national origin of the research with "headteacher" being used in the UK and principal being used in the other nations referenced. The terms Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) and academy trusts are also used interchangeably.

2.1.1 Search strategy

I have designed my search strategy around my conceptual framework so that the literature review is organised under five main headings. Each of these broad areas is then sub-divided into more specifically focussed areas of the literature. The following databases were used in the literature review process: Summon, Google Scholar, Scopus, Shibboleth. Table 1 below gives an indication of some of the search terms used. This is not an exhaustive list.

Table 1. Search terms used

Founding CEO	• Founding CEO and succession • Founding CEO and family firms • Founders and family firms
Founder succession	• Founder succession in family firms
Succession planning	• Succession planning and family firms • Succession planning and not for profit • Succession planning and CEO • Models of succession planning
School succession planning	• School principal succession planning • Leadership succession in schools
Conceptual frameworks	• Conceptual frameworks and doctoral thesis
School culture	• Organisational culture, school culture, cultural transmission in organisations, leadership succession and school culture • Leadership and school culture
Multi Academy Trusts (MATs)	• Leadership in MATs, education reform UK, Charter Schools, Academies,
School leader Professional development	• Professional development for school leaders, NPQH, CPD for school leaders, NCSL

Many searches throughout the study were derived from citations within other articles. The study also makes use of grey literature or unpublished/not peer-reviewed literature such as reports, government documents, theses and magazine articles (Mahood et al., 2014).

The mind map in Figure 2 below shows the key areas of focus for the literature review.

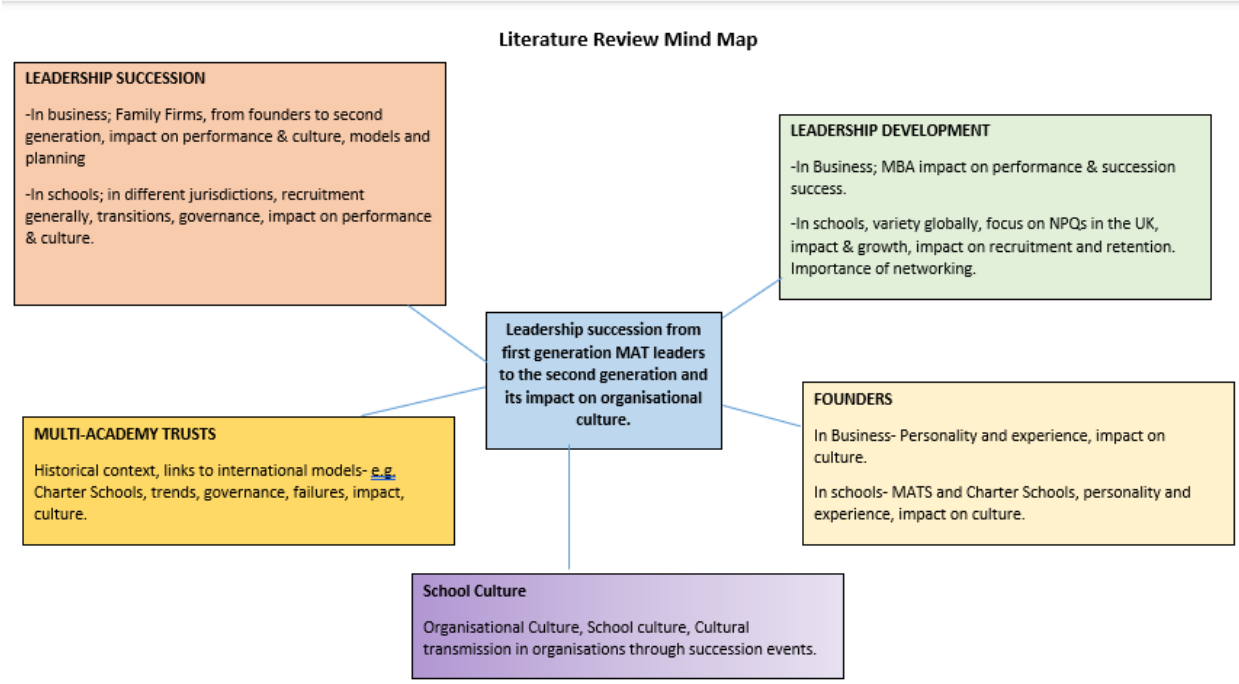

Figure 2. Mind map of key literature review areas

2.2 The nature and role of founding CEOs

There is a significant body of literature that suggests there are particular character traits and skill sets that are common in founders of companies that are often different from those of their successors. The character and skill set of the founder has a profound influence on the success or otherwise of the company as a whole and particularly on a leadership transition. Much of the literature focusses on the uniqueness of the relationship between the founder and their firm (Adams et al., 2009).

Founders are regarded as having a more paternalistic style of management (Ansari et al., 2014) and as being more entrepreneurial (McConaughy & Phillips, 1999). The

relationship of the founder to the organisation is very close (Kaehr Serra & Borzillo, 2013) with “huge emotional and financial capital in their company” (Hinks, 2011, p. 24) and their character is evident in its organisational culture (Schein, 1983). This relationship can be described as “stewardship” defined as “the unusual devotion to the continuity of the company through the assiduous nurturing of a community of employees and by seeking closer connections with customer … stewardship places the long-term interests of a group ahead of an individual’s” (Chen et al., 2016, p. 5112).They explain that founder CEOs have a high degree of stewardship because they are very emotionally invested in the long-term prospects of the company, the family’s investment and the company reputation.

Unsurprisingly, the personality of the founder is influential beyond their own role and is evident in the senior managers and other staff in the organisation; many of the senior managers in the firm may have worked for the company for a long time and enjoy a personal relationship with the founder CEO; they may have developed “unique ties with the founder that extend well beyond the parameters of a contractual work arrangement” (Lansberg, 1988, p. 29).

The importance of the CEO is not just in the way they behave or the staff they gather around them but also in the stories they tell about the organisation and how they contribute to the founding myths and organisational culture. The action of talking about and making sense of the organisation is a fundamental role of a founding CEO (Jonas III et al., 1989). Ogbonna and Harris (2001) emphasise the strong long-term legacies of the founders and how their initial vison for the companies is passed down; through workforce buy in, through documents (employee handbooks) and company

“stories” such as in retirement speeches, i.e. through a strong company culture. In a previous study, Harris and Ogbonna (1999), focussing on the long-term impact of a founder’s vision and values on a company long after they have left, found that “the created organization is a physical manifestation of the founder's perceptions and opinions of the wider environment” (Harris & Ogbonna, 1999, p. 334).

There is some evidence, albeit rather dated, that the academic qualifications, specifically those in a business-related field, that the founder has can have a significant impact on the firm’s performance and the success or failure of the succession (Rubenson & Gupta, 1992). White, Smith and Barnett (1994) assert that CEO educational and career experience may be very significant in determining how adaptive to change they are and therefore how successful they are at managing their succession (White et al., 1994). In a more contemporary study, King et al. (2016) found that there is evidence that CEO education, particularly MBA education, is linked to positive performance differentials in companies (King et al., 2016). These findings build on work by Beber and Fabbri (2012) that finds that CEOs with MBAs are more likely to take greater risks and see better performance than those without (Beber & Fabbri, 2012). There has been a recent growth in executive leadership qualifications such as the NPQEL in school and MAT leadership, which may have an impact on trust CEO performance and credibility (C. A. Simon et al., 2019) and will be considered later in this study (Department for Education, 2020).

While the literature does suggest that the character of the founding CEO is highly influential in shaping the company culture, its viability as a business and the success of the succession, there is conflicting evidence as to how long the influence of the

founder lasts. In a study of Korean companies, Ahn (2018) suggests that founders leave a lasting legacy that dominates the company through successive generations through a process of “imprinting” where the founder’s views and ethos are passed on to future leaders. However, in certain circumstances, it would appear that the influence and engagement of founder CEOs can change, even decline, over time, particularly as they near the point of transition and the perception of their power and influence wanes amoungst employees and board members (Souder et al., 2012). The point at which founders may have the greatest influence on the long term culture and success of the firm is at the point of leadership transition through the role they play in choosing a successor (White et al., 1994).

There is a widepread sense that while the skills and personalities of founders may make them ideal for establishing a company, there is a different skill set required to take the company forward through specific key points in a firm’s development when founder CEO succession is more likely to take place, such as when the product is completed and brought to market and on first raising significant external capital from outside investors (Wasserman, 2003).

Willard et al. (1992) start from the position that the literature generally suggests that a rapidly growing firm will outgrow the founder’s capacity to manage it successfully and when this happens the founder must step aside to allow professional managers to take the firm forward. Contrastingly they also cite many examples where this has not happened and where founders have led firms through the rapid growth phase to become successful sustainable firms. The authors identified the need for a shift from “passionate commitment” to “dispassionate objectivity” due to emotional or financial

pressures and also the need for a bigger central team as the growing organisation grows in complexity and requires more specialisation within leadership/management roles (Willard et al., 1992).

In a response to the often-stated assumption that founders do not and cannot possess the skills to take a firm from its initial establishment through the period of development and growth that follows and that there is a need to replace them with "professional" managers to guide the company through its maturity, Rubenson and Gupta (1992) conclude that it is not reasonable to assume that entrepreneurial founders cannot develop the skills of "professional managers". In their sample of 54 founders the mean tenure is over 20 years and fewer than 25% left the firm when they were replaced as CEO. Also, more than 10 years passed after the firm's initial public offering before the founder departed.

They identify three important issues that are significant:

1. How fast the organisation is growing/developing
2. Whether the founder is willing to develop the managerial skills needed
3. Whether there are practical limits on the founder's ability to develop the "professional skills" needed to take the firm forward.

The factors that appears to have the most impact on the success of the firm were the founder's academic background and the degree of family control. In the case of the founder's academic background, it appears that this relates specifically to academic business qualifications – those with scientific backgrounds lose control of their companies earlier.

Therefore they find that:

1. Founders of very successful firms often stay in control for a long time
2. A high early growth rate in the company reduces the length of time the founder remains in control
3. Academic business training helps the founder stay in control longer
4. Family domination of the firm leads to the founder staying longer (Rubenson & Gupta, 1992)

The distinctive character traits of founder CEOs in business is important for this study in that there is very little literature on MAT CEOs and there are important similarities.

These character traits and the issues that arise from them have been referred to as "Founder's Syndrome" (Block & Rosenberg, 2002) or more recently and less elegantly as "Founderitis" (Sacco & Sani, 2019). The concept refers to the specific influence and power of the founder in the organisation, often as implied by the medicalisation of the term in an unhealthy way. Leaders with founder's sydrome are sometmes described as having narcissistic tendancies (Kislenko, 2022).

Block and Rosenberg (2002) focus their study on US based non-profit organisations and they find that there are significant differences between organsiations led by their founders and successors. These differences manifest themselves in a variety of structural ways such as how often governing boards meet and who is most influential at those meetings. In an ethnographic study of one US non-profit, Ceaser (2018) asserts that "Leaders who suffer from founder's syndrome are highly defensive; they do not lead well" (Ceaser, 2018, p. 460). He goes on to describe the characteristics of founders sydrome as a leader who is "charming and inspirational" (Ceaser, 2018, p. 464) but also intimidating and creating a culture at odds with epoused values of the

organisation. This echoes the work of English and Peters (2011) who specifically look at founder's syndrome in women's non-profit organsiations and find that while founders are "strong, visionary leaders" (English & Peters, 2011, p. 162), they find it difficult to delegate and empower other staff members, conflicting with the values of empowerment in a feminist organisation.

Kislenko (2022) asserts that while not all founders suffer from founder's syndrome it is widespread and found in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors although the more seemingly altruistic the organisation's mission is, the more likely it may be to suffer from the condition (Kislenko, 2022).

Greany and McGinity (2021) identify a particular type of MAT that is more likely to suffer from founder's syndrome (see Table 6 p. 166), the Kingdom MAT that is characterised by a hierarchial, autocratic organisational culture (Greany & McGinity, 2021b). In a very powerful ethnographic study of Mossbourne Academy and its founding "superhead" Sir Micheal Wilshaw, who went on to become Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI), Christy Kulz (2017) highlights what she see as his macho style of "powerful empire builders crafted in the guise of gun-slinging action hero Clint Eastwood in *Pale Rider*" (Kulz, 2017, p. 95).

The risks and harm caused by founder's syndrome may be the dark side of the more positive aspects of the notion of stewardship as discussed earlier, in that "Founders had invested so much in their organisations, had given so many hours of unpaid and volunteer time, that they frequently found it hard to accept decisions that they themselves had not made" (English & Peters, 2011, p. 164). Echoing the work of Block and Rosenberg (2002), English and Peters (2011) found that founders can be

“visionaries, women with compelling ideas rather than managers” (English & Peters, 2011, p. p169).

In a study of academic leaders in the US, Bennett (2004) describes the perception of some education leaders that they need to be heroic figures that stand alone like the cowboys of the west, a behaviour that leads to suspician, fragmentaion and discord with the staff and he argues for a greater focus on a stewardship model of leadership as described later in this study (Bennett, 2004).

2.3 Leadership succession

While there is a tendancy to hyperbole in much of the literature and “crisis” is an overused term when considering leadership succession in business and in schools, it is generally accepted that leadership succession is crucial to organisational success and that there is much that could be done to improve the current situation (Charan, 2005).

There is extensive business-based research into leadership transitions and succession and also into the role of founding CEOs often related specifically to family firms (Chen et al., 2016). As MATs are still a relatively new structure there is comparatively little literature relating to the significance of the role of founding CEOs and to models of leadership transition in MATs. For the pupose of this study, I have based my definition of succession on two broad simple starting points “Succession [is] the process by which a primary person is replaced” (Landry, 2011, p. 44) and “in the context of family firms, succession refers to the transfer of management and/or ownership from one family member to another” (Boyd et al., 2014, p. 336).

For the purpose of this study, the family firm is the main structure compared to the MAT, although reference is made to third-sector organisations in some areas, specifically in relation to founder's syndrome. The rationale of the comparison to family firms is due to there being a long history of academic study into founders of family firms from several countries. It is also reflects one of the main policy rationales for the establishment of acadamies, that the education system needed to benefit from the entepreneurial (Daniels, 2012), innovative and risk-taking taking attitude that is found in private business (Woods et al., 2007). This was part of a wider development of a wider private education industry, originally in the US, with growth of education companies supporting home education, school vouchers, educational resource publishing and a growth of education entrepreneurs (Hentschke, 2005).

2.3.1 Founder CEO succession in business

The business literature suggests that there may be something significant about founder CEO-succession in that there is a higher level of attachment and identification with the founding CEO and the organisation (Wasserman, 2003) and founding CEOs may have particularly dominant personality types or entrepreneurial skills, as discussed above (Rubenson & Gupta, 1997), that could influence the success of the transition (Lam et al., 2018).

Overall, it is postulated that founder CEO succession may be the most critical succession event in the life of most firms (Cragun Ormonde et al., 2016). Wasserman cites Hofer and Charan (1984) who claim that the most likely cause of business failure is the transition from a CEO with an entrepreneurial style of leadership to a well-organised professional management team and the departure of a founder will have a

disproportionately negative impact on the chance of the organisation surviving (Wasserman, 2003).

Lansberg (1988) identifies the interlocking systems within a family firm – the family system, the management system and the ownership system, all of which have different motivations and ambitions for the firm. The founder is the only person who is a dominant character in each constituency and therefore has a disproportioantely important place. In a more recent study of family firm succession, LeCounte describes the challenges that many founders face when considering succession: “Founder-CEOs deliberate about the time when they will no longer lead their family-owned SME [small or medium-sized enterprise]. Many business owners are unwilling to plan for inevitable leadership changes, making such transitions less likely to be successful, the CEO’s concerns may lead to succession stagnation” (LeCounte, 2022, p. 9). Meanwhile, Lansberg (1988) identifies confronting their own mortality – “planning my succession was like being actively involved in all the arrangements for my own wake” (Lansberg, 1988, p. 27) said one founder who was interviewed. This notion of a sense of mortality is echoed in a study by De Vries (1988) who found that leaving a successful legacy can “amount to defeating death” (De Vries, 1988, p. 57).

A case study of founder succession in a Canadian family firm also highlights the founder’s reluctance to step down and plan for the succession due to his reluctance to face his aging process and mortality: “Our research suggests that Peladeau’s reluctance to plan for succession may be due to his fear of retirement, death, and loss of control of the business he successfully built from scratch” (Ibrahim et al., 2001, p. 255).

Founders also fear the loss of influence in the day-to-day running of the business as soon as any succession plans are made known. In family firms, this fear of loss of control in the business can be amplified by the fear of loss of status and control in the family. Founders can also feel intense rivalry with their successor.

Unmans et al. (2021), in a study of 259 Belgium family firms, found that founder-led firms have less well developed succession planning due to the difficulty the founder has in letting go of the firm; they show a tendancy to feel too important for the firm to manage without them. Interestingly they also identify a gender difference suggesting that female founding CEOs are more engaged with succesion planning (Umans et al., 2021).

Lansberg (1988) points out that the family as a whole may well be facing a range of challenges at the time of succession that may discourage planning and discussion. The founder and their spouse may be facing retirement, “empty nest syndrome” relationship difficulties that can sometimes be associated with children leaving home. The children may also be going through a difficult time of establishing themselves as independent of their parents and starting their own families (Lansberg, 1988). It would also appear that both the length of time the founding CEO has been in post and how successsful they have been are relevant in that long-term successful CEOs and those with internal successors appear to be more successsful (Ahn, 2018). There appears to be a complex relationship overall between founder CEOs and performance with the transition to the successor being a key risk point.I It is suggested by Adams et al. (2009), in a study of Fortune 500 firms between 1992 and 1999, that founding CEOs who are sucessful may be more able to exert control over the succession (Adams

et al., 2009). Counter-intuitively Adams et al. (2009) found that successful CEOs are are more likely to leave firms and initiate a succession. This may be because they are keen to pass on a successful firm and also possibly due to under-performing CEOs remaining in post too long and being reluctant to hand over to a sucessor (Adams et al., 2009). The influence that the founder CEO can have on the succession process is further considered by Ocasio (1999) who examines the relationship between the success of the founder, the stage at which they move on and the internal governance arrangements of the organisation. The suggestion is that successful late stage founders can contribute to corporate inertia (Ocasio, 1999). Souder et al. (2012) also assert that firms run by founder CEOs tend to either decline or remain static the longer the founder stays in post (Souder et al., 2012).

Firms that are financially successful early on tend to have higher founder CEO turnover as founders either take the opportunity to benefit from selling a stake in a rapidly growing firm or because the founder recognises that things may not remain successful in the longer term. There may also be a sense of obligation to pass on a successful firm and secure a sense of legacy (Adams et al., 2009). It is unclear whether the legacy of founders is a positive one or not. The risk of inertia in companies with dominant founders (White et al., 1994) who have written their initial vision into company handbooks and culture is widely reported (Ogbonna & Harris, 2001).

As with so much of the literature that is based on company performance, however, there are contrasting studies that suggest that relay succession from the CEO to an internal heir apparent does not necessarily contribute to organisational inertia (Naveen, 2006). Ahn (2018) goes further in his study of 64 Korean companies and finds

that “strategic inertia” can be a very positive feature of founder/ insider succession in that it supports stable management, long-lasting business relationships with suppliers and customers and builds a positive social brand that allows the companies to become “socially accepted entities” (Ahn, 2018, p. 4) so that inertia, rather than being a problem, can be a positive strategic decision.

The seemingly contradictory impact of “inertia” on performance is an area that merits further investigation but is beyond the scope of this study. The difference between positive inertia that means stability, a long-term relationship with stakeholders and strong brand identity and negative inertia that results in inflexibility and missed opportunities may be sector specific. The requirement for stability and continuity may well be very different for an IT company to that needed in an engineering or manufacturing firm.

The sense of founders not having the skills to take a company through a period of growth after the intial set up is confirmed in a study of US semi-conductor start ups by Boeker and Karichalil (2002) who found that in both high-growth and low-growth firms, founder turnover is higher than in companies with a more stable profile (Boeker & Karichalil, 2002).

The importance of the development of a strong organisational culture by the founding CEO is clear (Schein, 1983), and it would appear that this can be either a positive at the point of succession or a negtive in that it can contribute to organisational inertia as the organisation seeks to replace a CEO with someone “similar” (Ogbonna & Harris, 2001). The influence of the family story in shaping the company culture and attitudes

to succession is also identified in a case study of a French family firm (Haddadj, 2003). The issue of organisational culture is explored in more detail later.

Several authors (Blumentritt et al., 2013; Hollenbeck et al., 2015; Landry, 2011; Liu, 2018; Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008) identify different models for succession planning. In “Grooming for the Top Post and ending the CEO succession crisis” (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2006) the authors identify three main types of CEO succession:

1. Relay, where the successor is chosen by the existing CEO as an “heir apparent” and groomed for the top job

2. Non-relay, inside succession where the successor is an inside manager but emerges from a selection process or “horse race” among multiple candidates

3. Outside succession, where the successor is hired from another company

They consider 184 US companies including several world-famous brands that have undergone CEO successions. When considering the antecedents to a succession event, one interesting finding is that firms with a larger pool of possible internal candidates are less likely to use both relay and outside succession and therefore will choose to run a “horse race”. Firms that are performing well are more likely to opt for relay succession and firms that are not doing well will tend to choose a successor from outside. Naveen (2006) found that relay succession is used in around 41% of firms where an heir is chosen before the CEO departs, and also that the likelihood of relay succession taking place increases with the size and complexity of the firm. He also finds that in firms where a clear succession plan is in place, they are more likely to appoint an insider and that there is no compelling evidence that relay succession leads to entrenchment/inertia.

After the event, the evidence suggests that relay succession is the most successful in terms of the firm's performance (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2006). It is interesting to note that in a relay succession, the use of the grooming period as a form of probation can be significant and they cite the examples of Boeing in 2003 where the heir apparent was dismissed. This process means that the risk of a poor cultural fit in relay succession is greatly reduced. The other big advantage that relay successors have is that they are able to move beyond their narrow field of experience within the company (such as HR or finance) and be offered the chance to be exposed to the full range of CEO functions. The authors found that when the firm was performing poorly and there was a challenging context, relay successions were even more successful.

The risk of running internal "horse races" is that the unsuccessful candidates can be resentful and either stay in the firm and challenge the authority of the new CEO or leave and take with them considerable valuable knowledge. They also point out that in a large field contest, the successful candidate will not have had the opportunity to build a coherent power base in the company. They point to a number of well-known companies that have run relay successions including McDonalds and Wal-Mart (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2006).

Ocasio (1999) focuses on the nature of formal and informal rules in companies; how they develop and are expressed and how they interact with CEO succession events. He claims that rules develop in several ways – some external – corporate governance/financial reporting rules, some through precedents and company history and some developed to suit new situations. He refers to Weber's concept of the "rountinisation of charisma" in which the power and authority of the founding CEO

becomes depersonalised and is invested in the position not the person. While some see rules as constraining the ability of the board to act, the author asserts that they can also free the board to feel safe to make difficult decisions. They also form a bond between board members when they provide a social norm that binds members together. Ocasio finds that if the previous CEO was an insider appointment, it is much more likely that the next one will be. He identifies the two types of insider succession- heir apparent (relay) and horse race. Precedent is seen as very important in informing the rules of succession and insider succession is seen as based on company rules (Ocasio, 1999).

Several studies have attempted to develop or apply a conceptual framework to the process of CEO succession planning. As the process of CEO succession is such a crucial point for firms, the models are designed to help organisations plan for the succession event. It is striking that many companies, particularly family firms with founder CEOs, do not have succession plans in place. Lui (2018) found that only 5% of Taiwanese family businesses have a succession plan against a global average of 16% (Liu, 2018).

Petrock (1990) found that leadership transition is an extended period that starts as soon as rumours begin about a potential change and continues after the actual change rather than a single event (Petrock, 1990). The need to support a new leader as part of the succession planning is crucial and many new leaders need support to avoid making mistakes in their first weeks (Bear et al., 2000).

The consequences of failing to get the succession process right are serious for companies with costs as high as 24 times the leader's salary and 40–50% of senior

leaders hired from outside the organisation being described as “mis-hires” (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008).

In the context of family firms, Boyd et al. (2014) apply the Theory of Planned Behaviour developed by Ajzen (1991) which assumes that if a person has a strong intention and the capacity to behave in a certain way then the likelihood of the change happening is a factor of their capacity and desire (Ajzen, 1991, 2011). In the context of family firm succession, Boyd et al. (2014) suggest that the incumbent CEO goes through a process of considering the response of their “valued social networks” to the change and the “socioemotional wealth” of the stakeholders in the firm before initiating the succession event. They also recognise the role of boundary conditions and contextual factors such as wider market conditions and the level of stock held by family members in influencing the plans (Boyd et al., 2014). Sharma et al. (2003) identify that while both the desire of the CEO to find a successor and the feasibility are important in developing a succession plan, the most significant is the identification of a likely successor in the organisation, in other words feasibility trumps desire (Sharma et al., 2003). These institutionalised norms and values in companies have a significant influence on the succession process and decision making; these are captured in neo-institutional organisation theory which provided useful insights into the process (Bresser & Millonig, 2003; Landry, 2011).

The idea that the history of the organisation, how successful the incumbent is and how long there is between succession events are all important is related to opponent process theory; a concept going back to Hegel that identifies a thesis and an antithesis in the system: “According to a theory of opponent processes, once the current leader

selects any one style, the best of the alternative styles then becomes an antithesis that stands in contrast to the thesis. Any imperfection in the current thesis becomes indirect evidence for the validity of the antithesis" (Hollenbeck et al., 2015, p. 6). The authors claim that it is therefore essential to understand this theory in planning for a successful succession. While the authors claim there are reasons for opponent processes to operate in leadership succession, how strongly they do so depends on a number of "boundary and moderating" influences such as perceived performance of the predecessor, the hierarchical level of the players and the time between successions (Hollenbeck et al., 2015). The contrast and tension between incumbent and successor are widely reported. There is evidence that CEOs can deliberately sabotage their successor (De Vries, 1988) and that succession is more successful when the personality of the successor is notably different from the retiring CEO (Lam et al., 2018).

Game theory may also be useful in studying succession in family businesses as it is a tool for analysing decisions and the factors influencing them. It recognises that decisions are inter-dependent. Games in game theory start with a statement of the problem; they then consider the interactions among multiple actors, the conditions that control those interactions and the pay offs for the various actors. Game theory views founder succession as "a set of rational choices made by individuals (e.g. founders/CEOs and potential successors) about a firm's future leadership, with predictable information about their own outcomes resulting from those choices (e.g. choose a particular successor, choose not to be involved with firm)" (Blumentritt et al., 2013, p. 55). The authors assert that game theory provides a firm basis on which to observe, explain and predict family succession.

Despite the evidence that firms should have detailed models and plans for succession, many boards continue to rely on heuristics and do what they have always done. They make succession decisions on the basis of their belief in their previous experience and rely on a range of factors to inform their decisions that are very poor indicators of actual performance (Graffin et al., 2013). This temptation to “follow a star” and hire a new CEO based on giving them undue credit for the firm’s performance in the first years of their tenue develops when boards create a set of formal and informal rules that means that companies that have made one insider CEO appointment are much more likely to do so again and also that if seeking an outsider they will be greatly influenced by the perceived reputation of the potential CEO (Ocasio, 1999).

The behaviour of the incoming CEO is seen as crucial in producing a successful succession event in a model based on a review of the literature by Manderscheid and Ardichvili (2008). This again reinforces the notion that a leadership succession is not a single event but a lengthy process that starts as soon as anyone in the firm suspects a change is coming and lasts well after the successor is appointed (Petrock, 1990).

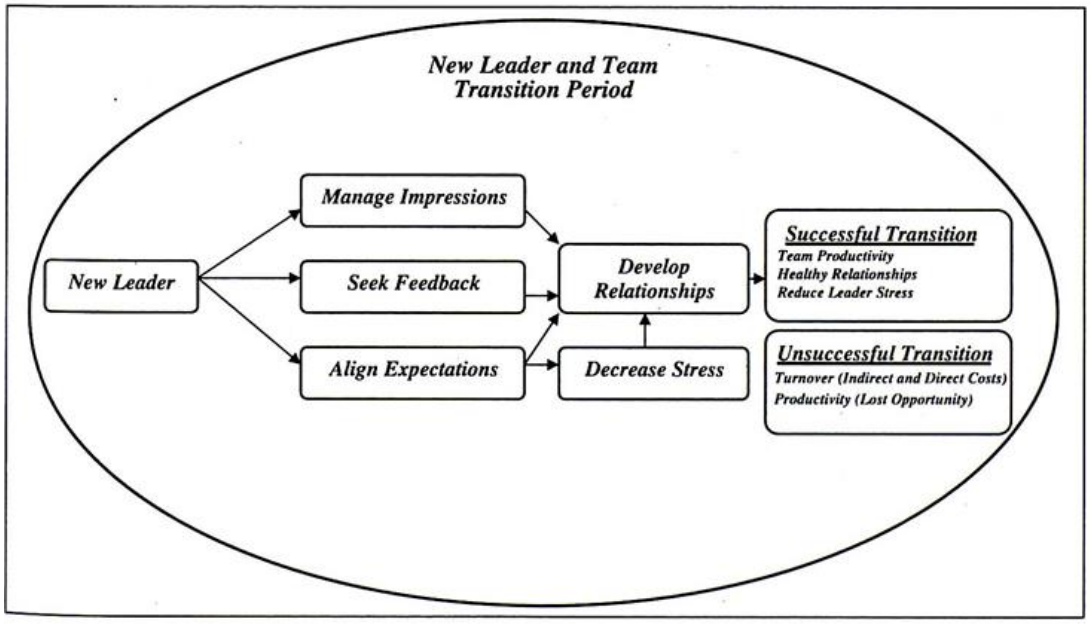

Figure 3. New leader and team transition (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008, p. 124)

The importance of a succession plan for an organisation, the significance of organisational culture and networks and the feelings of loss and grief around succession events described here in relation to business succession all resonate with the MAT context.

The increasingly digital nature of the work place and the associated increased speed of change means that human resources (HR) departments may need to rapidly develop more responsive approaches to succession planning (Jackson & Dunn-Jensen, 2021).

2.3.2 Leadership succession in schools

This review draws on Aravena's (2020) comprehensive review of the literature on principal succession and takes from it a working definition, itself derived in part from Hargreaves & Fink's (2003) study of principal succession in Ontario; "principal succession is defined here as a leadership transition process produced by the departure of a principal and the arrival of another" (Aravena, 2020, p. 3; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003).

While there is a great deal of literature about leadership succession planning in business (Besel et al., 2021; Bingham, 2021) there is less relating to school leadership and it is limited in scope; much of the literature relates to the US, Canada, Australia and the UK (Aravena, 2020). It is also important to note that none of the systems are homogenous as different states/provinces/counties have different organisational structures and each country has also developed a system of semi-autonomous schools outside direct local government control known as Charter Schools (Bankston et al., 2013) in the US, and Academies in the UK (Heilbronn, 2016). The different structures are significant in considering how leadership succession is managed in schools.

The different models of school organisation in different jurisdictions are interesting in the context of this study and show that many professionals in education are grappling with similar issues.

2.3.3 A leadership succession crisis?

There has, for many years, been a growing sense of a crisis of leadership succession (Huffington, 2020) in schools across the Western world with an aging population of

school leaders and fewer applicants when vacancies arise (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003; Kane & Barbaro, 2016; MacBeath, 2006; Renihan, 2012; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2005). The perceived crisis is not, however, universal with some albeit dated evidence that Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan all have had a plentiful supply of teachers willing to seek leadership positions (MacBeath, 2006). Even within Europe, while Sweden and France experience a recruitment problem, Spain appears to have a surplus of applicants and a plentiful pipeline of potential leaders (Renihan, 2012; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009). It is also the case that within countries there are considerable differences in the extent of the challenge with urban schools, schools in more challenging circumstances (MacBeath, 2006) and secondary schools finding it more difficult than others (Fink, 2010), larger schools managing better than smaller schools (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018) and regional differences between states (MacBeath, 2006).

To a certain extent, the crisis in leadership recruitment needs to be set in a wider context of teacher recruitment and retention (MacBeath, 2006) and changing working patterns more generally. In the UK while overall teacher recruitment had improved prior to the pandemic there were significant shortages due to the increasing numbers of children in schools (Foster, 2018) and particularly in certain subject areas and a dissatisfaction with workload and pay that is contributing to worsening retention. During the pandemic there were fewer vacancies as many teachers chose to remain in post; after the pandemic the most recent data shows increasing shortfalls particularly in secondary schools and an increase in senior leaders choosing to retire early. The impact is reduced to a degree by failing numbers of secondary age children but still reflects a tight labour market and a reluctance to join or remain in the

profession (Allen et al., 2022). There is also an increase in teachers working part-time which may have implications for progression into leadership roles (Worth & Van den Brande, 2019). Globally there is a very mixed pattern of teacher supply problems relating to changing demographics with sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the Arab states facing significant shortages while Europe, China and India do not face the same problems. There are of course significant variations within countries as well as between regions (Laming, 2007).

It is striking that, while this crisis in leadership recruitment for schools has been reported for many years (Anderson, 1991) with dire forecasts made about the large numbers of retiring leaders (Malone & Caddell, 2000) and too few potential candidates (McCormick, 1987), schools now still have leaders and educational standards in countries reporting leadership recruitment problems have been improving not collapsing (Schleicher, 2017). In fact in many cases there are more suitably qualified candidates than there are posts available (MacBeath, 2009). Fink (2010) found that in Ontario "over 70% of vice principals aspire to principalship" (Fink, 2010, p. 31) and that the problem is teachers not wishing to become vice-principals. It is not clear whether the problem faced by schools is being able to appoint leaders or being able to appoint highly effective leaders who will drive improvement in the system. Fink (2010) in his comprehensive study of the issue describes the problem as not being finding "warm bodies" to fill leadership vacancies but finding skilled ethical leaders of learning who are right for the context of the school at that time. This is a much more nuanced understanding of the issues facing responsible bodies seeking to appoint school leaders and represents a challenge not a crisis (Fink, 2010).

The increasing number of principal successions appears to be driven not by a shortage of principals but by increasing levels of turnover as school leaders move between schools more frequently than in the past (Aravena, 2020; Snodgrass Rangel, 2018). Early retirements of school leaders are also contributing to increases in headteacher/principal succession with the impact of the pandemic often cited as a reason for retiring early (Allen et al., 2022).

It is also important to recognise that there are issues of discrimination relating to gender, disability, and ethnicity in school leadership appointments. In the UK secondary school leaders are disproportionately white males (Earley et al., 2002), while primary heads are disproportionately white females (Wilson et al., 2006). Encouragingly a 2002 study in the UK showed that the majority of candidates undertaking the NPQH were women and that there was an increase in candidates from ethnic minority groups suggesting that there is potential for positive change in the characteristics of school leaders (Earley et al., 2002). There are widespread assumptions in the system about gender and leadership traits that may disadvantage women seeking promotion (Fitzgerald, 2003; Sperandio & LaPier, 2009). These issues are particularly the case in some countries in the Middle East and Africa where gendered assumptions about school leaders may be even more deeply embedded. It also appears to be the case that women are less likely than men to apply for headships (MacBeath, 2009).

Again these issues are not simple or universal across all sectors; in some cases in areas in the US with predominantly African-American students, while white men may remain the majority of leaders in secondary-level schools, African-American women

leaders are in the majority in primary (elementary) schools (Sperandio & LaPier, 2009). In some countries governments have identified an imperative to hire school leaders from minority groups, particularly to serve as leaders in areas where the students are from minority groups such as in New Zealand with Māori majorities (Fitzgerald, 2003).

It is important to recognise, therefore, that there are several overlapping issues such as different levels of deprivation, differences between types of school, size of school and national and local government policies.

This study considers the leadership development and career pathways that CEOs have experienced and considers how effective they have been in supporting both founder and successor CEOs in their roles. Professional development is a key part of leadership recruitment and retention.

2.3.4 Definitions of succession planning

In this review of the literature there are a number of definitions of leadership succession planning in schools:

1. " the explicit design and implementation of programs to identify and develop high-quality principal candidates" (Russell & Sabina, 2014, p. p600).
2. "ensuring that the right person is in the right place at the right time for the right reasons" (Fink, 2010, p. 112).
3. "school leadership succession planning can be understood as a deliberate process undertaken within the organisation to ensure a smooth transition as leaders come and go" (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018, p. 27)

Each of these definitions emphasises various aspects of leadership succession; the notion of specific training programmes, the motivation and values of the potential leaders and the notion of a transition period from the outgoing to in-coming leader. The definition used by Fink (2010) is the one that most elegantly captures the challenge of succession planning for school leaders as it recognises the importance of contextual factors such as the point in a school's "life-cycle" and the characteristics of the candidates.

This study does not rely on a single precise definition of leadership succession.

2.3.5 Succession planning in schools and MATs

While most businesses and, to a lesser extent, some public bodies have well-developed succession planning frameworks in place, Fusarelli et al. (2018) assert that "The practice of succession planning is not as common in education" (Fusarelli et al., 2018, p. 291). They go on to point out the importance of a long-term systematic approach to succession planning within US school districts due to the widespread shortage of professionally qualified principals. They highlight the need for long-term talent management and aspiring principal training programmes (Fusarelli et al., 2018).

Based on his experience of a lack of effective succession planning in an Australian school and a review of several studies cited in this research, Cruickshank (2018) asserts that the increasing shortage of school leaders means "that existing school leaders need to actively identify and develop leadership talent amongst their existing staff. This analysis has shown that succession planning and the building of staff capacities are essential elements of this process" (Cruickshank, 2018, p. 54).

While it is now the case that there is little evidence of a coherent national succession plan for school leaders this was not always the case. The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) which was founded in 2000 and took over the responsibility for teachers' leadership development from local authorities (LAs) (Bush, 2006) ran a number of programmes aimed at improving succession planning and providing a pipeline of school leaders such as "Tomorrow's Leaders Today", launched in 2007 with the support of a number of "National Succession Consultants" drawn from a range of educational leadership backgrounds. The NCSL set out a comprehensive plan for leadership development and succession planning in the report "Growing Tomorrow's School Leaders: The challenge" (Hartle & Thomas, 2003) which referenced the "potential crisis" in recruitment and retention and highlighted the need for a strategic approach to leadership talent development and succession planning through a leadership pipeline. The report offers direct advice and a six-stage approach to developing effective leadership succession (Hartle & Thomas, 2003).

The NCSL continued to examine the issue of succession planning with a specific focus on the role of MATs and other federations in "Prepared to lead: How schools, federations and chains grow education leaders" (Matthews et al., 2011); this identified specifically how academy trusts use their scale and capacity to grow leadership capacity, looking in detail and some well-known trusts such as Outwood Grange that have programmes to grow executive leadership capacity. It asserts that there is a strong case to say that some groups /federations/MATs can have a positive impact on developing a valuable succession planning process; however, in some cases there are boundary effects which may mean that some schools are shut out from these benefits (Matthews et al., 2011).

The National College also published a resource about leadership succession specifically in dioceses and schools with a religious character that identified a specific role for the dioceses in supporting leadership succession by providing detailed knowledge of the local context and providing "spiritual refreshment of experienced leaders" (NCSL, 2010, p. 11).

Bush (2013) suggests that the removal of compulsory status for the NPQH and the diminution of the role of the NCSL left the crucial need for a coherent national approach to succession planning in jeopardy (Bush, 2013).

The responsibility for succession planning and appointing new school leaders sits with different bodies depending on the jurisdiction and type of school. Across many school systems such as England and Wales, Australia, New Zealand, parts of the USA and Canada, Spain, Portugal and Hong Kong, schools have been given greater powers to manage staff including appointments over the last 30 years as part of a movement towards more self-governance and local management of schools in line with the neo-liberal education reforms of the 1990s and 2000s (Bush & Gamage, 2001).

In the UK a majority of state secondary schools and a large and growing minority of primary schools are now Academies (A West & D Wolfe, 2018) in which locally appointed trust boards have responsibility for the appointment of staff including school leaders and all pay and HR policies (Ranson & Crouch, 2009). In the remaining LA schools that responsibility is shared between the LA and locally appointed/elected governing boards (James et al., 2019).

The growth of MATs offers new opportunities to rethink school and trust leader succession with the development of the NPQEL, and other professional training for

trust leaders offer a route from headship to trust leadership (Ehren & Godfrey, 2017; Matthews et al., 2011; Williamson, 2020) and a widespread expectation that trusts will increasingly attract leaders in from beyond teaching as has already happened in some large national MATs (Menzies et al., 2018; Wigdortz & Toop, 2016; Worth, 2021).

In the US there is a complex pattern of school governance with locally elected school boards (Alsbury, 2008; Ford & Ihrke, 2016; Hess & Meeks, 2010), district, state and charter school trust boards (McCabe & Vinzant, 1999) all involved in appointing school district superintendents and school principals (Ritchie, 2020).

The various bodies responsible for school leader recruitment and succession planning have taken different approaches depending on their levels of autonomy and governance structures. Ritchie (2020) writes compellingly about the need for comprehensive succession plans and asserts that most school boards are much more focussed on the appointment process than they are in developing a pre-emptive succession plan. Ritchie is clear that school leadership teams and school boards should establish a process that runs from the point where the decision is made to move on by the current principal (or the decision is made for them) in which the existing team members are clear about their roles in the transition. The process should identify which positions are likely to become vacant and start to identify potential candidates both internally and externally; this process is described as the “forecasting” stage of the process by Peters-Hawkins et al. (2018). As discussed above this process is not just about identifying talent but should also include programmes that nurture and develop talent (Zepeda et al., 2012). A number of authors point to the importance of school

placements and possible interim posts to smooth the transition period (Ritchie, 2020; Russell & Sabina, 2014).

Having identified and trained a pool of talented leaders, the next phase after the immediate appointment is the period described as “pre-entry” by Kane and Barbaro (2016) which is the 5–9-month period between appointment and taking up a post. This is a period that is quite specific to school leadership appointments and many newly appointed principals describe receiving little or no induction support during this period (Kane & Barbaro, 2016). The next stage of the transition period is the time immediately post appointment which Steyn (2013), in a South African case study, describes as the “survival” period of the professional and organisational socialisation of a newly appointed school leader during which they must work out how to function in their new role. In a different context of independent schools in the US, this period is described as the time when the new leader has to settle themselves and their family into the school and wider community and deal with a lot of very practical issues around setting up a new family home (Kane & Barbaro, 2016).

Many studies identify the transition period as being a cause of stress for both the institution and the individuals involved. Hargreaves (2005) agrees that there may be stress and disruption when a school leader leaves but this should only be a temporary “wobble” in most schools (Hargreaves, 2005).

The induction period for new school leaders should continue at least through the first full academic year which is the time when the newly appointed leader is discovering the issues that they face and beginning to understand the school culture (Kane & Barbaro, 2016). The role of experienced school leaders as mentors in this period is

increasingly recognised as an important part of the transition period (Russell & Sabina, 2014; Zepeda et al., 2012).

The importance of "sustaining" school leaders in post to reduce turnover and to encourage vice-principals to apply for posts secure in the knowledge that they will be supported is an essential part of succession planning (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018). Hargreaves et al.'s (2003) study of four schools in Ontario offers a recommendation that school principal tenure should be increased to a minimum of five years to enable sustained educational improvement (Hargreaves et al., 2003).

In this study the successor CEOs describe their experiences of taking over from a founder and founders reflect on the succession plans or lack of them in their organisation.

2.4 Changes in school leadership

There is a near universal acceptance that the role of school leader has changed significantly over recent years (Renihan, 2012). In many jurisdictions around the world there has been a trend towards decentralisation, increased school autonomy (Earley, 2013), increased accountability for outcomes (Fink, 2010; Zepeda Sally et al., 2012), and greater competition between schools. These changes have, in many Western countries, been part of a neo-liberal marketisation of schools (Anderson, 2000; Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011; MacBeath, 2009; Sandals & Bryant, 2014; Walford, 2000).

Many authors point out that this has contributed to growing pressure on school leaders and consequent high levels of work-related stress (Cooper & Kelly, 2013; MacBeath, 2009; Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018; Renihan, 2012; Sogunro, 2012). It is

widely believed that the increasing stress experienced by school leaders is linked to high turnover and early retirement, both of which contribute to increasingly challenging recruitment (Alenezi, 2020; DeAngelis & White, 2011; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). In some school systems such as Ontario & Manitoba local school boards, there is a deliberate policy of rotating school principals that can lead to high leadership turnover and limit long-term school improvement (Fink & Brayman, 2006). Many US school districts also have a policy of rotating school principals as part of their succession planning (Russell & Sabina, 2014). It is interesting to note that some large MATs in the UK are beginning to move school leaders around within the trusts.

Many authors assert that high turnover of school leaders is itself associated with poorer outcomes for students (DeAngelis & White, 2011) and lower morale amongst teachers (Wahlstrom et al., 2010); however, not all the evidence supports this. In a study based in North Carolina over 12 years, Miller (2013) found that while principals often leave after a period of underperformance and in the immediate years after a new principal is appointed, after five years standards have rebounded to the previous high points before the decline. The author points out that caution is required when attributing declining performance to turnover (Miller, 2013).

Several authors also refer to a perception that school leaders have become too managerial and detached and lost sight of their identity as teachers and leaders of learning (Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011; Fink & Brayman, 2006). This perceived change, they assert, serves to discourage younger staff from applying for senior leadership posts. Renihan (2012), however, found that in Canada young staff were becoming more interested in applying for school leadership than previously and identified that

a positive role image of school leadership in some districts was responsible for this upturn. This suggests that the public discourse surrounding the challenges of school leadership may be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The development of MATs has led to another significant change in leadership in schools in the UK with the emergence of MAT CEOs and executive heads who run trusts (Hughes, 2022) and have line management of headteachers and a wider "system leadership role" (Cousin, 2019; Hargreaves, 2010; Hatcher, 2008; Hopkins, 2007). This new structure can also lead to a loss of autonomy for headteachers within trusts (Thompson et al., 2021). While it still remains clear that most trust CEOs have been headteachers, with a 2021 study by Constantinides (2021) showing that 4/5 CEOs had been headteachers, there is the potential for the number of trust leaders who have not been headteachers to grow as existing CEOs retire (Constantinides, 2021b).

This study captures a moment of significant change in school leadership as founding CEOs reflect on how they had to adapt their leadership to a new structure and take on new functions in Chapter 5. Successor CEOs interviewed also point to a moment of change from the founders who established MATs with a particular set of skills to the successors who must grow and sustain them with a different, complimentary skill set.

2.5 Leadership development

There is overwhelming evidence that effective leadership is highly influential in improving student outcomes (Harris & Jones, 2020). Many studies highlight the importance of specific programmes to support talent identification, leadership development, new principal induction and the transition period as a whole (Fink &

Brayman, 2006; Hargreaves, 2005; Kane & Barbaro, 2016; Russell & Sabina, 2014). Coaching and mentoring of new headteachers/principals is also widely regarded as an important part of the process (Fusarelli et al., 2018).

A successful programme for training and supporting new headteachers is widely regarded as part of the solution to the challenges of headteacher recruitment and retention (Bolam, 2003; Caldwell et al., 2003; Weindling, 2004). Many countries have invested in formal structured headteacher training programmes such as the NPQH in England that has been running since 1997 and which has generally been positively received with participants particularly valuing the elements of personalisation involved, the placements in another school, the coaching and the networking (Crawford & Earley, 2011).

University delivered postgraduate degrees in education and a range of related fields have continued to expand both globally and in the UK with there being 43,455 people in 2018/19 undertaking these degrees up from 40,990 in 2016/17 (HESA, 2020).This pattern is replicated globally; in the US 459 universities offered master's degree programmes up from 396 and the number of master's degrees awarded went up by 90% from 8,292 to 15,720 between 1993 and 2003 (Perrone & Tucker, 2019).

There is evidence from five European countries that school leaders find these courses valuable (Kowalczuk-Walędziak et al., 2020).

A well-structured effective training programme for headteachers is clearly part of a successful succession planning system and many studies point to the importance of high-quality headteacher professional development in developing a "pipeline" of capable new headteachers (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Zepeda et al., 2012) with some

specifically identifying the placement element as particularly powerful (Russell & Sabina, 2014).

The CEOs in this study reflect on their leadership development and consider what was most valuable in preparing them for their role in Chapter 4.

2.5.1 School leader professional development in England

As previously stated, the level of executive/leadership qualifications held by the CEO of an organisation is important in considering the performance of the organisation, the leader's credibility (Jakobsen et al., 2022) and the success or otherwise of leadership succession. It is therefore important to consider the development of leadership training and development for headteachers and more recently CEOs in schools.

Harris et al. (2016), in a comparative study of headteacher training programmes in seven countries, are clear that the evidence is strong that headteacher/leadership development has a positive impact on school improvement and pupil outcomes. They also suggest that there is a danger in too much "policy borrowing" between jurisdictions and that the context in terms of both scale and structure is very important in determining what works (Harris et al., 2016).

The range, style and responsibility for the training and development of school leaders in the past 50 years reflect the political and social contexts of their times. Successive governments have taken different views of how best to deliver leadership development for headteachers that in many ways reflect their overall view of the role of the state in education (Bolam, 2004).

Bolam (2004) has produced a comprehensive history of leadership development in schools in England and Wales up until the establishment of the National College for School Leadership in 2002 that details the role of a wide range of organisations which he divides into three main phases. Brundrett (2006) offers a valuable reflection on the period up until 2006. In the 1960s and 1970s the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) had the lead role in running a range of practical training courses for headteachers. In addition to this Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) delivered specific courses for heads. There were also a range of master's degree courses offered by some universities (Bolam, 2004; Creissen & Ellison, 1998) the first of which was offered in the 1960s at the Institute of Education London (Brundrett, 2001) and programmes such as the "One Term Training Opportunities" (OTTOs) that were taken by around 11% of headteachers (Creissen & Ellison, 1998). In the US it has become a general requirement for school principals to hold master's degrees (Huber & Hiltmann, 2010). The 1970s saw the beginning of the attempt by central government to take control of school management training following the report from the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Training of Teachers in 1974 when Margaret Thatcher was education secretary, which led to the establishment of the National Development Centre (NDC) for School Management Training based at Bristol University (Bolam, 2004). During the period 1983–1988 the NDC ran courses for over 6,000 heads and deputies (Bush, 2007).

Until the early 1980s headteacher training and development was the responsibility of the individual LEAs (Brundrett, 2006) that employed all teachers in their schools and managed the budget for education across their county. The history of the development of school leadership development programmes mirrors the wider

changes in education policy over the last 40 years with the role of the LAs being diminished and first a centralisation and more recently a marketisation of leadership programmes. This period also saw central government grants through various bodies such as The Technical and Vocational Initiative (TVEI) and the In-service Teacher Training Grants Scheme focus spending on national targets such as the reform of the curriculum; this was seen by some as a politically motivated attempt to direct school leader training to support government priorities (Graham, 1996).

The 1988 Education Reform Act established Local Management of Schools (LMS) under which funding was devolved from LEAs to individual schools. The Act also led to the creation of the School Management Task Force which worked with LEAs to develop more control over school management training (Bolam, 2004; Bowe, 1993; Bush, 2007).

The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) was established in 1994 (Graham, 1996; Mahony & Hextall, 1997) and while the initial main focus of its work was initial teacher training (ITT) it quickly became highly influential in developing a "whirlwind of initiatives" which impacted on all aspects of teaching training and professional development (Mahony & Hextall, 1997, p. 270). In 1995 the TTA started funding professional development for school managers through the HEADLAMP programme. The HEADLAMP provided funds for newly appointed headteachers to take part in a range of induction courses, mentoring and specific training such as dealing with school budgets from a variety of providers (Crow, 2007). It is worth briefly noting that in the 1980s and early 1990s the focus was on school "management" rather than the current focus on leadership. This was based on the use of business-based language; the move

from management to leadership was championed by the TTA with its publication in 1996 and formal introduction in 1997 of the NPQH based on the Headteacher Standards (Bush, 2008; Gunter, 1999; Law & Glover, 2001; Lodge, 1998; The Teacher Training Agency (TTA), 1997)

The National Standards for Headteachers (now replaced by the National Standards for Excellence for Headteachers (DfE, 2015)) represent a statement about the central importance of school leadership in educational improvement and an attempt to quantify the skills and experience needed when recruiting headteachers. For some this was a worrying encroachment by government (the TTA was an arm's length branch of government or Quango) into the professional nature of teaching and a step towards managerialism and central control over teaching (Graham, 1996). Managerialism is a concept that is associated with a focus on targets, performance management of employees, financial and outcome-focussed accountability and the introduction of quasi-markets (Deem & Brehony, 2005). Others saw the developments as a welcome recognition of the need to invest in proper professional development centred on the evidence-based national standards (Law & Glover, 2001).

The 23-year history of a nationally regulated programme of leadership training for headteachers that has grown into the suite of NPQs is central to the issues of headteacher recruitment and succession planning that this study seeks to examine. The NPQH was aimed at aspiring headteachers, and the first group of candidates started in 1997 and by 2000 over 6,000 candidates had registered for the qualification. Initially the NPQH offered a single route and was designed to take participants around

three years to complete (Office for Standards in Education, 2002). The TTA also developed the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) which was in part designed by the consulting group Hay-Mcber and included the requirement for headteachers to be paired with a business leader from beyond education (Brundrett, 2001).

Ofsted inspected the quality of both the HEADLAMP and NPQH in 2002 and in general were much more positive about the quality of the NPQH than the much more disparate and diverse HEADLAMP programmes (Office for Standards in Education, 2002) which may have contributed to the further moves away from the LEA-funded short courses towards the more centralised NPQH. It is important to note, however, that other surveys of participants in HEADLAMP programmes were more positive and felt that, apart from the administrative issues, the courses were valuable and well delivered (Blandford & Squire, 2000).

In 2000 the NCSL was launched by the New Labour government with a brief to support and deliver leadership development programmes for school leaders (Brundrett, 2006). Bolam (2004) describes the concept of a national college as having been developing over many years with support from various bodies including the main secondary headteachers' union The Secondary Headteacher Association (SHA), now the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL). It initially had three core areas of focus:

- Leadership development (including the NPQH, HEADLAMP and the LPSH)
- Research and development
- Online learning, networks, and information

Greany (2018) explains that the NSCL took over responsibility for the headteacher training programmes from the TTA and this became a core part of its offer (Greany, 2018a).

Bolam (2004) also references the adoption of the programmes developed by the TTA but suggests that the notion of a single national leadership college was new and innovative while many of its initial programmes had been developed by other organisations such as the TTA (Bolam, 2004).

Importantly the NCSL set out to provide leadership development and training for school leaders through five stages of leadership in its Leadership Development Framework (NCSL 2001): emergent leadership, established leadership, entry into headship, advanced leadership and consultant leadership (Bush, 2005). The notion of training for experienced leaders and consultant leaders with roles beyond a single school foreshadow the development of the NPQEL which was introduced in 2017 for leaders in MATs (Lambert, 2018) and is highly relevant to this study.

The history of the various national bodies involved in teaching is littered with starts, mergers and abolitions that follow the appointment of new secretaries of state for education. The network of leadership preparation has now moved from a centralised national college and the oversight of LAs to a more dispersed system of Teaching School Alliances (now Teaching School Hubs) and MATs with a few specialist training providers (Cliffe et al., 2018).

The NCSL not only sought to be a provider for training for school leaders, but also had a clear agenda to grow and become the pre-eminent provider of training, a leading educational research body and the body that established the standards that school

leaders should work to. It regularly sought the views of heads to inform future developments through government-funded surveys (Earley & Evans, 2004).

The Teacher Training Agency was re-launched as the Training and Development Agency for Schools, under the Education Act 2005. As part of its expanded remit, the Training and Development Agency for Schools was responsible for improving the training and development of the entire school workforce.

In a 2011 review of leadership development for the NCSL, Matthews et al. (2011) found that "Despite the balance shifting to school-based leadership development, most of the headteachers and principals involved in this project considered that a system with leading-edge leadership should be served by a leading-edge leadership staff college" (Matthews et al., 2011, p. 6). This report foreshadowed the demise of the NSCL and the move towards the system of teaching schools, and trusts taking over the responsibility for leadership development (Matthews et al., 2011).

In 2012 the Teaching Agency was established as an executive agency of the Department for Education, replacing the Training and Development Agency for Schools and parts of the General Teaching Council for England. The Teaching Agency was responsible for initial teacher training in England, as well as the regulation of the teaching profession. The following year the Teaching Agency merged with the National College for School Leadership to become the National College for Teaching and Leadership (Whitty, 2014).

As the focus for this study is on leadership succession in MATs, it will consider the qualifications aimed at headteachers and executive headteachers; the NPQH and most recently the NPQEL and a number of other executive leadership training

programmes offered by other organisations such the Ambition Institute, The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL).

The NPQH and NPQEL are part of a suite of NPQs comprising:

1. The National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML) for those that are, or are aspiring to be, a middle leader with responsibility for leading a team
2. The National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) for leaders that are, or are aspiring to be, a senior leader with cross-school responsibilities
3. The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) for leaders that are, or are aspiring to be, a headteacher or head of school with responsibility for leading a school
4. The National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL) for leaders that are, or are aspiring to be, an executive headteacher or MAT CEO role with responsibility for leading several schools (DfE, 2019, p. 6)

These qualifications have a content that is laid out by the Department for Education but they are delivered by a range of providers who have to bid for a licence; most of these are Teaching School Alliances (now hubs), established training providers or groups such as dioceses (Department for Education, 2020).

The content of each of the NPQs is grouped into six content areas:

1. Strategy and improvement
2. Teaching and curriculum excellence

3. Leading with impact
4. Working in partnership
5. Managing resources and risks
6. Increasing capability

There are also seven leadership behaviours, common to each NPQ level, which the department asserts set out how the best leaders operate. They are:

1. Commitment
2. Collaboration
3. Personal drive
4. Resilience
5. Awareness
6. Integrity
7. Respect (DfE, 2019)

Both the NPQH and the NPQEL are delivered through a mixture of group teaching, large-scale conferences, and practical assignments that participants complete in their own setting or as part of a placement in another setting which is regarded as an important part of developing a professional network (Baxter & John, 2021; Bush, 2013; Fotheringham et al., 2022; Potter & Chitpin, 2021) and demonstrating leadership outside one's own specific setting. These are assessed by formal written assignments and graded by experienced assessors and can result in failing the qualification. Both programmes also offer participants mentoring and/or coaching in their current role (Bush, 2016). Most of the NPQs offer a mixture of preparation for a

promoted role and training for existing post holders. The process of preparing to take on a more senior role can be described as professional socialisation (Bush, 2013).

The NPQH has always been thought of as the "flagship programme" of the suite, partly because it was the only part that was compulsory until April 2012 (Bush, 2013) and partly due to the status of headship as the pinnacle of the profession, until the advent of MATs at least. The removal of the mandatory status of the NPQH (Lambert, 2018) prompted some to worry that "unqualified" heads could be appointed (Bush, 2016); however, the NPQH and the more recent NPQEL have proved popular; between 2009/10 and 2013/14 8578 people applied for the NPQH programme and 3,909 completed it (UK Parliament, 2015). The programmes were given a boost when in October 2017, teachers and leaders in government designated "opportunity areas" could have the full costs of their national leadership qualifications paid for as part of the government's strategy for closing the "disadvantage gap" in educational performance. The Department for Education established a £10 million scholarship for school leadership development in areas with the some of the highest deprivation and lowest social mobility in England, which includes the 12 "opportunity areas". The funding was available to fund participants taking National Professional Qualifications for Middle Leadership, Senior Leadership, Headship or Executive Leadership (Andrews et al., 2017). In 2018 more than 10,000 people undertook one of the NPQ qualifications (Hinds, 2019).

As part of the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy (Hinds, 2019) the whole suite of NPQs recently underwent a process of reform and a new set of qualifications was launched in September 2021 (DfE, 2020). These include a series of NPQs focussed

on specific areas of teaching rather than general leadership development, areas such as behaviour management, assessment and curriculum development; these are designed to follow on from a new early career framework and form part of an enhanced suite of qualifications (Cowley, 2022; Hinds, 2019).

While there is evidence in the business world that the educational level of CEOs has a positive impact on business performance (Elsharkawy et al., 2018; King et al., 2016), in schools there is little to evaluate the impact of the leadership qualification on school outcomes. Brundrett (2006) reports that only two respondents in his survey out of a sample of 50 schools where staff who had undertaken leadership development programmes through the NCSL and asserted that participation in the programme could be linked directly to improved student outcomes (Brundrett, 2006). Earley and Evans (2004), in a review of a number of studies of the impact of the NCSL programmes, are clear that the positive impact of leadership development programmes is indirect in that in can be found in improvements in school culture and staff performance rather than linked directly to the headteacher (Earley & Evans, 2004).

Where there have been evaluations of the NPQH (it is too soon to have evaluated the impact of the NPQEL which was only launched in 2018), over the years they have largely focussed on the views of participants with some reference to school governors' views of the impact (Jackson & Berkeley, 2020). In an early review of the NPQH, Gunter (1999) asserts that the problem with the first iteration of the qualification was that it focussed on delivering tasks rather than developing leadership characteristics (Gunter, 1999).

In an NCTL research report published in 2013 it was found that participants started the course highly motivated to go to headship and 18 months after completing the programme, 49% were about to take up headships or had done so. Both NPQH graduates and governors felt that completing the NPQH had a positive impact on their schools with staff development, leadership skills including performance management and links with the community being the main areas highlighted. Overall participants were very satisfied with the course (Diamond et al., 2013).

Cliffe et al. (2018) report mixed feelings among a small sample of members of leadership teams with one participant asserting that “with NPQH, you just weighed the folder. If you put enough paper in, then you got the stamp. It wasn’t good enough” (Cliffe et al., 2018, p. 9).

In educational research it has proved very difficult to establish causation between any initiative and pupil outcomes. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has a well-regarded toolkit that rates a range of school-based interventions on their value for money and impact on pupils; learning; it also carries out focussed evidence-based reviews of a range of issues – in the “Quality Assurance of Teachers’ Continuing Professional Development [CPD]” Rapid Evidence Review (2019) it found that professional development in the English educational system has few methods of quality assurance and it is not clear that what there is has a significant impact. This also appears to be the case internationally; with a few notable exceptions such as Ontario the report asserts that “in general, monitoring of CPD quality is undeveloped in many educational systems” (Perry et al., 2019). While there is a consensus that

training, and leadership training is valuable and makes a difference, not only to the individuals, but to the system as whole, it is difficult to establish clear evidence of this.

Professional development is also important for leaders building a professional leadership identity, although there is a debate about whether school leaders define themselves as leaders of the profession with an identity stemming from pedagogy and curriculum or pastoral leadership or as professional leaders with a set of transferable leadership skills (Bøje & Frederiksen, 2021).

It is clear from this overview of school leadership development that the literature in terms of headship training is dated and has struggled to keep up with the changes imposed by various governments. This points to a gap in the literature which this study, in a very modest way, will contribute to in that the level of professional development and views about its efficacy for MAT leaders will be examined.

In May 2022 the government awarded the contract for the newly established National Institute of Teaching to the School Led Development Trust (SLDT); this is an organisation comprised of four academy trusts. The SLDT will provide a range of leadership programmes at all levels including NPQs and training for newly designated National Leaders of Education (NLE) (Male, 2022).

The new suite of NPQs includes the offer of "Early Headship Coaching" which recognises the increasing popularity of coaching/mentoring for school leaders to support their professional development and resilience (Glazzard & Stones, 2021b) and the evidence that it is considered by school leaders to be of value (Boon, 2022; Bryant, 2020).

In addition to the formal national accredited NPQ programmes discussed above there are a number of providers and sector bodies who also offer professional development programmes on a commercial basis, such as ASCL who have developed a “Trust Leaders: Executive Programme”, The Ambition Institute “Trust Leaders programme” and The confederation of School Trusts (CST) who offer the “Masterclasses in Trust Leadership”. Participants in this study made specific reference to all three of these providers as being of value. There is no evidence in the literature of a review of the impact of these courses which are fairly new on the scene and evolving all the time.

In a report for The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Pont et al (2008) found that school leaders who took roles beyond schools in areas such as educational consultancy or administration in government bodies not only contributed to their professional development by giving them an opportunity to share best practice and gain wider experience but also made their career more rewarding and sustainable. This chimes with the long-expressed and widespread view within the wider educational community that sabbaticals should be a really important part of school leaders’ professional development which seems to be gaining some traction at the DfE with a recent announcement of a plan to encourage school leaders to take sabbaticals (Earley, 2020).

Culpin and Male (2022) argue that in addition to the structured learning of programmes such as the NPQEL prospective, trust CEOs need time to develop political literacy and astuteness in developing and using networks and understanding organisational culture (Culpin & Male, 2022).

2.5.2 Networks and professional development

There is now a widespread acceptance that collaboration between school leaders and the development of strong professional networks are important in supporting professional development and improving outcomes in the wider system. Kools and Stoll (2016) neatly capture the role and benefits of networks describing them in this context as "an extended group of people with similar interests or concerns who interact and exchange knowledge for mutual assistance, support and to increase learning" (Kools & Stoll, 2016, p. 5). Katz and Earl (2010) offer this definition of network theory in education: "The theory is that significant changes in pupil learning depend on major changes in the practices and the structures of schools, and these changes will emerge from the professional learning that occurs through interaction within and across schools in networks" (Katz & Earl, 2010, p. 28).

Matthews et al. (2011) identified the importance of the networks and school partnerships in delivering effective leadership development: "the case for school partnerships and the value of schools supporting or leading other schools as a means of both growing leadership capacity and ensuring school improvement is strong" (Matthews et al., 2011, p. 5).

There is a growing focus on networks of MAT CEOs and the government's focus on the "Self Improving School System" and "System Leadership" both of which rely on professional and personal networks of school leaders and a networked system of schools (Hadfield & Ainscow, 2018; Harris & Jones, 2020; Harris et al., 2021; Southworth & Quesnay, 2005). Due to the widespread overlap of Teaching School Alliances and MATs and the sponsorship of "failing" schools by MATs there is a clear

connection between MATs and wider system leadership. The importance of the networks and professional standing or "capital" of the school leaders who established and, in many cases, still run MATs is central to their development. Daly and Finnigan (2012) highlight the importance of social capital in educational networks, particularly the development of trusted and reciprocated relationships between educational leaders in different institutions in bring about systemwide improvement (Daly & Finnigan, 2012).

Greany and Higham (2018) recognise the importance of the developing networks in education but raise concerns about their influence and the motivations of the system leaders within them: "they reflect complex local responses to hierarchical and market governance, as schools work together to try to meet accountability requirements and/or to protect their positioning in local status hierarchies" (Greany & Higham, 2018, p. 17).

Matthews et al. (2011) also warned of the risk of networks and particularly academy chains becoming exclusive in their professional development and limiting the access to this from schools outside these structures and also becoming too inward looking and lacking experience beyond their organisation (Matthews et al., 2011).

Armstrong et al. (2020), in a detailed review of the literature on school collaboration, identify trust and social capital as key elements of successful collaborative networks (Armstrong et al., 2021).

The government is placing collaboration between school leaders and academy trusts at the heart of its reforms with an expectation of collaboration through teaching school hubs and between academy trusts (Department for Education, 2021a; DfE,

2022a). Indeed the 2022 schools' white paper states that "Teachers and leaders in strong trusts can form communities of practice, sharing evidence-based approaches and benefitting from high quality professional development to improve outcomes for children" (DfE, 2022a, p. 44). In a study of 11 trust CEOs, Simon et al. (2021) found that most had led Teaching School Alliances and came into trust leadership with a history of leading collaboration between schools (C. A. Simon et al., 2021).

In her ethnographic study of a single trust CEO, Hughes (2020) describes in detail the importance of the "realist" networks of the CEO and the way in which these are used to inform policy, share resources and enhance collaboration (Hughes, 2022).

There is clear evidence, particularly from the US, that the Covid pandemic has increased the reliance of school leaders on online networks in addition to the informal learning or networking that takes place during other professional development opportunities (Rehm et al., 2021; Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020).

It is also interesting to note that new organisations that promote online collaboration between school leaders have come to prominence during the pandemic, such as The Confederation of School Trusts and The New Schools Network which provides a well-thought-of space for networking and collaboration for trust CEOs (Long, 2021; Taneva et al., 2021; Woods et al., 2021).

The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of networks as a mechanism for supporting school leader wellbeing and building resilience in which the authors make developing peer support through strong networks key to reducing principal burnout (DeMatthews et al., 2021). This adds to a body of research over several years, such as the study of Ontario principals, that identifies that school leaders' networks can have

a positive impact on their sense of wellbeing and self-efficacy (Leithwood & Azah, 2016).

In Chapters 4 and 5 the CEOs interviewed for this study all reflect on the value and impact of formal professional qualifications in their career development and some identify the supportive professional networks with colleagues developed during the course as being a significant aspect of the process (Armstrong et al., 2021; Cowie & Crawford, 2009; Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020; Woodland & Mazur, 2018). Some of them describe the value of coaching and mentoring in supporting them in their role.

Professional networks and the importance of learning from and with colleagues is a key area for consideration as the educational landscape and structures develop (Woodland & Mazur, 2018) and are also discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

It has also become common for school leaders to take the opportunity to work as Ofsted inspectors as part of their professional development, with around 800 currently working as inspectors with a clear focus on preparing their own schools and or trusts for future inspections (Baxter, 2013; Carr, 2022; Ofsted, 2021; Waldegrave & Simons, 2014).

Coaching and mentoring are a specific aspect of peer support related to the development of professional networks that have become a widely used element of school leader professional development. Glazzard and Stones (2021), in a study of professional development and specifically coaching and how it supports resilience in 16 English headteachers, found that “The data demonstrate that access to professional learning is a protective characteristic which supports resilience. To emphasise the important role of coaching and professional supervision in supporting

headteacher resilience, we have included this as a separate layer within our proposed model of resilience. The use of coaching, external professional supervision and professional development led by headteachers are strategies which participants particularly valued in this study (Glazzard & Stones, 2021a, p. 22). Speirs and Berkeley (2020) assert that the collegial culture of the teaching profession makes this particularly appealing. Boon (2022) finds that school leaders in Singapore report significant benefits from having coaches as part of their professional development (Boon, 2022). Many school leaders now make use of this and it has been widely included in a number of the professional development courses discussed above, such as the ASCL Executive Leadership programme, the Ambition Institute NPQEL and SSAT courses (Hobson & Sharp, 2005; Speirs & Berkeley, 2020).

The growth of coaching and mentoring for school leaders follows its rapid rise in business leadership development over many years (de Janasz & Peiperl, 2015; Hawkins, 2008; Whitmore, 2010).

Matthews et al. (2011), in their review of leadership development, found that "The best school leaders provide strong leadership role models and share their expertise through effective coaching and mentoring" (Matthews et al., 2011, p. 7).

One of the benefits of leaders investing in their professional development, building effective networks and working with mentors and or coaches is building their professional credibility as well as their skills. Credibility is considered one of the key components of effective leadership (Campbell, 1993) and by some as the single most important factor in a school leader's quest for school improvement (Boyd et al.); they

go on to assert that along with success and trust, it is fundamental in developing partnerships (such as trusts).

Farling et al. (1999) define credibility as "the quality that enables one to be believed" (Farling et al., 1999, p. 57). Little and Green (2021) describe credibility as being achieved through "trustworthiness and competence" (Little & Green, 2021, p. 2). The identification of trust and trustworthiness between leaders is a key feature in school collaborative networks (Armstrong et al., 2021).

The credibility of the CEO is also thought to directly influence the credibility of the whole organisation in the corporate setting, with Men (2011) asserting that the concept of CEO credibility, which includes both expertise and trustworthiness, influences how employees evaluate the organisation's reputation (Men, 2012). Jakobsen et al. (2022) conceptualise leadership credibility as relating to five core concepts:

1. The credibility of the leadership initiative
2. The perceived credibility of the leader
3. The level of investment in the initiative by the leader
4. The "formal rules" relating to the initiative
5. The informal decision rules relating to the leader's professional values (Jakobsen et al., 2022, p. 3)

Jakobsen et al. (2021) state that the leader's perceived credibility stems from their previous behaviour, personal characteristics, their career history and position

(Jakobsen et al., 2022), while Lauzon and Bégin (2007) describe it as the sum of accumulated skills in key areas and professional recognition by peers (Lauzon & Bégin, 2007). Williams et al. (2018) consider the relative importance of charisma and credibility in transformational leadership; they argue that charisma has often been seen as more important but with declining trust in public bodies, credibility is becoming more important. They describe how credible leaders can make use of their specific knowledge to deal with the challenges that they face, and that this knowledge of context inspires trust and confidence.

The importance of the credibility of leaders in educational settings was particularly highlighted in the COVID pandemic when there was an urgent need for compelling effective communication and rapid organisational change (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020; Netolicky, 2020).

2.6 Multi Academy Trusts

A Multi Academy Trust (MAT) is a group of academy schools that has a single board of trustees, and a single CEO who is also the accounting officer is the employer of all the staff in each of its schools and receives the central government funding or a General Annual Grant (GAG) for all the schools (Simkins, 2015). MATs vary considerably in size and geographical spread but they share a similar model of governance (Baxter & Floyd, 2019). Academies are publicly funded schools that are independent of LA control and have a number of “freedoms” in relation to the national curriculum, admissions and teachers’ pay and conditions (Heilbronn, 2016). Carter (2020) defines them simply as “a charitable organisation which oversees the

running of multiple schools in England with 'academy' status" (Carter David, 2020, p. 11).

MATs are a very significant part of the current education landscape and debate. There have been many stories of failures, educational, financial, and ethical (Perraudin, 2017; Stewart, 2009). The current government continues to promote the growth of trusts and has recently made it a condition of securing additional financial support that schools consider joining a MAT.

While MATs vary widely in terms of number of schools/students and geographical spread, most trusts are still relatively new and small with fewer than five schools (Wilkins, 2017). There is considerable geographical variation in the system with "mixed and fragmented patterns … in a highly dynamic process" (Simkins, 2015, p. 7). This is still a period of growth in MATs and change in the education system and therefore further research is needed to understand the experience of staff involved and the process of developing distinctive MAT cultures.

Bowe (1993) makes it clear that the idea of entrepreneurship in education predates the academy movement and goes back to the introduction of Local Management of Schools (LMS) in the 1988 Education Reform Act and as part of the wider development of the New Right approach to public policy (Bowe, 1993).

Hatcher (2006) sets the establishment of sponsored academies in the wider context of "re-agenting" the education system and a long-term trend of increased private sector involvement in education through a range of areas such as proving services to LEAs, setting up private schools and sponsoring Academies and the Blair government's

policy of creating a business-friendly environment in the public sector (Hatcher, 2006).

In a 2007 study of 58 early Academies, Woods et al. (2007) focus on the role of business sponsors that formed an important part of the early Academy movement and sets this in the context of the wider drive by governments to have greater involvement from the private sector in public serves "to imbue public services with a more entrepreneurial spirit. It has been argued that educational institutions specifically need entrepreneurial leadership that reflects something of the innovative and risk taking capacity of private business" (Woods et al., 2007, p. 238). The reference to risk-taking is a significant one here that is picked up throughout this thesis and is reflected in the comments of some of the trust CEOs interviewed in Chapter 5. The study is important in addressing the origins of the more business-focussed attitudes to risk in school leadership but is dated in that it focusses on the Academies that were sponsored by businesses or individual business leaders and focusses on the designation of "Specialist School" which no longer exists. The private sponsorship of academies has not grown significantly other than by existing sponsored trusts growing and the majority of current sponsored academies are sponsored by lead schools or trusts. Just one of the CEOs in this study is working in a trust that is sponsored by business sponsors who invested £2million to found it. Where Woods et al. (2007) is most relevant is in showing the origins of the notions of entrepreneurial leadership and risking-taking that has been adopted by more recent non-business trust leaders.

Daniels (2012) in his study of senior leaders' attitudes to entrepreneurship in 24 early academies and his own experience of being an early academy principal highlights the policy of introducing entrepreneurial leadership as a mechanism for driving innovation and risk-taking to raise standards in schools (Daniels, 2012).

Greany and Higham (2018) identify that "school-level actors are being encouraged to enhance their own positions and the positioning of their school(s), both by working entrepreneurially to sell services in new markets in school improvement and by working in new regional and sub-regional governing networks"(Greany & Higham, 2018).

Susan Cousin's (2019) longitudinal study of trust leaders and headteachers within trusts between 2009 and 2015 addresses this in terms of the early stages of academy growth. She reports a change in attitudes and motivation of the "system leaders" over time with an initial wave of positivity and moral purpose being replaced by a sense that trust leaders had been captured by the political agenda and more focussed on their status and becoming more entrepreneurial and competitive rather than ethically motivated professionals (Cousin, 2019).

MATs have a variety of starting points; some are established when a school (usually deemed to be unsuccessful or failing) is sponsored by either another school, an existing academy chain or other sponsor such as a faith group. In these situations the ethos and culture of the sponsor is clearly very significant in determining the overall culture of the MAT and changing the culture of the sponsored school (Gibson, 2015).

The purpose of this study is to add to the growing field of research into MATs and organisational culture and to build on and follow up (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006) on

the work of others in the field. It seeks to address the gap in the literature relating to founding CEOs of MATs and the succession to a next generation of trust leaders. It will also investigate the level and quality of leadership development designed to equip them for this role.

The aim of this literature review is to explore some of the literature relating to MATs and their development as well as issues around school culture and professional identity. It is in the overlapping of these well researched areas that this study is located. There is a considerable and growing body of literature about MATs; much of it focuses on the political background, the models of governance, international comparisons, and the results obtained by MATs. There is little that focusses on the lived experience of staff who have been through the process of establishing or joining a trust. There is a particular gap in the research around the small local trusts that dominate the system in terms of numbers but are significantly absent in much of the discussion of the system and the policy development where the large national and regional trusts are the focus.

2.6.1 Multi Academy Trusts timeline and legislation

Table 2.Legislative timeline after Sandals & Bryant (2014)

	Conservative Government (1979-1997)	**Labour Government (1997-2010)**	**Coalition Government (2010-2015)**	**Conservative Government (2015-Present)**
School Autonomy	1988 - Grant maintained schools 1988 - Schools gain control over curriculum, staffing, discipline	1999 - Excellence in Cities (later London Challenge) launched. 2002 - The first sponsored academies open 2006 - The first national leaders of	2010 - Academies Act 2011 - First teaching schools designated 2012 - Schools take responsibility for initial training	2018 - Statutory Careers guidance 2022 – "Opportunity for all Strong schools with great teachers for your child" –

		education appointed	through school direct.	ambition for fully acdemised system.
School Funding	1988 - Local management of schools	1999-2001 - Greater delegation to schools 2006 - Ring-fenced dedicated schools grant introduced	2013 - Preparation for national funding formula 2013 - Changes to school funding, increased delegation	2018 - Introduction of national funding formula
School Accountability	1988 - New assessment framework introduced 1992 - Ofsted established, performance tables introduced	1998 - School Standards and Framework Act	2010 - White paper describes LA role as champion and commissioner 2011 - ebacc introduced 2012 - New inspection framework 2013 - Changes to floor standards 2014 - Wolf review of performance tables and eligibility	2015 - Reformed GCSEs first taught 2016 - Progress 8 and attainment 8 introduced as key performance measures 2020 - T levels introduced 2022 – Parent pledge in "Opportunity for all Strong schools with great teachers for your child"
Role of Local Authorities	1979-81 - Greater restrictions placed on local authority education spending	2004 - Children Act 2005 - LAs required to hold a completion for new schools 2009 - LAs gain responsibility for 16-19 education and training	2011 - New schools opened by LAs must be academies 2011-14 - Changes to LAs commissioning for SEND	2018 – Working together to safeguard children 2022 – "Opportunity for all Strong schools with great teachers for your child". Opportunity for LAs to start MATs

The establishment of MATs in the 2010 Academies Act is part of a lengthy process of increasing school autonomy and reducing the influence and responsibility of LAs as shown in the table above (Sandals & Bryant, 2014, p. 13). This process really started

with the introduction of grant maintained schools in 1988 in the Education Reform Act which was part of the wider process of developing “Quasi-Markets” in education by establishing greater devolution of school management from LAs and introducing greater parental choice into education (Walford, 2000). The term “Local Management of Schools” (LMS) was also introduced in the 1988 Act to indicate a move away from the perceived bureaucracy of LAs towards more self-governance of schools (Anderson, 2000) and this saw the beginnings of the idea of a more entrepreneurial style of school leadership. Bowe saw this as “a strand in Tory thinking that seeks to alter significantly the relationship between the state social policy and institutional management” (Bowe, 1993, p. 37), and a key part of the thinking of the “New Right” influenced by Hayek and Friedman. Bowe specifically refers to the development of entrepreneurialism as necessary “as part of the new management culture of the school as ‘social enterprise’ that is a releasing of the entrepreneurial skills of individuals within the organisation” (Bowe, 1993, p. 39). This puts in context the notion of entrepreneurial academy leaders as something that has been developing since the 1988 Education Reform Act. Bowe uses an example of LMS in one school to identify concerns about the skills of the school leaders and the time and effort being taken away from core education functions (Bowe, 1993).

This process of decentralisation and greater autonomy for schools has had significant implications for the “middle tier” which is defined by Greany (2022) as “any aspect of statutory or non-statutory support or and influence which operates between individual schools and central government” (Greany, 2022, p. 249). In the context of this study, this represents the partial replacement of the functions of LEAs by MATS.

In a detailed study of the comparative costs of the MAT model vs the LA model, Bubb et al. (2019) identify four key functions carried out by the middle tier.

Finance	Accountability	Access	People
Allocating finances Accounting Financial monitoring Finance returns Intervening in financial issues Audit Allocating grants Bidding for grants	Monitoring standards School improvement Complaints External reviews Governance support and intervention Liaison with DfE Agencies	Admissions and appeals Curriculum SEN Educational welfare Place planning Buildings and grounds	Recruitment Training and development Initial teacher training NQT induction Human resources

Table 3 four key functions carried out by the middle tier (Bubb et al., 2019, p. 14)

The idea that the LA is being removed from the local school system by the government reforms is challenged by Crawford et al. (2020) who describe it more as a continuous redefinition with LAs exploring their role in the "middle tier" and seeking to develop a more "multi-dimensional middle" along with the other regional and national policy bodies such as the DfE, EFSA, Regional Directors, Ofsted and MATs (Crawford et al., 2022).

The notion of freeing schools from the "heavy hand of local bureaucracy" is part of an attempt to drive up standards in schools by encouraging competition between schools and giving parents the chance to choose schools that they prefer, thus enabling schools perceived as more successful to grow and those deemed as failures to either improve or close (Ainscow, 2012). It also represents a deliberate intervention designed to break down the established hierarchies in the education system and free schools from bureaucratic control (Salokangas & Chapman, 2014). The role of LAs as school improvement providers is the one that Crawford et al. (2020) see as being the area that they have stepped back from most obviously with the three LAs in their study all feeling that this was now an area where they cannot compete with TSAs and MATs as their in-house capacity has almost totally disappeared (Crawford et al., 2022).

There is a considerable body of evidence in the literature that many feel that the degree of deregulation involved in the establishment of academies went too far and that there were and possibly still are inadequate levels of accountability and scrutiny and a weakened system of checks and balances (Greany & Scott, 2014a). Some argue that the entire academy system is illegitimate and that there is widespread opposition to it. Since the introduction of the academies policy in 2000, however, there has been a strong presence of anti-academy feeling among the British public (Wilkins, 2012, p. 12) and the sense that there is a need for a whole new architecture of local school governance (Allen & Gann, 2022). It is clear that the DfE through the ESFA has tightened controls and regulation particularly with regard to governance through its annual revisions of the *Academies Financial Handbook* now simply the *Academies Handbook*.

One of the oft-cited reasons for the promotion of academy chains is the idea that they can save money through economies of scale in back office functions (Hill et al., 2012); however, this is hotly contested. In a study using data for all state-funded secondary schools in England for the academic years 2009/10, 2011/12 and 2015/16 Davies et al. are clear that the data do not on average support the claims of financial efficiency (Davies et al., 2021).

The key role of parental choice as a mechanism for driving up standards in public services and particularly in education is a theme that developed from John Major's government and on through the New Labour years under Blair and Brown (Wilkins, 2017). The establishment of grant maintained schools alongside the introduction of "open enrolment" or parental choice about where to send their children established a market in education that was very competitive when compared to other international school systems (Clark, 2009).

Prior to this "Neo-Liberal" movement towards marketisation in education (Bowe, 1993), the dominant paradigm had been one of co-operation or partnership between central and local government, and to a lesser extent the teaching profession, in the administration of the education system (Ozga, 2009). Running alongside the drive for autonomy was a focus on "outcomes" and accountability, notably demonstrated by the 1992 introduction of School League tables, that were designed to facilitate parental choice and so support the development of markets by giving parents the information needed to make informed choices (Leckie & Goldstein, 2017).

The academies system in its current form originally started to enlist the support of successful business leaders, church groups and charities to get involved in a new

greatly de-regulated system that was intended to foster creativity and competition to drive up standards for the most disadvantaged students predominantly in the inner cities (Hutchings et al., 2015).

Speaking in March 2000 the then Education Secretary David Blunkett introduced the "City Academies" as a successor to the "City Technology Colleges" introduced by the previous Conservative government and influenced by the "Charter Schools" movement in the USA (Carvel J, 2000).

There are limited similarities between academies in the UK and charter schools in the US; while academies have on the whole not taken up many of the "freedoms" they are legally permitted to and in many ways do not differ greatly from LA schools in most aspects, charter schools are much more likely to be run by private companies, to make profits and employ non-unionised staff (Bankston et al., 2013; Eyles et al., 2017). There is a much more substantial body of research on the development and impact of charter schools and charter school chains than that relating to MATs (Salokangas & Chapman, 2014).

Parallels are often drawn with the Swedish schools reforms which introduced parental choice through a voucher system and permitted state schools to be run as for-profit institutions (Sahlgren, 2011). Those who are ideologically opposed to the UK academy system have frequently sought to suggest that profit-making schools are the obvious end point of the reforms (Martin & Dunlop, 2018; Moorhead, 2013; Shah, 2018). In 2014 the Education Secretary Nicky Morgan made clear that there were no government plans to allow state-funded schools to make profits and this remains illegal (Warrell & Parker, 2014).

Following Blunkett's announcement, it was in September 2002 that the first sponsored academies opened. The initial academies had individual sponsors such as Lord Harris of Peckham. Two years later in September 2004 the United Learning Trust (ULT) took on its second and third sponsored academies and established the first MAT (Hill et al., 2012).

The academy movement can be divided into two distinct phases: the earlier period just after 2002 when academies were part of a limited localised school improvement effort focussed on specific areas of inner cities and the post 2010 period when they became a mass movement to reform the entire national school system (Eyles et al., 2018). This period not only had a significant impact on the schools system but also on local government generally with responsibility for schools passing to MATs and Regional Schools Commissioners and a diminution of the LAs' capacity and status (Simkins, 2015).

In the 2010 Academies Act, Michael Gove the Secretary of State for Education, allowed the governing body of each maintained school in England to apply to the Secretary of State to convert the school to an academy. The Act also gave the Secretary of State the power to convert schools that are "eligible for intervention". This legislation substantially changed the scope of the academies programme with its ambition for all schools to become academies (Eyles et al., 2018). The government also established "free schools" – new schools set up by parents, teachers, charities, universities, business or community or faith groups where there is parental demand. In 2015 the Prime Minister David Cameron announced that he intended all schools to become academies (Stone J, 2015) although the government later stepped back from

this commitment following significant resistance from parents, teachers, trade unions and local authorities (Eyles et al., 2018).

In November 2017 government statistics showed that there were over 20,100 state-funded schools in England. This included 6,100 academies, of which 1,668 were stand-alone academies and 4,432 schools were in MATs. Since 2016 there has been an increase in the number of academies that were both stand-alone academies (from 1,618) and those in MATs (from 4,140) (DfE, 2018). It is important to recognise that the situation is very different between primary and secondary schools; in 2016 82% of primaries remained under LA control and there is a concern that primary schools risk being left out of the academisation process, particularly small rural primary schools which appear reluctant to join MATs (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017).

The then government expected that over the next five years the number of MATs would grow even further. The expectation was that most schools which convert to academy status would join a MAT. The Education Select Committee, however, has raised a number of concerns about the performance of MATs and the way in which the system had developed with some trusts growing too quickly and with insufficient attention given to their capacity and sustainability (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017).

The Education and Adoption Act 2016 required all schools rated “inadequate” by Ofsted to become academies. The Department of Education also took new authority to remove the headteachers of schools deemed failing and to prevent those opposed to academisation from “obstructing” takeovers (Shah, 2018). The current situation is

very diverse with considerable difference in the rate of conversion to academies in different parts of the country sometimes between neighbouring LAs in the same regions (Smith & Abbott, 2014).

The 2022 schools' white paper published by the DfE (DfE, 2022b) represents the most recent move towards the creation of a fully academised schools system in England with its clear statement that the government intends all schools to be part of a "strong" academy trust by 2030. A strong trust is defined as one that has either 10 schools or educates 7,500 students and meets a number of quality provisions. This is currently driving the growth of academy trusts as most of the just over 50% of primary schools that have not yet become academies and the secondary standalone academies begin to start the process of finding an academy trust to join. It is also driving smaller trusts to consider joining with larger trusts to increase their school improvement capacity and benefit from greater economies of scale. This process has been compared to "mergers and acquisitions" in the business sector (Greany & McGinity, 2021b; Hodges, 2020). It has also given LAs limited opportunities to establish new trusts in areas where there is not sufficient trust capacity. This process is described by Male (2022) as the "rise and rise of academy trusts" and emphasises that the model is here to stay (Male, 2022, p. 316).

By January 2022, numbers of academy trusts had grown to 9,837 in England, for the first-time providing schooling for over half of school-aged children. Around 1,300 of the trusts were standalone trusts with the others in around 1,200 MATs (Culpin & Male, 2022).

It remains contested as to whether MATs actually raise standards in schools as intended, with some authors asserting clear positive impacts, notably Hill (2012) in the 2012 NCSL publication "The growth of academy chains: implications for leaders and leadership" finding that in 2008/09 and 2010/11 secondary academies improved their GCSE results faster than non-academy schools and also that the Ofsted inspection outcomes of academies in chains of three or more schools were generally better than other comparable schools (Hill et al., 2012).

In a research paper for the Education Policy Institute, Andrews (2018) found that while being within a "high performing school group" does predict improved performance at both primary and secondary phase, that group could be either an academy trust or an LA. The report shows that while the highest performing groups are mainly academy chains (14/20) there are also significant examples of trusts that are seriously underperforming and have been forced to close and give up their schools (Andrews, 2018). It could be argued that this shows a strength of the system in that failing trusts can be and have been closed while this is not possible with LAs. Indeed increasing the challenge to underperforming LAs is one of the four key recommendations along with collected performance data for trusts and LAs and sharing capacity and support for failing trusts and LAs (Andrews, 2018).

"Academy chains are a positive development within the English education system. They are bringing innovation and systematic improvement and helping to raise attainment in some of the most deprived parts of the country. They are nurturing an able new generation of school leaders with experience and expertise in leading in

different contexts. They are evolving new structures and roles for executive leaders" (Hill et al., 2012, p. 102).

Eyles and Machin (2019) in a study of "poorly performing" schools in the first wave of conversions in the 2000s reported significant positive improvements in secondary school pupil performance after converting to academy status with stronger improvements for pupils in urban areas (Eyles & Machin, 2019), although this is contrasted with the outcome of another study of the first primary schools that became academies in England (between 2010/11 and 2014/15 by the same authors) that identified no evidence of improved pupil performance due to conversion to academy status (Eyles et al., 2017).

There is some evidence that schools that are in chains for longer show the greatest improvement in outcomes and this does suggest the system works (Machin & Vernoit, 2011).

In a 2019 study of 41 MATs, Ofsted found that school leaders working in trusts reported that "Respondents in our project were generally very positive about being part of a MAT" (Ofsted, 2019, p. 14) with a range of generally agreed benefits such as dealing with back office functions effectively, collaboration and data sharing, leadership development and staff training, recruitment and retention and additional support and leadership capacity. This finding is supported by Greany (2018): "Overall, the findings from the survey and case studies indicate that the great majority of middle and senior leaders within schools that are in MATs and federations are positive about the benefits that these structures bring" (Greany, 2018b, p. 169). The respondents in the Ofsted survey also identified concerns about the loss of decision-

making for school leaders, a lack of clarity about the role of local governing bodies, and the financial implications (Ofsted, 2019).

In the final report of a long-term study on the impact of academy chains on the performance of disadvantaged students for The Sutton Trust, Hutchings and Francis (2018) found that while there is considerable variation between chains with some showing a strong positive impact overall, the data show that, in comparison to the national pattern, the overall performance of disadvantaged pupils in sponsored academies in our analysis worsened slightly from 2013 to 2016, but recovered in the 2017 GCSE data. They suggest that there is evidence that school improvement in chains takes more than three years (Hutchings & Francis, 2018).

In a comprehensive supplement to the study "Hierarchy, Markets and Networks: Analysing the 'self-improving school led system' agenda in England and the implications for schools" (Greany & Higham, 2018), 'Multi-academy Trusts Do they make a difference to pupil outcomes?' Bernardinelli et al. (2018) produce a detailed analysis of the impact of the size, status and phase of academy trusts on pupil outcomes that is shown below in Tables 4, 5 and 6

Table 4 Outcomes of schools in MATS by phase:

	Primary Schools (in MATs)	Secondary Schools (in MATs)
Compared to equivalent standalone academies	No significance but positive difference	No significance, and neutral difference

Compared to equivalent maintained schools	Significant and positive	No significance but positive difference

Table 5 Outcomes of schools in MATs, by academy status (converter or sponsor-led):

	Converter	Sponsor-led
Primary schools in MATs, compared to equivalent standalone academies	No significance but positive difference	[no matched sample]
Secondary schools in MATs, compared to equivalent standalone academies	No significance, and neutral difference	No significance but positive difference
Primary schools in MATs, compared to equivalent maintained schools	Significant and positive	No significance, and neutral difference
Secondary schools in MATs, compared to equivalent standalone academies	Significant and positive	No significance, and neutral difference

Table 6 Outcomes of schools in MATs, by MAT size:

	MAT size by number of schools				
	2	3	4-6	7-15	16+
Primaries in MATs, by standalone academies	No significance but positive difference	**Significant and positive**	No significance but positive difference	No significance but positive difference	No significance, but negative difference
Secondaries in MATs, by standalone academies	No significance but positive difference	No significance, but negative difference	No significance, and neutral difference	No significance but positive difference	**Significant and negative**
Primaries in MATs, by maintained schools	No significance but positive difference	**Significant and positive**	**Significant and positive**	**Significant and positive**	No significance, but negative difference
Secondaries in MATs, by maintained schools	**Significant and positive**	No significance but positive difference	No significance but positive difference	No significance but positive difference	**Significant and negative**

Tables 4,5 &6 Impact of MATs (Bernardinelli et al., 2018, pp. 34-35)

The analysis above shows just how complex it is to determine whether MATs raise standards as there is such a diverse system of trust structures and variety of times that schools have been within trusts.

In a comprehensive study of the literature relating to school-to-school collaboration Armstrong et al. (2021) assert that while it is too early to establish whether various school collaborative structures (MATs, federations, teaching schools) improve student outcomes, there is compelling evidence that they improve teaching and learning and pedagogy and also that they are key drivers for staff professional development (Armstrong et al., 2021). It could be argued that as there is evidence of the impact of professional development on improving teaching and staff attitudes (Earley & Porritt, 2014), although this association is contested by Burroughs et al. (2019) who identify the level of teacher experience, subject knowledge as more significant with and a degree of professional learning most relevant for maths teachers, as having a positive impact on student outcomes (Burroughs et al., 2019) that ultimately school collaborative models could have a positive impact on student outcomes.

The integrity of the MAT system has been challenged by many authors and commentators who highlight the high-profile failure of a number of academy trusts such as Durand Academy Trust, Perry Beeches, and the Lilac Sky Trust (Ball, 2018; Vaughan, 2016). There have been a number of local campaigns against academies and the academisation of local schools (Hatcher & Jones, 2006). Mansell (2016) identifies a number of examples of conflicts of interest, poor governance and financial mismanagement in academy trusts (Mansell, 2016).

In a report for the Education Select Committee, Greany and Scott (2014) found that conflicts of interest were common in academy trusts and raised particular concerns about related party transactions where trustees or senior staff provided paid-for services to the academy. They also highlighted concerns that the auditors and regulators needed to develop their skills and capacity to oversee the system (Greany & Scott, 2014b).

Financial concerns about the higher salaries of trust CEOs and the increasingly large trust central teams are identified by Bubb et al. (2019) when specifically compared to non-academy schools and when considering the "middle tier" in international comparisons. They recommend an urgent review and simplification of the currently muddled system. This poses a serious challenge to those who have argued that MATs offer economies of scale and a more cost-effective system that the LA-based historic model (Bubb et al., 2019).

Davies et al. (2021), in a study of data for all state-funded secondary schools in England for the academic years 2009/10, 2011/12 and 2015/16, find no evidence to support the assertion that MATS generate economies of scale and raise concerns that spending on "educational support" and teaching costs are lower in trusts while central costs are high (Davies et al., 2021).

West and Wolfe (2018) argue that the system has not produced the benefits that advocates of it suggested and that academies should be permitted to convert back to become LA-maintained schools and that LAs should take the overall control of the academies back from the Regional Schools Commissioners (now Regional Directors).

They highlight concerns about excessive salaries for trust CEOs and excessive control over the curriculum and admissions (Anne West & David Wolfe, 2018).

It is not the purpose of this study to form a judgement about whether academy trusts are effective in improving standards or other areas or whether they are a public good in general. It is also important to reflect that there was no golden age of LA control of education when standards were universally high and there was no financial mismanagement or fraud in LAs. There are considerable concerns about the financial oversight of LAs with "a growing recognition that the arrangements for local public audit and public assurance are no longer fit for purpose in England" (Murphy et al., 2023, p. 242) and older data suggesting that fraud cost LAs £135million in 2010 (Authorities et al., 2010).

2.7 School culture

2.7.1 The study of organisational culture

Organisational culture beyond education has been extensively studied, with Edgar Schein pre-eminent in the field. Schein gives a great deal of attention to the role of leaders in initiating and sustaining cultural change. He identifies the significance of the role of the founding leader in forming and establishing a culture; this is of particular relevance in this study of MAT founding CEOs as most MATs are still young organisations and led by their founder (Schein, 2010). Schein also highlights the anxiety which staff can feel during periods of change and again reminds us of the importance of how people feel about the organisation they work in and the changes it goes through. While many studies of change management focus on the strategic management of the change process and the importance of the implementation of

plans there is less attention paid to the emotional response of the staff involved in a significant change. This is clearly identified in the Kübler-Ross grief cycle that is increasing referenced in studies of change management (Kearney, 2002). This recognition is important in the study of leadership succession in schools and MATs and will be explored throughout this study.

Schein's concept of "Temporary Cultural Islands" (Schein, 2010, p. 390) is another useful way of understanding how organisations that grow from mergers can manage cultural change, with its recognition of the importance of small-scale micro cultures with members of staff enabled to engage in a meaningful dialogue about their feelings during the process.

2.7.2 Definitions

There are a range of definitions of organisational culture; some that focus on specific areas such as the rituals, ceremonies and symbols (Deal & Peterson, 2016) or indeed the design of the buildings and the branding of the school, while most agree that shared beliefs, and shared assumptions of the members of the organisation (Van Houtte, 2005) are the common thread in most definitions (Schein, 2010). The 2004 study by the Hay Group "A Culture for Learning" defined culture as "the shared beliefs and values of a school; what people agree is true and what people agree is right" (Hobby, 2004, p. 2). At its simplest level, it is often summarised as just "the way we do things round here".

It is not the intention of this study to produce or agree on a single definition of school culture, rather as Prosser (1999) suggests that since definitions of culture are often

very general and all embracing “they are of little worth and convey little in terms of the meanings attributed”. Prosser (1999) goes on to say that:

> “future studies of school culture would be better served by avoiding reliance on definitions and by placing greater emphasis on clarifying its meaning within the context of use.” (Prosser, 1999, p. 9)

2.7.3 School culture

The history of the study of school culture is neatly outlined in the first chapter of *School Culture* (Prosser, 1999), particularly the plethora of terms that were used interchangeably to discuss broadly the same thing: climate, culture, ethos and others. The distinction between climate and culture is described as being an ontological one with quantitative researchers focussing on measuring “climate” and qualitative researchers studying culture. Indeed Prosser concludes that since definitions of culture are frequently generalised and designed to encapsulate so much “they are of little worth and convey little in terms of the meanings attributed” (Prosser, 1999, p. 9). This seems to be an eminently sensible approach rather than wading through the myriad variations of definitions. Van Houtte (2005) believes that the distinction between climate and culture lies in whether it is a perception of what other members of the organisation believe about the organisation and how its members will behave (climate) or whether it refers to an individual’s set of beliefs and values within the organisation (culture). He regards climate as a wider concept that encompasses culture and deals with perceptions of the organisation rather than specifically the deeper underlying beliefs and assumptions that constitute climate (Van Houtte,

2005). The distinction between climate and culture is also examined in the Hay Group report (Hobby, 2004) which includes a useful appendix that separates climate and culture by defining climate as "short term and transactional" whereas culture is defined as a "long term, transformational feature of any institution" (Hobby, 2004, p. 81).

School culture is a term that has frequently been attached to studies of school improvement. Stoll (1998) makes it clear that culture in schools is situationally specific, depending on the age of the organisation, the external context, the school phase (primary or secondary), the students' socio-economic background and societal changes. The importance of the stage in an organisation's life is also highlighted by Schein in his detailed study of the cultural significance of the founder of an organisation and their beliefs and values (Schein, 2010). Both Stoll and Schein make clear the centrality of leaders in setting, maintaining and changing culture (Stoll, 1998).

Harris (2018) uses a study of the use of language in a leadership team meeting in a Queensland secondary school to identify aspects of school culture. She claims that school culture is not solely derived from specific policies, events or plans but that staff conversations and in particular leadership conversations not only reflect the culture of the school but by their shared assumptions and use of specific terms define and form the culture (Harris, 2018).

Angelides and Ainscow (2000) highlight the significance of "Critical incidents" in both shaping and revealing school culture and propose that by adopting a structured reflection process after critical incidents in a school the school can understand the

culture that is influential in determining the response to the critical incident (Angelides & Ainscow, 2000). Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) also identify the opportunity for either reinforcing or changing culture that is presented by a school crisis (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

The importance of staff trust and loyalty is examined by Shueh-Chin Ting and Liang-Yin Yeh (2013); in a study of Taiwanese schools they conclude that gratitude to the school creates trust and satisfaction and through them contributes to staff loyalty to the organisation (Ting & Yeh, 2014). The role of gratitude is interesting in that it is in the school leaders' gift to show kindness or generosity and to respond appropriately to critical incidents and therefore to develop loyalty to them and via them to the organisation. It also suggests that the reverse may be true.

The relationship between school culture and the culture of the local community is explored in Fuller and Clarke's (1994) study of a range of international contexts which examines the relationship between the local society's attitude to education and views on appropriate pedagogical styles, school effectiveness and culture. They conclude that there is a complicated feedback relationship that needs to be understood in comparing the outcomes of education systems in different countries and local communities (Fuller & Clarke, 1994). The importance of understanding the local community context in education is also underlined in Sparks' (2014) study of a Californian school's work to connect to the community in which it is located by use of the predominant language and culture as well as engagement in community health needs (Sparks, 2014).

The Hay Group (Hobby, 2004) report provides a tool for identifying actual and desired school cultures and in a study of over 4,000 teachers in 134 schools it seeks to identify a number of characteristic cultural elements in successful schools. It identifies not only a disconnect between the perceived and desired culture in schools and a distinction between the culture in what it defines as successful and unsuccessful schools (based on examination data and a value-added score) but perhaps most concerning for school leaders, a consistently significant distinction between the perception of a school's culture by school leaders and that of the main staffing body. Given the significance of leadership in most studies of organisational culture, notably by Schein (Schein, 2010), this is quite a challenging finding.

Stoll argues that culture in schools is situationally specific; with the age of the organisation and the social and political context playing a central role (Stoll, 1998). Once again, as with Schein, Stoll highlights the importance of the age of the organisation and the nature of the leadership.

Principal succession and high turnover of school leaders has been observed to have a negative impact on school culture and on the organisational capacity to deliver long-term school improvement (Aravena, 2020).

It may be the case that successful school leaders who have gone onto found MATs have a particular impact on organisational culture as charismatic leadership in schools has been observed to have a particularly strong influence on the development of school cultures and be positively valued by staff (Ozgenel, 2020); however, this is an area that needs further research as this is still a relatively new phenomenon.

2.7.4 Culture in MATs

MATs are still a relatively new feature of the schools' system and organisational culture can take a long time to develop. Many MATs are still led by their founders and the point of leadership transition is a key challenge for organisational culture. There is clearly a need for further study in this area (Culpin & Male, 2022).

In an early pre-academy study of the impact of the merger of three primary schools on culture, Wallace (1996) states that "The establishment of Neworld [the new school] was a culture shock and, for many teachers outside the SMT [Senior Management Team], brought on a prolonged identity crisis" (Wallace, 1996, p. 466). With echoes of Schein's notion of temporary cultural islands (Schein, 2010), Wallace found that a strong and distinctive positive culture quickly developed amongst the senior leadership team of the new school while less positive subcultures developed elsewhere (described in this study as balkanisation). The paper points to the significant challenge of developing a positive new culture from separate schools coming together and the need for leaders to give time and attention to the process (Wallace, 1996).

MATs must develop a culture of their own from the merging of the separate schools; this can be challenging particularly when there is a perceived power or performance imbalance. Existing cultures can be very strong in schools and may need challenging and developing into a new "trust" culture. This process has been likened to the acculturation process when two cultural groups come together in the case of immigration (Das, 2020).

Birks (2019), in a PhD thesis examining the impact of school amalgamation and the creation of a MAT on three secondary schools, asserts that " A school amalgamation or a school joining a MAT as a junior partner are undoubtably seismic events with a discernible negative impact on school culture in this study (Birks, 2019, p. 268). He goes on to identify that deliberate leadership strategies such as communication through regular staff meetings, consultations and a sense of a shared aim and vision mitigated against these adverse effects to a degree. Over time staff from different schools spending time together built collegiality and strengthened culture. He also identifies the negative impact external factors such as Ofsted inspections and financial pressures linked to potential redundancy can have on culture (Birks, 2019); this is an observation that is startlingly relevant in 2023.

Schein used a series of case studies of companies to describe the importance of culture and the role of leaders in shaping and managing cultural change. Although not based in education there is much that is relevant to this study; his identification of the significance of the length of the organisation's history and the role of the founding leader in creating and embedding a culture resonate with the history of the trusts described by their CEOs in this study (Schein, 2010).

As the number, size and type of MATs has grown and developed it has become clear that MATs have very different organisational structures and cultures dependent on size, phase, and whether they contain sponsored academies or not (C. Simon et al., 2019). Simon et al. (2019), in their interviews with 11 CEOs, also identify the experience, credibility of the CEO and their espoused motivation in growing a trust as important factors in the complex landscape. One other main distinction is between

MATs that set out to have a structure based on significant autonomy for their constituent schools and those that favour greater centralisation and uniformity (Menzies et al., 2018).

In their 2018 report "Building Trusts: MAT leadership and coherence of vision, strategy and operations" (Menzies et al., 2018) report that data from the 17 MATs in their study shows that: most MATs consider "setting a common vision and culture while maintaining local autonomy in delivery" and "ensuring each school works to strengthen its community" to be very important (Menzies et al., 2018, p. 5). In a study of primary headteachers and CEOs of primary MATs, Simkins et al. (2019) raise concerns about the cultural integration between primary and secondary schools within MATs (Simkins et al., 2019).

The notion that autonomy can be delivered through trusts is challenged by the concept of " indentured autonomy" described by Thompson et al. (2021) in their study of six headteachers in Northern England in which the perceived advantages of autonomy offered by MATs appears to be a false hope (Thompson et al., 2021).

The centrality of the founding CEO and their vision and values in establishing the culture of an organisation is well established in business and never more so than during a change process such as growth or mergers (Sarros et al., 2011) which is the situation most MATS have been in on and off over the last few years as they grow.

There is an extensive body of literature relating to cultural integration during mergers and acquisitions in business which has relevance to the growth of academy trusts. Martin (2016) suggests that in business mergers and acquisitions companies that focus on what they can offer in the acquisition are more successful than those that

focus on what can be gained by the originator (Martin, 2016). The failure of many acquisitions has been attributed to cultural differences between the organisations and the failure of post-merger cultural integration (Elsass & Veiga, 1994; Saunders et al., 2009).

The CEOs in this study, particularly the founding CEOs, describe how the culture of the founding school and the founding leader have contributed to the culture of the whole MAT. The influence of the individual founder CEO in establishing a trust culture from the constituent school cultures is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

2.8 Research questions

This review of the literature led to the framing of three overarching research questions:

RQ1 What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of succession planning in MATs?

RQ2 What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of academy trust leadership development and how effective is it?

RQ3 What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of organisational culture and how do they establish a positive trust culture while incorporating a number of schools with their own cultures?

Table 7 (below) shows how questions that emerged from the literature review led to the main research questions.

Area of literature review	Questions that emerge from the literature review	Research questions
Founding CEOs' Succession Planning	Is there something distinctive about founders? How important is a CEO's professional credibility in the establishment of a trust? How engaged in succession planning are trust CEOs?	What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of succession planning in MATs?
Leadership Development	What role have professional networks played in supporting founding CEOs and their successors? How important is a CEO's professional credibility in the establishment of a trust? What role does formal training play in preparing CEOs of MATs for their roles? What role does experience out of school play to become a trust CEO? What roles do coaching and mentoring play in supporting new CEOs?	What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of academy trust leadership development and how effective is it?
Organisational Culture	How does sponsorship influence the development of a culture?	What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of organisational culture and how do they establish a positive trust culture while incorporating a number of schools with their own cultures?

Table 7 How RQs developed from the literature review.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will frame the study in terms of the research paradigm and show how the research questions and theoretical frameworks are related. It will explain how and why the methodology and methods were chosen based on the research paradigm.

I will explain my personal values and background and examine how they may lead to bias in a discussion of insider research. The sampling strategy will be explained and justified and the nature of the sample of participants will be described. There will be an exploration of the process of developing the interview schedule and the logistics of carrying out the interviews during the COVID pandemic.

A discussion of the process of extracting the data from interview transcripts through coding and some examples of this process will follow and the way in which the coding process relates to the research questions and the literature review will be examined. Issues of reliability and validity will be discussed as will the ethical issues involved in the research. The chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of the limitations of this research.

3.2 Theory

It is essential for research to be rooted in an academic tradition that links it to previous study and enables others to understand its context and origins. It is arguably impossible to undertake research without making absolutely clear the researchers' ontological and epistemological position (Scotland, 2012). These connections can be

traced back to Aristotle (Gallifa, 2018) and the whole history of the Western academic tradition. They locate the methodology of a study in its theoretical framework and the world view of the researcher. The research paradigm makes clear to readers and other researchers how you believe that knowledge is acquired (Opie, 2004) and what the nature of truth is. Theory is important in that it provides a backdrop and offers a broad framework in which research findings can be interpreted (Bryman, 2016).

Theories in social science research can be considered at a number of scales. “Grand Theories” are great overarching theories which are abstract in nature and sit above a middle range theory that are more specific to concrete situations and are applicable to an empirical research study into a specific and limited area (Bryman, 2016). The theoretical framework for this study is located in the middle-range theoretical concepts of organisational/school culture, leadership succession and founding leaders.

While it is important to me to situate my research in the context of the academic tradition and with a coherent connection between my world view, the theoretical domains above and the methodology and methods that I have deployed, Kettley’s 2010 critique resonates with me:

> “Theory is always an artifice or contrivance … Theory is the interface of systematic inquiry, including data analysis and interpretation, and the researchers cognitive ability, which can incorporate components of any social paradigm” (Kettley, 2010, p. 9)

These theoretical areas led to the framing of three overarching research questions:

- What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of succession planning in MATs?
- What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of academy trust leadership development and how effective is it?
- What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of organisational culture and how do they establish a positive trust culture while incorporating a number of schools with their own cultures?

These three main RQs were then used to frame the interview questions shown in the interview schedule (Appendix 1). In a semi-structured interview the schedule identifies the topics and associated questions that the interviewer will ask the participant. I discuss the interview schedule and questions in more detail later in this chapter (Bearman, 2019).

3.3 Research paradigm

The notion of a research paradigm dates back to the 1960s when Thomas Kuhn first used the word to describe a basic belief system in how the world works and how it should be studied (Bryman, 2016; Khatri, 2020; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Guba and Lincoln (1994) define a paradigm as "a set of *basic beliefs* (or metaphysics) that deal with ultimate or first principles. It represents a *world view* that defines for its holder the nature of the world" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107). The paradigm provides guidance to the researcher in terms of how to conduct their research and the nature of the knowledge that can be gained (Bhattarai, 2021).

> "The 'paradigm' a study falls within is shaped by the researcher's views on how research should be conducted, both in general terms and specific to the study

aim. It is used to inform the research methods adopted, research processes undertaken, and the nature and generalizability of conclusions subsequently drawn" (Gannon et al., 2022, p. 2).

While there is considerable academic debate about the number and scope of research paradigms, broadly speaking they are divided into positivist or constructivist. As I approach this study from a constructivist perspective I believe that it is the subjects' views of the trust CEO leadership and succession that is important and not an "objective truth". I am clear throughout that there is an impact on the research of my background and experiences (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

3.3.1 Ontology

This study is based on a relativist or constructivist approach in that it seeks to understand the careers and motivations of academy trust CEOs. It has the fundamental belief that social or natural science is not scientific in the traditional positivist sense but that it is constructed by human meaning and is intrinsically subjective (Kettley, 2010). It is their beliefs and views rather than any objective external truth that is the focus. It is fundamental to this study that reality is subjective and each person has a different reality and interpretation of the situation they are in (Scotland, 2012). Furthermore, the researcher and the area of study, indeed, the data sources are linked in that the researcher is part of the system under investigation and is, to an extent, known to the subjects (Coe, 2017). The issues of insider research are considered in more detail later in this chapter.

3.3.2 Epistemology

This study is framed in an interpretative epistemology (Oliver, 2014); it is important that I am able to delve into the feelings and social constructs of the research subjects. I am hoping to identify how leaders understand the process of succession from a founding leader and its impact on the organisational culture within the context of the development of a MAT. Interpretivism stems from the relativist or constructivist ontology (Bryman, 2016). In considering the responses of the interviewees. I take the view that each has a different subjective view of the theoretical concepts of culture, succession and founding leaders. It is accepted that there is little transferability and is hard to generalise from as the qualitative data produced are highly contextual (Eddine; Scotland, 2012).

Interpretivism stems from the belief that it is not possible to apply the principles of traditional scientific research and experimentation to the study of people within their social context (Bryman, 2016). Instead of having independent definable forms, the objects of social science research are constantly being created and influenced by the people working and living within them and crucially by anyone seeking to research them. The notion is that anyone working within social science research not only brings their own bias and history to the study but in the process of the study interacts with the subject and influences its development. This is particularly the case when, for example, an educational researcher studies an educational setting and even more so if they are studying a setting that they work within. Norris (1997) makes it clear that thinking of oneself as a researcher in relation to the area of research undertaken is an

essential precondition for dealing with potential bias. The crucial point here is that this is about coping with bias not avoiding bias (Norris, 1997).

3.3.3 Methodology

Traditionally this interpretivist approach leads the researcher to use qualitative methods as is the case in this study. The concepts of ontology and epistemology underpin decisions that researchers make about research methodology and ultimately the practical methods they employ in their research. Historically it has been assumed that the distinction between the ontological positions, that concern the nature of the social phenomena under investigation, will inevitably lead the researcher down one of two main paths towards either a purely quantitative set of methods or an entirely qualitative approach (Cohen, 2018). Kettley (2010) identifies that the qualitative methods used in this paradigm emphasise “atypical samples, the discovery of meaningful interpretations of action and findings that are spatially and temporally dependent” (Kettley, 2010, p. 81).

In a simplistic way the world can be divided into those who believe that there are objective truths that can be discovered by rigorous scientific experimentation and those who believe that society is made up of human interactions and that any study of it cannot be value free. The former relies on research with a detached approach based on the “gold standard” of the double-blind experiment (Lichtman, 2013) in which all factors other than those being directly studied are identified and isolated. The two ways to carry out research can, to a degree, be considered in terms of quantitative study: that which can be measured in numerical terms and qualitative

study which requires subjective description. Ercikan and Roth (2006) sum this problem up well:

> "In education research, as in the dominant mode of Western thought more generally, quantity and quality are treated as two independent, dichotomous phenomena, as different kinds of things (thereby pertaining to ontology) and different forms of knowledge (thereby pertaining to epistemology)" (Ercikan & Roth, 2006, p. 16).

The positivist epistemology has led researchers to develop quantitative research methodologies that seek to produce data that can be analysed and that can produce an evidence-based approach to understanding the world. In the social sciences this positivist approach can be seen in the ontological position of objectivism which posits that social structures and phenomena can be studied separately from the people who work and live within them (Bryman, 2016).

While many social science researchers believe that it is not possible to reduce complex human interactions and social structures to numerical or quantitative data, Cohen et al. argue powerfully that this is not the case (Cohen, 2018).

In many cases the choice, if one is to be made, between the use of a quantitative research method or a qualitative one, may depend on the scale or size of the sample. It is impossible to carry out detailed interviews with more than a small number of subjects so if the research question requires a snapshot of the views of hundreds or thousands of subjects it may be appropriate to produce statistical analysis of the responses to a questionnaire that uses a Likert scale to capture the data. In this study a sample size of 14 detailed interviews was used (n=14).

Ercikan and Roth (2006) argue that it is unhelpful to focus on the distinction between qualitative and quantitative data and research methodologies. They point out that all aspects of the natural world and in particular, educational research have elements of both qualitative and quantitative data and subjective and objective interpretation. Indeed, they posit a series of continuums between these polarities based on the degree of inference possible. They highlight the issue of generalisation as a marker for high quality objective research and challenge the notion that quantitative research has a monopoly of generalisability. They make it clear that within what might traditionally be viewed as objective or quantitative research there is a considerable requirement for researchers to exercise judgement in deciding where to set boundaries for data sets, questions to be included in surveys and in selecting samples for research. They point out that in social science research the notion of generalising from subsets or samples of a population to the entire population carries significant risk and requires a detailed knowledge of statistical significance (Ercikan & Roth, 2006).

This study uses the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews that will be described in greater detail later in this chapter.

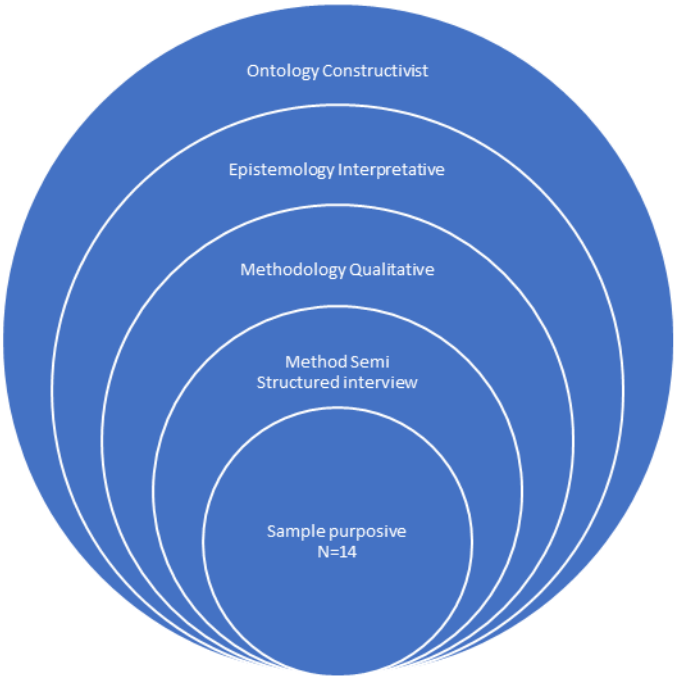

Figure 4. Research paradigm of this study after Saunders (Saunders et al., 2007)

3.4 Values and personal context

As a doctoral student, a career teacher and school leader I am aware that my career experiences will inform the process of conducting this research and also my interpretation of the findings. This is inherent in the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). I start this discussion aware that in studying the organisational structure (MATs) that I work in, not only am I incapable of being detached but I have not been able to avoid interacting with my research subjects as a colleague over many years in a way which will impact on the outcome of the research. I believe that the challenge is to recognise and declare my bias and the impact I have on others not to try to avoid it. I expect this to be, as Cohen et al. described, a difficult process, that is often messier than I would like (Cohen, 2018).

Historically the search for objectivity and avoidance of bias has been a challenge for social science research as it seeks to find its place in more traditionally focussed

scientific studies. Bias in common usage implies prejudice for or against an idea or a group of people and it is always regarded as a "bad thing" and contrasted to objectivity which suggests even handedness and balance and is therefore a "good thing" that we should seek to achieve (Eisner, 1992).

The question of whether researchers should try to be detached from their subject or to strive for objectivity at all costs goes to the heart of questions not only of research design but of world view or ontology. Eisner (1992) suggests that objectivity is an ideal objective of the educational researchers who should strive to remove bias from their work before he goes on to challenge the notion that objectivity is achievable or desirable (Eisner, 1992).

There is a great deal of literature reflecting the recent growth in practitioner-led research and insider research along with the increasing number of EdD programmes, originally introduced in England in the University of Bristol in 1992 and now widely delivered in UK universities (Taysum, 2007). Floyd and Arthur (2011) highlight the risks of the growing number of inexperienced researchers (myself among them) enrolling in EdD courses and carrying out insider research, particularly in relation to ethical issues around consent and confidentiality (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). While not working in the same organisation as any of the subjects in my research, I do work in the same sector and regularly engage with some of the subjects in regional and national forums. My awareness of this prompted me to have early discussions with my doctoral supervisor about how to navigate this ethical situation. I am confident that I have been able to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of my subjects. The degree of "insiderness" for researchers is recognised to be a continuum that depends on the

closeness of the researcher to the topic, the organisations, and any individual subjects. This position on the continuum can change during the course of the research (Fleming, 2018).

Anderson (2002) examines the continuum from practitioner reflections through action research to formal research in discussing the work of Metz (2001) and while reflecting on the value of the insights that she gains points out that this can be lost in the process of trying to avoid bias (Anderson, 2002).

It is not just my status as an insider that requires identification and awareness, we are all made up of complex personal characteristics and life stories. I am a white, middle-aged, middle-class man with a career of 33 years in schools. Non-teachers, women and people of other ethnic backgrounds all bring a different and specific set of perceptions and possibly values to their studies (Pallas, 2001). May (2011) describes the significance of “Feminisms and Research”; he reflects that there is a distinct feminist perspective and research paradigm that identifies women as automatically separated from “malestream research” and therefore as bringing a specifically outsider or “stranger” view of the public realm due to their exclusion from it through history. This can be interpreted as it being impossible for either men or women to be truly objective in social science research as each bring their own gender-based bias that has developed over many years (May, 2011). Indeed, according to Eisner these individual perspectives are crucial; as it is in the relationships between objective conditions and personal reference points that we are able to interpret and make sense of the world (Eisner, 1992).

Pallas (2001) adds not only racial and ethnic minorities but “even education practitioners” to a list of “traditionally subordinated groups” within the context of the traditional academic research community (Pallas, 2001). The significance of this to an individual educational researcher is made clear by Al-Saadi (2014) in a highly personal reference to his Muslim faith, making it clear that Islam is the overarching context in which to consider his ontological and epistemological positions (Al-Saadi, 2014).

Pallas (2001) appeals for education doctoral students to be fully involved in a thorough discussion and analysis of the full range of epistemologies as a common understanding of epistemological development is a fundamental feature of a research community (Pallas, 2001).

Bryman (2016) describes feminist qualitative research as rejecting a “value-neutral approach” (Bryman, 2016, p. 36) to process and embracing the human interaction between researcher and participants. I believe that this rejection of any value-neutral approach to research in education is essential. Educational researchers and particularly insider researchers cannot leave their values out of any research and should instead declare them and embrace them. The power of the researcher and the research subject acknowledging their values and background and laying it open to examination and challenge is that it can produce a more honest and open discussion (Bryman, 2016).

The complexity of the range of approaches to social science and educational research would suggest that it is not desirable or even not entirely possible to operate within one of the two spheres of ontological, epistemological methodology discussed above.

The debate that has developed between the two dominant views of education researchers is described as the paradigm wars of the 1970s and 1980s (Ponce, 2015).

I do not therefore believe that it is “possible or desirable to be detached from the structures and values in which we also are embedded”. It is important that the personal history, beliefs, values and, indeed bias of social science researchers are not only recognised and declared but also valued and celebrated as a contribution to the study. Indeed the notion that being a “reflexive researcher” in which our own personal history can enrich our research is increasingly accepted (Etherington, 2004). Without this recognition there is a risk that “insider” research can never be recognised and valued as a legitimate contribution to the literature and the development of the academic knowledge and understanding in any field.

In a 2022 study of 30 staff from various medical and related roles in two health centres in New Zealand, Aburn et al. (2022), while acknowledging the risks of insider research, discuss the benefits for both researcher and participants particularly when the participants are not “direct reports” of the researcher, such as: the absence of a need to build a rapport and put participants at ease, the ability to be open and frank and the cathartic nature of being able to talk about their work and issues with a trusted colleague confidentially. In this study the participants clearly enjoyed the process and this matches my experience with the CEOs that I interviewed (Aburn et al., 2022).

3.5 Methods

3.5.1 Interviews

The research is based on semi-structured interviews (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Kallio et al., 2016b) with CEOs in 14 MATs. The purpose of such in-depth interviews is to identify the subjects' perceptions and feelings rather than to seek to establish objective facts about the organisation (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). This method means that the approach can be considered abductive in that the understanding of the system and organisations will be viewed through the context of the perspectives of the participants (Bryman, 2016; Papanastasiou, 2017; Shank, 1987).

I had originally planned to conduct interviews face-to-face; I am fortunate in being located within easy travelling distance of several MATs and having flexibility in terms of being able to travel during the day in the working week due to my work context. While there is not conclusive evidence that face-to-face interviews are always more effective than telephone interviews, there is evidence to suggest that in a face-to-face interview it is easier to establish a rapport (McGrath et al., 2019), probe responses in greater detail and respond to the non-verbal cues of both interviewer and interviewee (Irvine et al., 2013). The COVID pandemic made this impossible as discussed below.

The initial stage of developing the interview schedule started with the literature review (Prescott, 2011) from which emerged the broad areas that were formed into the interview schedule (Boote & Beile, 2005). The schedule identifies the main topics and the questions that are asked during the interview both for the interviewer as a guide and for the interviewee (Bearman, 2019). In planning the interview schedule both Bearman (2019) and Cohen et al. (2018) describe processes that were considered

during this study. For Bearman this is a three-stage process, for Cohen it is a six-stage process. In this study the initial stage was framing the main themes, selecting the style of interview and questions to be asked. The second stage involved developing a structure and sequence of questions. It also involved a careful consideration of the respondents' likely understanding, knowledge and ability to engage in a shared vocabulary. In this study as all the participants were experienced academy trust CEOs a high level of understanding of the themes and a shared understanding of the language and issues could be assumed. This stage also considered the relationship between the interviewer and the respondents (Cohen, 2018). I felt confident that as I knew all the participants this would be strong. Bearman (2019) makes the point that effective interviews include some warm-up questions that put participants at ease (Bearman, 2019; Cohen, 2018). In this case the initial questions in the schedule were confirmation of the consent (Bullock, 2016) and having read the information sheet and then:

> *"Tell me briefly about your career to date. How long have you been in teaching? How many schools have you worked in? Have you completed any specific training such as an MA or any of the NPQs?"*

When I came to carry out the interview in each case I did not stick to the exact form of words in the schedule. After checking the consent I started by again outlining the overall themes and then asking for a career overview. Bullock (2016) cautions against sticking too religiously to the schedule but suggests that the interviewer allows a natural flow. This start was in order to make sure that participants had the whole picture in line with Cohen's (2018) view that the interviewer should "explain the

purpose and conduct of the interview" (Cohen, 2018, p. 517), and I also felt it important to establish a clear time frame as I was very aware of how busy the respondents were; a typical introductory section with one participant is shown in Appendix 7.

It is generally regarded as important to carry out a form of pilot or pre-testing of an interview process (Bryman, 2016). I carried out a limited pilot of the consent form, information sheet and interview questions (see Appendices 6 & 7) with two CEOs.

It is suggested that pilot studies can be divided into two types: feasibility studies and pre-testing of particular aspects of the process (Malmqvist et al., 2019). My pilot study was the second type in that it involved a "trying out" of my interview schedule and documentation. In qualitative research piloting can be used as a way of avoiding any methodological surprises (Guðmundsdóttir & Brock-Utne, 2010) and ironing out any technical glitches. The process also had the advantage of allowing me a trial run through the interview schedule and the technology that gave me a greater sense of confidence when carrying out the bulk of the interviews (Bryman, 2016).

Pilot CEO 1

> *"Thank you for sending through the consent form this morning and you've had a look through the bits. So the context of this is, as you know, I'm doing this doctorate and the main bit of data gathering is going to be interviews with 10 CEOs. But before I can start actually doing that, I have to have a pilot, so I'm piloting the questions and the process with you and with XX from xx Academy. I did it with him this week. The idea is for you to let me know if any of the*

paperwork or the process you think doesn't meet needs, isn't clear or if there is anything that you could improve on."

***Facilitator**: "So in terms of the information sheets that were sent out, were they reasonably accessible and did they work okay?"*

***Interviewee**: "Yes, absolutely fine".*

***Facilitator**: "We've used up the time you kindly allocated for this, so quite useful for me, if you wouldn't mind, just reflecting on whether that felt like a discussion that picked up the points I think we should have done. As always with these things, it flows freely and jumps around, whether there are other things that perhaps I should be thinking about, or whether that felt too long, not long enough or whatever."*

***Interviewee**: "I think I talked about – you asked me an open question and I told you my story and you maybe didn't want all that. As I got halfway through I felt well either I just carry on now or he'll stop me, because I whittered on about my journey to the formation of the trust probably in too much detail for you."*

Pilot CEO 2

"So what I've got to do is, just try and run through the questions and see if they work. If you've got any observations about things that you think don't work or aren't sensible questions or anything you'd add in, anything like that would be useful. If it's all fine, then it's fine"

***Interviewee**: "Yeah. It was very simple. I don't have any problem with that."*

The reflections of the two CEOs in the pilot confirmed that the information that I sent out before the interviews was appropriate, that the technology worked and that I could get through the questions in my schedule in the allotted one hour. After careful consideration it was decided that as there had been so few issues with the pilot interviews, I could add the outcomes into my sample, so taking the number of participants from 12 to 14.

3.6 Adapting the research methods due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Due to the COVID pandemic and the requirements of social distancing and limits on travel, it was necessary to consider whether it was appropriate to continue with the research and to conduct interviews online. The ethical requirement to prioritise the health and well-being of the participants and the need to adhere to government guidance meant that face-to-face interviews were no longer appropriate (Jowett, 2020). It was also important to consider the stress placed on participants by the pandemic and the additional work and personal burdens that it placed on them. The importance of a level of adaptability and resilience for the researcher and the participants is inherent for social science researchers who often have to adapt to changes in the field (Rahman et al., 2021). Teti et al. (2020) point out that qualitative methods as a research tool are well placed to be adaptable to explore the diverse reactions to such a crisis (Teti et al., 2020).

While there are concerns about the challenges of online interviewing (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014), individuals have become much more used to this medium in the current pandemic and many of the issues may have been, to some extent, reduced.

Lobe and Morgan (2021) point out that online interviews are not a completely different method but are an extension of existing approaches using the infrastructure of the internet and specific pieces of software (Lobe & Morgan, 2021). The concerns relate to a sense of difficulty in establishing a rapport and missing out on non-verbal cues such as body language, particularly as the interviewer may only see the head and shoulders of the interviewee (Irani, 2018; Lo Iacono et al., 2016), the sense that some participants may feel awkward or embarrassed about being filmed and the risk of some participants not having the technical skill to use the software (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Rahman et al. (2021) identified some specific challenges associated with online interviewing. These included: a tendency for interviewees to become distracted with issues either at home from child care or pets or in the work place by emails, a perception from some interviewees that online interviews could be more easily rescheduled than an in-person appointment and also the more obvious technical issues such as connectivity (Rahman et al., 2021).

Thunberg & Arnell (2021), in a review of 29 studies into online interviewing, concluded that on balance the evidence is broadly positive about using online interviewing particularly during the pandemic with the most significant limitation relating to occasional technical glitches and the limitations of the IT infrastructure (Thunberg & Arnell, 2021).

These issues provide a good example of how practicalities in terms of carrying out research impact on the methods used and approach to this study.

I was confident that in interviewing academy trust CEOs – many of whom I have met face-to-face at various meetings, following the recent exponential growth in the use

of Zoom and Teams all the participants would be confident in using the platforms and there would be a limited risk of anxiety or failure to establish a rapport, and this proved to be the case.

There are advantages to platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams in that they have built in recording features, reduce travel time and cost, permit both interviewer and interviewee to be in their own space and therefore possibly feel more comfortable (Archibald et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020; Irani, 2018). In a study of pregnant doctoral students, Mirick and Wladkowski (2019) highlighted the benefits of the increased flexibility for interviews in that they were able to participate from home and the process was less disruptive of family life; they also highlighted the advantage over telephone interviews of being able to see each other's faces during the interview. Overall they reported very positive feedback on the Skype interview process (Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019). The potential advantages for qualitative researchers in using online tools to work remotely also include the opportunities for researchers in different countries to work together collaboratively and the opportunity to reach a wider range of participants and a more diverse sample (Rahman et al., 2021). Gray et al. (2020), in a small-scale study in Canada, report an overwhelmingly positive response to participants being interviewed on Zoom; they offer a useful 10-point guide for researchers when using the technology which I have summarised below. This guide need not be specific to zoom but can be applied to Teams as well, as shown in Appendix 8.

I used Microsoft Teams as my preferred platform for online interviews.

I selected semi-structured interviews because they allowed a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee to develop and are both flexible and versatile (Kallio et al., 2016a). Also following on from my pilot, I recorded the interview on my laptop using the record function in Teams. I engaged a transcription service as I found this very effective in managing the time required to transcribe interviews personally (McGrath et al., 2019).

As I used semi-structured interviews, I prepared an outline sequence of areas to be explored and draft questions and shared this with the participants in advance (Appendix 1). Although I followed this outline template, I endeavoured to make sure that the questions drew out full, open answers from the interviewee and allowed the conversation to develop. The interviews were based on the belief that both interviewer and interviewee had a shared commitment to developing knowledge and understanding a shared context (Roberts, 2020). Such interviews are intended to flow freely and encourage the development of a rapport between the interviewer and interviewee (Brown & Danaher, 2017).

The interview questions were developed and sequenced in order to put the participants at their ease with a general career history introduction and then a series of mostly open questions designed to gather rich data and encourage a free flowing comfortable interview that the participants could enjoy (Bearman, 2019). This was made easier by the fact that I had met and worked with all the participants as a peer CEO, and we shared a common language and many common experiences.

The CHE (Connectivity, Humanness, and Empathy) principles outlined in Brown & Danaher (2017) offered a useful framework for thinking about how to approach semi-

structured interviews in qualitative research. Appendix 1 is the set of reflective questions for enacting the CHE principles in semi-structured interviews in educational research which informed my planning of the data collection stage of the research (Brown & Danaher, 2017, p. 85).

Another useful resource in planning for the data collection was the six-stage process outlined by Rabionet (2011); of particular interest was the significance given to the development of the interview protocol in which the interviewer has to introduce themselves with an opening statement which sets the context of the research and the personal context of the researcher (Rabionet, 2011).

Lichtman (2013) also offered a useful resource for researchers in the form of a checklist for conducting interviews, which formed part of my preparation for the process (Lichtman, 2013, pp. 216-217).

For busy trust leaders giving up an hour to be interviewed could feel like a significant imposition in a busy school day and even more so at the end of a working day. This concern was mitigated by conducting the interview online and therefore offering more flexibility. The fact that the interviews took place during the COVID pandemic meant that mixing and travel were restricted. I was fortunate in that I was working part-time for the duration of my research so that I had flexibility in my availability to fit round my subjects' requirements as much as possible.

There is always a risk that supplementary questions that arise during the course of an interview can have the effect of leading the subject or of suggesting language that they would not normally use. This needs to be identified in the transcription process

and the answers considered in the context of the questioning (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

The focus of this study is not on linguistic analysis; however, the nature of qualitative research is that it gathers data through dialogue (Bengtsson & Fynbo, 2018) which inevitably includes a range of verbal ticks, filler words and silences. One of the challenges of transcription and analysis of interview data is understanding the respondents' unspoken meaning, including attempting to interpret the significance of silence in different contexts (Bengtsson & Fynbo, 2018).

3.7 Sampling

It is important that the sampling strategy used is aligned with the ontological and epistemological perspective of the overall study (Campbell et al., 2020). Cohen et al. (2018) go so far as to say "the quality of a piece of research stands or falls by the … suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted" (Cohen, 2018, p. 202).

The CEOs that are the focus of this study were selected using purposive sampling. This is not a random sample (Staller, 2021) and participants were selected as they met the overall aims of the study (Bryman, 2016) in that they were either founding or second-generation MAT CEOs and they lead trusts of varying sizes and make ups. There is no intention to generalise from this sample (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012) to the whole MAT CEO population as the sample cannot be considered to represent the whole population of trust CEOs (Cohen, 2018). Instead the data provide what Thomas (2011) describes as "exemplary knowledge" (Thomas, 2011, p. 31).

Within the overall purposive sampling strategy an element of criterion sampling was used in that they meet the needs of this study by offering a small range of perspectives due to the number and phase of schools in each trust (Bryman, 2016). The option to use remote online interviews meant that I was less constrained by geography and able to include MATs from anywhere in England.

I did not seek to interview a large number of subjects, rather I focussed on detailed "history-taking" and comparisons between the individual responses. In this case using a relatively small sample (n=14), the sample was selected to offer a level of depth in their responses and therefore the analysis rather than a more general breadth of respondents. There is an argument that this requires a relatively small sample size as depth of analysis is more important that numbers of respondents (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) describe this as the sample size not being "too large that it is difficult to extract thick, rich data" (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 242).

The question of how large a sample should be for a qualitative study has been widely discussed with the notion of data saturation at the heart of the discussion (Francis et al., 2010; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Staller, 2021; Vasileiou et al., 2018). O'Reilly and Parker (2012) suggest that while some literature suggests that there is a "gold standard" in terms of data saturation in qualitative research, it is still unclear what is meant by data saturation and at what level it is achieved (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). It is not easy to define saturation, in part due to the variety and complexity of all the research designs in qualitative studies that exist; what is sufficient in one case will not be in another

(Fusch & Ness, 2015). Braun and Clark (2021) offer a useful definition that highlights the origin of the concept of saturation within grounded theory:

> "The concept of saturation, often broadly and loosely defined as information redundancy, the point at which no new information, codes or themes are yielded from data, evolved from the more tightly conceived notion of theoretical saturation in grounded theory" (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 2).

In this study the purpose of the sample was to produce a richness and depth of data that permitted the RQs that were developed during the literature review to be addressed. It is inherent in the study of an area that it is rapidly changing, very structurally varied and subjective in that it is based on the perceptions of individual CEOs such that no sample size can possibly capture every opinion.

The sample size used in this study of n=14 detailed interviews with participants selected for their rich experience and specific career stage meets the criteria that O'Reilly and Parker (2012) identify in that it represents a pragmatic, manageable sample size that provides sufficient rich data to address the RQs (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Each interview was planned to be a maximum of one hour as there was a concern for the participant in terms of their level of concentration and time commitment as well as the level of saturation within an interview in that the questions derived from the RQs have been addressed and all the relevant data have been collected from the individual. There was relative homogeneity of the sample used in this study, that is to be expected in purposive sampling, in that all participants were based in England, academy trust CEOs, teachers and approximately in the 40–65 age range; this meant that it can be argued that a relatively small sample size was

sufficient (Alam, 2021; Guest et al., 2006). Latham (2013), in a study of CEO leadership, asserted that in a case study-based interview research he found the sweet spot to be 14 interviews (Latham, 2013).

In order to provide the desired transparency (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012) about how the sample size was chosen, it was based on a number of factors; the data gathered from the interview transcript coding provided enough to address the research questions, the sample size was manageable for the researcher (Alam, 2021) and in discussion with my supervisor it was agreed that it was suitable.

In considering the homogeneity of the sample, I was aware of the need for an element of gender balance in my sample that included eight women and six men. This was not a criterion for selection, and I have not considered the role of gender in my research. The balance of genders in the sample may make it slightly more generalisable (Robinson, 2014) but this was not a key focus and would be a very interesting area for further study. I did not ask participants to declare age, sexual orientation, or ethnic background and so these areas are excluded from the study completely.

	Gender	Pseudonym	Founder/ Successor	Previously HT in the Trust?	Size of Trust at time of interview	Size of Trust May 2023	Primary/ Secondary
1	F	Jane	F	Y	13	28	PS
2	M	Peter	F	Y	7	7	PS
3	M	John	F	Y	10	11	PS
4	M	Neil	S	N	30	32	PS
5	F	Janet	S	Y	14	15	PS
6	M	Gareth	S	N	5	9	P
7	F	Anne	F	Y	8	11	PS
8	F	Ruth	S	N	6	6	PS
9	F	Megan	F	Y	3	3	P
10	F	Jessica	F	Y	12	17	PS
11	M	James	F	Y	13	13	PS
12	M	Ben	F	Y	3	3	PS
13	F	Holly	F	Y	4	4	PS
14	F	Milly	S	Y	6	9	PS

Table 8. CEO Sample

3.8 Analysis and coding

The interview files were imported into NVivo, the qualitative data analysis software. I used this software to go through a process of coding to identify the main themes in the responses and analyse them (Deterding & Waters, 2021). Again, having had the opportunity to trial the use of the software on a very small-scale research project, I was clear that the software allowed me to store and analyse significant amounts of data effectively. NVivo allows the researcher to code text from interview transcripts and store and retrieve sections of text that have a particular code allocated to them

(Bryman, 2016). NVivo has several functions and tools; however, in this study it was used mainly for data management and storing the codes/nodes.

Coding describes the process of ascribing a category or group label to a piece of data, in this study, that is a section of the response in the interview. Coding is then the process by which the set of 14 transcripts was broken down into smaller units that correspond to themes developed from the research questions. These were developed from the literature review in a process of data reduction which is a fundamental element of most qualitative data analysis (Deterding & Waters, 2021). Some examples of this process of data reduction are shown in Table 4 below which shows how, after initial re-reading and identification, common words or codes were identified and then aggregated into nodes or themes that form the basis for the analysis in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Appendix 8 shows an example of a section of a transcript with key terms highlighted before they were aggregated into nodes. These research questions were used to craft the questions asked as described above and therefore the codes were, to an extent, developed ex ante or in advance (Cohen, 2018). In this study some additional codes developed in response to the data as common themes emerged. In the screen print (Fig. 6) below, the codes developed in advance such as “culture”, succession planning and qualifications clearly reflect the overarching three research questions based on the middle-level theories shown in Table 4. For others, such as those with a joint role as headteacher and CEO, networking and mentoring emerged as common elements across a number of interviews. It is an accepted part of the process that codes may represent different levels of specificity with some being broad overarching concepts and some being very specific (Cohen, 2018). Some codes are

allocated at the start of the process to areas which do not develop into significant themes during the process of repeatedly reading and combing through the data.

Some areas of data (in this case responses to interviews) can contain several codes; this can be shown in NVivo by using coding stripes (Grbich, 2013) as shown in Fig. 6 where one section of response has been coded with three codes, two of which overlap – credibility and founders.

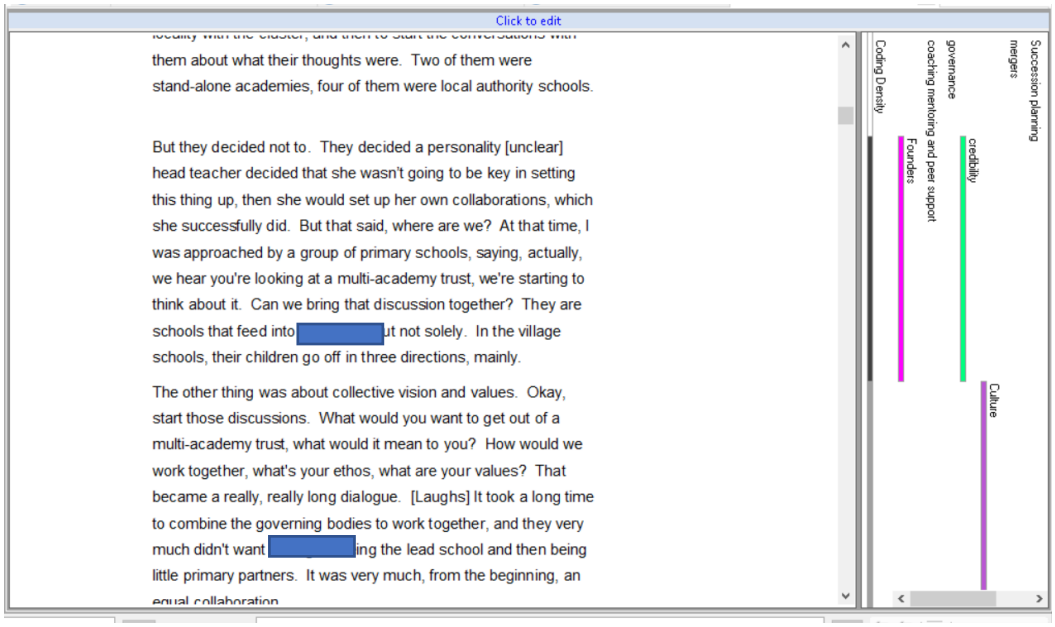

Figure 5. Coding strip screen shot

The codes then formed the basis for the discussion and analysis and were used to enable me to quickly gather all the relevant sections of data in one document from which to then further select data for detailed analysis.

Table 9. Examples of consolidating codes into themes

Initial codes	**Themes/ nodes**
Local authorities	Experience out of school
Ofsted	
DfE	

Exam boards	
National bodies	
Business	
Universities	

Initial codes	**Themes/nodes**
NLE	Credibility
Ofsted inspector	
Experience	
Headteacher	
Executive head	

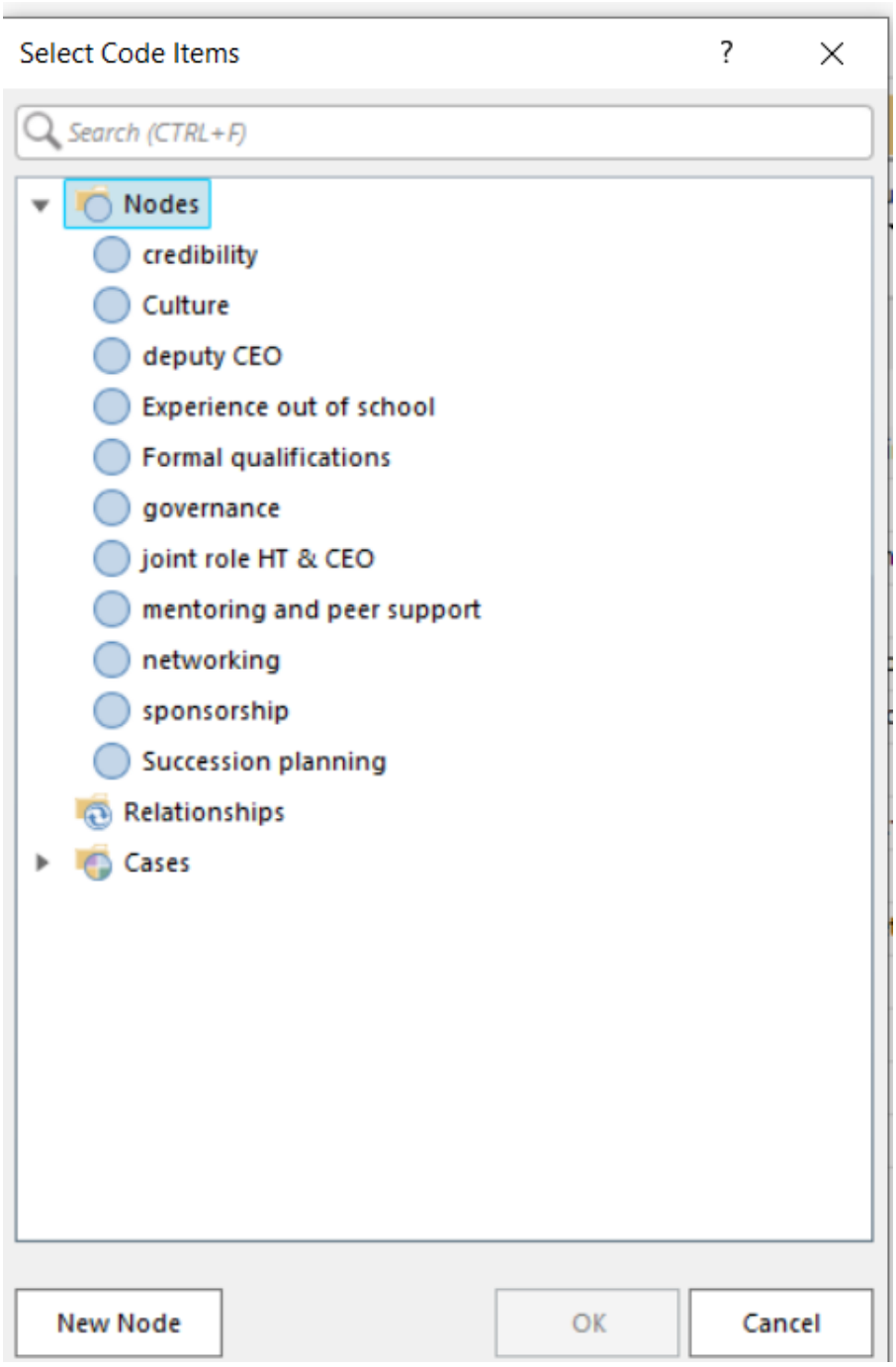

Figure 6. NVivo codes screen shot

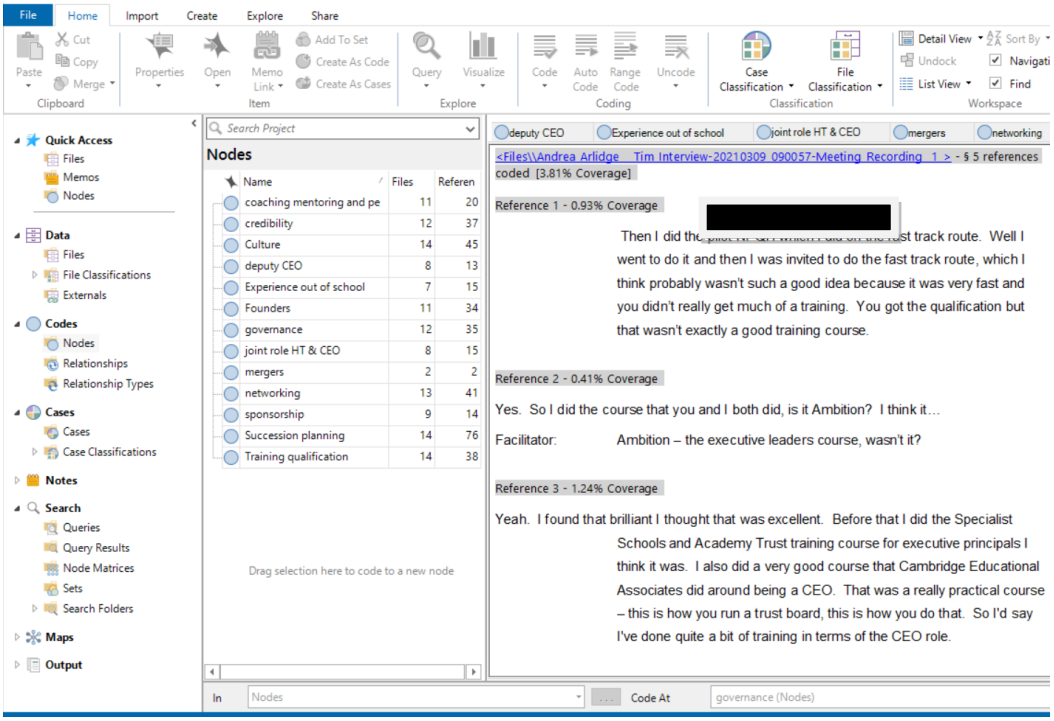

Figure 7. NVivo screen shot

3.9 Reliability/validity and relevance in qualitative research

The concepts of reliability and validity in research stem from the quantitative research tradition. Reliability can be used as an overarching concept to encompass ideas such as dependability, replicability and consistency; ideas that relate to the accuracy of measurements and the ability for another researcher to get the same results when using the same procedures (Cohen, 2018). Validity refers to truthfulness and although related to reliability is distinguishable. Validity relies on reliability; if results are not reliable and replicable then no valid conclusions can be drawn from them (Bryman, 2016).

There has been much debate over time about how the quality standards of reliability and validity in quantitative research can (or should) be applied to qualitative research. Pre-eminent in this field are Guba and Lincoln (1994). Much of the thinking about how the quality and rigour of qualitative research can be assured is based on identifying

different but related standards that can be applied. Thus words such as trustworthiness and authenticity are used b to replace the “conventional benchmarks of ‘rigour’, internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 112). This has more recently been framed as “truth value”, “consistency”, “neutrality” and “applicability” by (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Bryman adds further to Guba and Lincoln’s approach by breaking down trustworthiness into four criteria:

- Credibility
- Transferability
- Dependability
- Confirmability (Bryman, 2016, p. 384)

Noble and Smith (2015) offer a useful checklist of strategies to support researchers in establishing the credibility of their study findings and I have drawn on these in this study. I am confident that the credibility of the study as a whole has been established, in part because of the professional experience that the interviewees have and that I share. Throughout the process I have been clear about my background and experience and the potential for bias that could stem from this. I have kept detailed records of all the interview transcripts, consent and information sheets. I have included extensive verbatim quotations from the interviews to support my findings and to demonstrate how my conclusions arise from the data (Eldh et al., 2020). I have drawn on extensive literature and sought to use research in related fields to develop my research questions and compare them with my own findings (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Throughout this research the sources of information, ethical considerations, raw data and discussions have been shared with my supervisors so that the dependability and confirmability can be ensured. Throughout the study the process is made clear and transparent so that there is a clear audit trail (Eldh et al., 2020).

3.10 Additional sources of data

Websites are important shop windows for schools and trusts and are an essential portal for conveying the trust's ethos and culture to potential parents, staff and other schools. As such they are very important in the context of both increased parental choice and increased school freedom (Wilson & Carlsen, 2016). In fact, I only used the trust websites or other sources (such as the DfE website) for very minor fact checking around how long trusts had been in existence and the numbers/phase of schools in them. This was for background information rather than for areas central to the study.

3.11 Ethical considerations

While there is no universal definition of what constitutes good ethical practice in research, there is widespread agreement about the general principles.

"Most commonly listed are those concerned with minimizing harm, respecting autonomy, preserving privacy, and acting equitably" (Hammersley, 2015, p. 435).

In this case I made extensive use of the *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) 2018.

Prior to all interviews I provided an information sheet with a link to the BERA guidelines and ensured that I obtained clear informed consent for my findings to be used. I made clear that the consent could be withdrawn at any time (British

Educational Research Association [BERA], 2018). The ethics forms are included as Appendix 3.

While it is valuable to start with a clear set of ethical principles, it is important to remember that specific situations may require a particular response during the research.

“Ethical judgments are essentially situational” (Hammersley, 2015, p. 445).

Bryman (2016) suggests that discussions about ethical transgressions in social research can be broken down into four main areas:

- Whether there is harm to participants
- Whether there is a lack of informed consent
- Whether there is an invasion of privacy
- Whether deception is involved (Bryman, 2016, p. 125)

In the context of my research into MATs, the risk of harm to participants is focussed on professional or reputational harm should they be identified; therefore, the principle of anonymity is crucial and great care was taken to ensure that it is not possible to identify individuals from their responses.

I have already touched on the importance of consent. In this study there was no covert observation or interviewing of children or others who may not be capable of giving informed consent. The focus was therefore on the use of a thorough consent form prior to the interview and a detailed explanation of the purpose and focus of the study. While it is not possible to describe in detail the direction that the research might take after an interview, it is important to recognise my responsibility to make the information provided as comprehensive as possible (Lichtman, 2013). It was

important to consider the ethical issues around electronic storage of the interview recordings which are in password protected files on my home computer (Lo Iacono et al., 2016).

The great value of semi-structured interviews is that they allow, or indeed require, the interviewer to establish a rapport with the subject. This process may involve some disclosure by the researcher of their background and context. It is important that while enabling the interviewee to be comfortable enough to discuss their feelings and perceptions, the researcher needs to ensure that participants do not feel that questions are intrusive.

The risk of deception in a face-to-face or online interviews with clearly informed consent is relatively limited. In line with the requirements of the GDPR (2018) and the BERA ethical guidelines (2018), I explained exactly what data I held, what it would be used for and how it would be stored (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2020). Participants were provided with the contact details of the researcher's supervisor and encouraged to check with the university if they had any concerns. The participants' information sheets contain all the details relating to data storage and permissions.

Chapter 4 Discussion and Analysis I

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will outline the RQs. I will then discuss in detail the participants' responses drawing on direct quotations and how they relate to the literature. This analysis and discussion are based around the RQs identified earlier in this study developed from the literature review in Chapter 2. The first area for discussion is succession planning. I will then move on to the role of formal training and qualifications in preparing trust leaders, the importance of work beyond schools and the impact of coaching and mentoring.

4.2 Research questions (RQs)

These theoretical areas led to the framing of three overarching RQs:

1. What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of succession planning in MATs?
2. What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of academy trust leadership development and how effective is it?
3. What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of organisational culture and how do they establish a positive trust culture while incorporating a number of schools with their own cultures?

Within these three overarching RQs, there are a number of more specific questions that are explored:

4.2.1 Leadership succession

- How engaged in succession planning are trust CEOs?
- What role does formal training play in preparing CEOs of MATs for their roles?
- What role does experience out of school play to become a trust CEO?
- What roles do coaching and mentoring play in supporting new CEOs?

4.2.2 Founding CEOs

- Is there something distinctive about founders?
- What role have professional networks played in supporting founding CEOs and their successors?
- How important is a CEO's professional credibility in the establishment of a trust?

4.2.3 School culture

- To what extent is the organisational culture of an academy trust determined by its founding CEO and their school?
- How does sponsorship influence the development of a culture?

Figure 8. Conceptual framework

4.3 Succession planning

- How engaged in succession planning are trust CEOs?
- What role does formal training play in preparing CEOs of MATs for their roles?
- How important is experience out of school for CEOs?
- What roles do coaching and mentoring play in supporting new CEOs?

Succession planning for MAT CEOs is in its infancy and in general in education, it has not been common, although this is changing as the recruitment and retention challenges increase (Cruickshank, 2018; Fusarelli et al., 2018). Education has much to learn from business about the importance of succession planning with an increasing awareness that this is an essential part of a HR function and is crucial at all levels in an organisation, particularly in leadership (Jackson & Dunn-Jensen, 2021).

Succession planning can be considered through the theoretical lens of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which, despite some challenges (Sniehotta et al., 2014) and modifications remains one of the most influential models for predicting human behaviour (Ajzen, 1991, 2011). In applying this model to succession planning it recognises that the desired outcome of the initiator (usually the incumbent CEO) and the acceptance of the outcomes by the reference group (in this case the board of trustees) and the notion of conformity with social norms predict the likelihood of the development of a successful succession plan (Sharma et al., 2003). The CEOs in this study all grasp that it is desirable to have a succession plan and that its development is a worthwhile and legitimate part of their role. As the general discourse in educational leadership increasingly focusses on this, it becomes a normal and acceptable area of work and discussion.

The business research into succession planning in family "founder led" firms which I have suggested is a reasonable "proxy" for founder led academy trusts suggests that they are even less likely to have developed succession plans than "subsequent-generation firms", partly due to a sense that founders find it very hard to let go and tend to want to "make themselves indispensable" (Umans et al., 2021, p. 660).

Two founder CEOs in this study articulate this clearly:

> *"When you've been so engrained in one institution and you've invested so much in it, it's actually very difficult to step away." Holly, Founder CEO*
>
> *"The next generation might be different, but I think our generation are founders and founders generally hang on to things vehemently" Ben, Founder CEO.*

This research supports the findings of LeCounte (2022) that “Founder-CEOs deliberate about the time when they will no longer lead their family-owned SME. Many business owners are unwilling to plan for inevitable leadership changes, making such transitions less likely to be successful. The CEO’s concerns may lead to succession stagnation” (LeCounte, 2022, p. 9) and Ibrahim’s finding about the reluctance of the founder CEO of a Canadian firm to manage his succession due to fears of his mortality (Ibrahim et al., 2001), in addition to earlier work by Lansberg (1998) and Devries (1988) who identified a fear of confronting mortality as part of the reason that founders find it hard to contemplate succession planning (De Vries, 1988; Lansberg, 1988).

In a study of 259 Belgium family firms, Unmans et al. (2021) found that “Founders have more difficulties with letting go, which negatively affects the SP level. This finding supports that associated with the family firm founders' inability to leave what they have created from scratch is their inability to plan for their succession” (Umans et al., 2021, p. 10) while second generation or successor CEOs who have experienced succession are more likely to think about and engage with the succession planning process (Umans et al., 2021).

See Table 10 below which indicates that almost half of founder CEOs have not considered section planning in this study while only one successor hasn’t. The data also suggest, as Unmans et al. (2021) point out, that this impact is more pronounced when the founder is male: “Particularly, we state that the negative influence of the CEO's inability to let go on the SP process is stronger for male CEOs than for female

CEOs" (Umans et al., 2021, p. 10) with three quarters of the founders who had not considered succession being male. This is, however, a very limited sample.

	Gender	**Pseudonym**	**Founder/ Successor**	**Considered succession planning or not?**
1	F	Jane	F	y
2	M	Peter	F	y
3	M	John	F	N
4	M	Neil	S	y
5	F	Janet	S	y
6	M	Gareth	S	y
7	F	Anne	F	y
8	F	Ruth	S	y
9	F	Megan	F	N
10	F	Jessica	F	y
11	M	James	F	N
12	M	Ben	F	N
13	F	Holly	F	y
14	F	Milly	S	N

Table 10 Have CEOs considered succession planning?

Unmans et al. (2021) in their study of Belgium family firms also identified that gender as well as founder/successor differences were important with a view that female CEOs are more likely to engage in succession planning as they are less likely to struggle to "let go" of their firm (Umans et al., 2021). This study does not look at the influence of gender in succession planning for academy trusts, but it would clearly be an interesting area for further research.

In this study two founder CEOs (one male one female) suggest that they have not really engaged in a conversation or planning with their trustees about succession planning.

> *"we've not considered it [succession planning] formally with the trust. The trust have very much considered [unclear] themselves, me as a problem on the risk register. Very much so. They asked us to go away and look at succession. You know, what happens if he falls off his bike a little bit too hard." James, Founder CEO*
>
> *[Have you considered succession planning for your role?] "Not really. We need to have that conversation. [Laughs] I'm in the twilight of my career, I think I need a change, maybe." Milly, Founder CEO*

Some CEOs have a clear idea of internal candidates that have been appointed and are, to an extent, being "groomed" as potential CEOs as made clear by Jane, Anne and Neil below:

> *"I think what we've done is we've recruited – so basically the person who we've got as Director of Education was one of our principals, came into the trust and then I would be – I feel that I've got somebody who could quite easily take over the Chief Exec role." Jane, Founder CEO*
>
> *"Yeah, I mean, [laughs] it's easy, to be honest … if I'm honest with you about who it is. The person I think who would do it is [x]. I don't know that you – you probably don't know him very well. He's an exceptional head, and led [school] into a really great place, from a really poor place. He's taken over at [another school in the trust], and he's, in six months; he's transformed [that school] and*

[it] will become a great school. What I recognise in him is that he has got many, many qualities that will transform the trust after me. I do think that he – I do, genuinely, think that he would be a great person to run the trust, and I have had an informal conversation in that, the kind of informal career exploration and so on". Anne, Founder CEO

"there's probably a couple of people that I would say are future CEOs in [x]. I'm definitely moving them into positions whereby I think in five years or so they could be ready to take that on". Anne, Founder CEO

"So in terms of the immediate, we've appointed a deputy chief executive from within who is excellent. We don't call her COO[Chief Operating Officer], but effectively she's what in most trusts would be a COO. We're all completely confident; when we went through her recruitment we did two things, one is she got a job description of what she does, she obviously had to get that. Secondly, could she be the chief executive for six months and the view is yes, she could be, but she probably wouldn't be the CEO after six months." Neil, Successor CEO

One of the limiting factors in having internal candidates in post is the size of the trust. Most trusts are still small with the vast majority of trusts having fewer than 10 schools (in June 2020) (Greany & McGinity, 2021a). Succession planning is linked to growth and the capacity to appoint deputy CEOs/internal candidates.

Matthews et al. (2011) reference the work of two well established trusts in succession planning and building future leadership capacity:

> "Outwood Grange and Trafford Partnership are among the first to grow executive headteacher capacity within their organisations. They now have three and two NLEs respectively. The CEO at Outwood Grange recognised that succession planning is essential at the top level of the organisation and to do that, prospective executive principals needed to be exposed to everything that he faces" (Matthews et al., 2011, p. 41).

The government white paper "Opportunity for all Strong schools with great teachers for your child" clearly identifies the need for trusts to reach a certain size in order to have the capacity to be effective and resilient; it states that:

> "We expect that most trusts will be on a trajectory to either serve a minimum of 7,500 pupils or run at least 10 schools." (Department for Education, 2022b)

Two CEOs in this study identify size as a limiting factor in their capacity to manage succession planning by having clearly identified internal successors in post:

> *"So, I think a lot about succession planning and the trust is not in a place where I wanted it to be at this age. I wanted those two secondary schools and those five primary schools. I wanted them for a reason really. I thought it was a good growth plan but also, I thought that would give me clear insight into my successor internally, who I would be able to put against an external field." Ben, Founder CEO*
>
> *"I haven't gone for the Deputy CEO role. I guess we're just not quite big enough to need that, I don't feel at the moment. In the future, yes it might be something. Because I suppose what you might be looking for is somebody who's got that headship experience." Janet, Successor CEO*

CEOs in this study also consider the issue of whether the second generation of trust CEOs will all be qualified teachers. This has been part of the discussion about MATs from their inception and there are a number of trust CEOs who have not been headteachers or qualified teachers (Menzies et al., 2018). One CEO in this study, while he is a qualified teacher, had not been a headteacher or deputy head but had been a Teaching School Alliance manager.

> *"I would probably start by saying there's a definite imposter syndrome … I haven't been a head teacher, I haven't even been a deputy head teacher of a school, so looking at the normal trajectory that people go through, I'm kind of one of those anomalies … When we had the Trust Network Meeting but actually everyone I think probably, apart from me, in the room had been a teacher, a deputy head teacher, a head teacher, an executive head teacher, an NLE and then a CEO." Gareth, Successor CEO*

Other CEOs are in the process of grappling with this issue and are considering whether their successor could come from the central team in an HR or finance role to take over as CEO as Ruth, John and Neil describe:

> *"So I sat down with the trust, and we had a long chat, and what I had noticed is although [x] is not a teacher and has never been a headteacher, they've got a lot of respect for [x]. The principals have got a lot of respect for [x], because [x] gets them out of the shit all the time. So she's brilliant at HR. She's brilliant at finance. She's brilliant at managing people. She's brilliant at empowering people. She's got all the bits you need a CEO to have. She's just not a headteacher, and so – it took me nearly – well, she only got made the Deputy*

CEO in September, and it's taken me all that time to persuade the Trust Board to have her as Deputy CEO." Ruth, Successor CEO

It is interesting to note that the trust that Ruth leads was established by business leaders as one of the early sponsored trusts (Hatcher, 2006) and while this is the only example in this study, it is interesting that the board in this case were willing to appoint a non-teacher as deputy CEO and potential CEO. In the context of succession planning Ruth goes on to say:

"Then if anything happens to me and I did end up hospital with COVID …. They need somebody young and vital and powerful that knows this trust like the back of her hand and can lead it.

Now, I'm not saying that she could lead the education bit, but the other thing I've done is I've got a Director of Education for the trust, so – and they're both paid the same. So I've got the Deputy CEO and my Director of Education … So if anything does happen to me, I have got one of them can carry on running, and they all know she's the boss". Ruth, Successor CEO

"[x], I've talked about her a number of times, she's really a class act, she really gets it, but obviously isn't so confident about the education side. Every other aspect of it, it's just really – without her, I couldn't be doing the job in this way. She's doing a great job. Previously worked in the police and did some great development work there. The estates work has been just one part of what she's done really well". John Founder CEO

"So although I talk about the importance of being a headteacher, I tell the trust board I don't think it's the most important thing. But actually, when they

appoint someone who's after me, that's not the thing they should look at as most important." Neil Successor CEO

"The first generation are people like you and me, who are heads who have gone on to other things, I think, but I'd be open minded about the next generation, where they come from. It is a job which will have appeal. It's the salary of a certain size which will appeal to people who are able to move. If you look at Christine Gilbert, I don't think she's got a teaching qualification. There are people running big organisations now, who might be doing a great job and very confident, but they're not necessarily old primary school teachers." John, Founder CEO

Some CEOs are absolutely convinced that their successor will still need to have been a headteacher, despite calls over recent years for the system to open up to non-teachers as school leaders to plug the gap caused by the perceived leadership crisis. In the 2016 report "The Schools Leadership Challenge 2022", James Toop and Brett Wigdortz argued that in order to combat the projected shortfall of school leaders in 2022 it was necessary for people from other professions to move into school leadership (Wigdortz & Toop, 2016). In a more recent article, the argument was considered again with Dan Worth in the *Times Educational Supplement* (*TES*) quoting Sir David Carter (former National Schools Commissioner) as saying:

"'I suspect 90 per cent of [current] CEOs have the same background that I did, as a teacher then a head,' he says. 'But I think that will begin to change as people realise you need someone who can run a complex organisation that

has a £50 million turnover and that the best people to do that may not be rooted in education but are from outside.'" (Worth, 2021)

James a founder CEO explains that he regards the credibility that he feels stems from having been a headteacher as essential:

> *"We have considered it (appointing a non-teacher), and I think that we – the general consensus is that we would still want to have somebody who has a background in teaching and learning, leading people to be the lead for the trust. I think we need that credibility with the school leaders, parents and so forth. To try and do something else, I mean my CFO[Chief Financial Officer] is fantastic, but he wouldn't have that credibility with head teachers in terms of growing the trust or working with others. It just wouldn't work." James, Founder CEO*

The discussion between CEO and trustees is crucial in thinking about succession planning as it is, of course, the trustees who have the statutory responsibility for appointing a CEO (Department for Education, 2020). The importance of developing a succession strategy with the board has been understood for some time (Huffington, 2020) and choosing the chief executive is potentially the most important thing a board of directors or trustees in any business do (Bingham, 2021). Despite the importance of this and the significant amount of business literature dealing with CEO succession planning the non-profit and public sector (including education) appears to be well behind the private sector with a study of succession planning in the US, Germany and Latin America suggesting that a majority of non-profit organisations do not have a written executive succession plan (Besel et al., 2021).

Planning ahead and ensuring that senior staff are recruited with the potential to be future CEOs is also a feature of some CEO's and board's thinking; Bingham (2021) suggests that ideally a CEO can hand over to an internal candidate who has been prepared for the role within the company for many years, although the size of the organisation is significant with larger organisations likely to have a large pool of potential successors (Bingham, 2021). This is significant in this study as most academy trusts are small organisations and have only been in existence for less than 10 years, meaning there is a smaller pool of senior staff and less time to develop them.

In the largest and longest established of the trusts in this study, the CEO is clear that they have been able to develop a candidate internally, and they have sufficient layers of senior leadership with a deputy CEO and several directors of primary, secondary, SEND etc. to have a pool of senior staff above headteacher level, as Neil explains:

> *"we've identified someone within our trust who's actually a primary director, who we think is very suitable to be a chief executive. We are developing him to be a chief executive of the trust. Now, time will tell when appointments arise, but in the event that I leave whenever, that he is a very strong internal candidate. So in a sense there's a definite internal candidate." Neil, Successor CEO*

The CEO of another large trust in this study, Jane, is clearly planning to develop internal candidates by recruiting staff with CEO potential:

> *"let's make sure that we are recruiting people who would have the potential to move up in the organisation. That is not to say, and I think it's really important to say, that what we haven't done is earmark those people as being*

the successor, but just trying to ensure that we've both recruited people of the sort of calibre with that in our minds always, and then invested in them and trained them so that they would be able to step up into those roles … Succession planning is a big feature of the work that we're doing. We're just starting a piece of work actually, where we're trying to really put that really at the heart of what we're doing. We're looking at our talent management plan, our people plan, if you like." Janet, Successor CEO

4.4 Formal training and qualifications in preparation for MAT leadership

As discussed earlier in studies related to business rather than education, there is evidence that CEOs' educational and career experience may influence how adaptive to change they are and therefore how successful they are at managing their succession (White et al., 1994). More recently King et al. (2016) found that there is evidence that formal qualifications such as MBAs which develop specific business skills contribute to better company performance (Beber & Fabbri, 2012; King et al., 2016).

The need for CEOs to learn quickly on the job as they move from the operational role of headteacher in a single school to the broader strategic role in a complex and often fast-growing organisation has been recognised by several recent authors (Ehren & Godfrey, 2017; Greany & McGinity, 2021a; Hughes, 2020). The new role involves a level of entrepreneurial and policy engagement skills (Greany & McGinity, 2021a) that is not usually required in running a single school, particularly if that school is within an academy trust.

In the past it was common for school leaders to gain the skills and experience needed for headship by working their way through the various roles in school and becoming a “first among equals”. Over the last 20 years in England a range of formal NPQs have contributed to a more strategic approach to leadership development (Jackson & Berkeley, 2020). In this study 13 out of 14 CEOs had been headteachers and described their professional progress through a variety of leadership roles in schools and the wider education system; this aligns with a smaller sample of five MAT CEOs in which Constantinides (2021) reported that 4/5 CEOs had been headteachers and that their experience of leading school improvement in individual schools was crucial to their ability to be an effective CEO (Constantinides, 2021a). Simon et al. (2021) similarly found that most of the 11 MAT CEOs in their study had been headteachers often of “outstanding” schools in Ofsted terminology and also leaders of Teaching School Alliances and so had experience of working beyond a single school (C. Simon et al., 2021).

In her case study of a trust CEO, Hughes (2020) describes the importance of the CEO having gained professional credentials through competency-based training and also having developed relationships with policy-makers through considerable network capital (Hughes, 2020).

It is clear that as academy trusts have come to proliferate, the role of CEO, while it emerges from a traditional conception of headship, has become very different from the role of headteacher. Culpin and Male (2022) state that:

> “MAT leadership requires different ways of thinking and working than required for headship of individual schools, especially so in organisations

which are loosely coupled in nature" (Culpin & Male, 2022, p. 305). A number of CEOs in this study identified how different the role of CEO and headteacher is including the only CEO in this sample who had not been a headteacher – Gareth:

"So, if I went and did an NPQEL there would be some people who have been head teachers for a couple of years and their experience and their needs will be very different to the role that I'm doing." Gareth, Successor CEO

"We brought in chief executives and chairs of trustees from other multi-academy trusts to present and reflect on what it looks like … I did feel that I needed some training, that actually being a chief executive is different to being a headteacher." Holly, Founder CEO

Hughes (2020) describes the CEO role as "Policy Networker, Entrepreneur and Broker" and describes how founding CEOs have created a new role for themselves that moves between different levels and roles but is much more strategic and has considerable autonomy and agency (Hughes, 2020, p. 482).

Most of the CEOs in the sample had completed the NPQH in preparation for headship while only one had finished the NPQEL and another was in progress. The NPQH was first introduced in 1996 and it was briefly compulsory for headteachers from 2007 before becoming optional again in 2012 (Cliffe et al., 2018; Greany & Earley, 2022; Lodge, 1998). In 2019 the government launched its proposals for a new suite of NPQs that very explicitly addressed the need for new professional development for staff working in MATs (Hinds, 2019; Williamson, 2020) and included a re-designed NPQEL. The provision of funding for all NPQs for school staff in the autumn of 2021 signals a

commitment to invest in professional development for schoolteachers and leaders at all levels including MAT CEOs.

The CEOs had mixed views of the value of the NPQH:

> *"Then I did the pilot NPQH which I did on the fast-track route. Well, I went to do it and then I was invited to do the fast-track route, which I think probably wasn't such a good idea because it was very fast and you didn't really get much of a training. You got the qualification but that wasn't exactly a good training course." Jane, Founder CEO*
>
> *"so I signed up to do NPQH, and I felt that that's actually one of the best trainings I've had in a long time. Although afterwards, when you become a headteacher after doing the NPQH, you realise they didn't cover half the things that you need to do as the head teacher." Ruth, Successor CEO*
>
> *"I was an early completer of NPQH. I did it as a head of Key Stage 3 alongside various other people. Some who were never going to be a head and some who have gone on to be heads and I'm still in close contact with. I think that was quite useful, all be it, you know what NPQH was like in those days. It was a bit of a slog." Ben, Founder CEO*
>
> *"For myself, I'm a product of the National College. (NPQH) … I think I really benefitted from being challenged to do them, and be able to relate with others, and work – so that whole experience of working with head teachers across the country, in Nottingham really – obviously NPQH, LA training, inspector training, all of that prepared me." James, Founder CEO*

"I actually liked NPQH. A lot of people slagged it off and said it was awful but I loved it." Peter, Founder CEO

In a study of English and Scottish headteachers who had been through the NPQH and SQH there was a similar range of views with many participants being unimpressed with much of the content but agreeing that completing the course had improved their confidence and that they had greatly valued the supportive professional networks they developed (Cowie & Crawford, 2009). This theme of the value of training being more in who you meet on the course than the content is common to some of the other courses cited by this group of CEOs not just the NPQH. Potter and Chitpin (2021), in a study of nine headteachers and their work to address issues of social injustice in schools, identified that the headteachers in the study found networks invaluable in supporting them and preventing them becoming too focussed on their own school context and isolated from good practice elsewhere in the network (Potter & Chitpin, 2021). Four CEOs in this study identified networking as one of the key benefits of formal training:

"Again, one of the best things about it – the course was very good, but again, it's not about the course and it's not about the material in the course. It's about who you're meeting, and so it was the first – because I don't know anybody in this area … But by doing that course, you had an opportunity to sit with 20 other CEOs in a room, and even if the course bit was rubbish, the fact that you could talk to other CEOs and realise that actually, maybe your trust wasn't as nuts as everybody else's trust." Ruth, Successor CEO

"I did the [SSAT] Executive Leader course which I found very valuable. I really did enjoy that. There were some trusts ahead of us and it was really good to go and meet those CEOs and head teachers and just pick up on some ideas and help to shape your views on alignments, standardisation, et cetera." Jessica, Founder CEO

"The other thing I did is I just went and spoke to a number of CEOs … and various people that I sort of thought, right, okay, I think they're doing a good job. I'll go and have a chat with them." Janet, Successor CEO

"We visited XXX Trust, XXX Trust et al., so we've had a lot of that, and really good networking." John, Founder CEO

Three of the CEOs in this sample did not report any formal training for the role at all. Indeed several seemed unaware of the wide range of courses available to them when asked, as shown by John and James below:

"No, no, I didn't. No. I suppose a lot of visits to trusts. I remember we went to visit XXX on several occasions, actually. I went there three or more times. X (the CEO) was very inspiring and very generous with his time … But nothing formal in terms of – I think there is a deficiency in terms of CEO progression in the system." John, Founder CEO

"I have not done any executive leader formal training and I could not I just haven't been able to see how I could justify the expense for what it would bring. I think I'm a – and that's not being arrogant – I think I'm just being practical here, I've had 20 years as a head teacher, and working with some really really

good people, where I've tried always to learn lots, particularly on the business side of things, to make sure I'm aware of that." James, Founder CEO

It is also interesting that while some founder CEOs did not undertake any formal CEO training before establishing the trust, they became aware of the need later as described by Milly and Holly below. Cliffe et al. (2018) suggest that "pre-service" training requires deliberate action and a clear willingness to learn new skills while "in-service" training tends to require less conscious effort and happens in a more ad hoc manner (Cliffe et al., 2018).

"No, not in that setup phase. I probably was so busy doing it that I didn't go and seek help.

Once I became CEO, I could do a CEO induction programme with the RSC[Regional Schools Commissioner]. That was really useful … Then you're there doing the job, and you think, oh, yeah. I get what you're talking about now. It's simple things like that, and governance structures and how to get that information flow going". Milly, Founder CEO

"So we kind of created our own training agenda really in terms of finding out how to do it. Subsequently, I did feel that I needed some training, that actually being a chief executive is different to being a headteacher. I think you'll have had the same experience, of still being the headteacher and being chief executive at the same time". Holly, Founder CEO.

It is noticeable that all the CEOs in this sample still seem to regard their identity as teachers as important and their professional development has been drawn from within the education sphere. The idea of school leader identity as either "professional

leaders" or "leaders of the profession" is drawn from Bøje and Frederiksen (2021) and while it emerges from research into Danish school leaders' professional development (Bøje & Frederiksen, 2021) it chimes with an on-going debate as to whether trust leaders need to be teachers.

> *"The size my trust is at the moment, I definitely think it would need to be an educationalist. To be honest, I just feel it gives you an insight. It keeps the heart where it should be, in education, I think." Janet, Successor CEO.*

Of the CEOs interviewed only one mentioned completing a master's degree early in her career and one other was part-way through a master's course. For many years it was felt that master's courses would continue to make a distinctive contribution to the professional development of senior managers in schools (Lodge, 1998), and while there are many master's courses offered in UK universities and they remain popular with teachers, it is clear that the CEOs in this sample had not felt that they were an essential part of their leadership development.

In an international study of recruitment of school leaders, while many jurisdictions had a requirement for some formal qualification, only the USA required a master's degree for teachers applying for a role as a school principal (Huber & Hiltmann, 2010). The value of master's degrees and the impact on professional development is considered in a research project into master's students in education carried out in five European countries by Kowalczuk-Waledziak et al. (2020) who found that master's students in England who were mostly experienced and senior teachers/ school leaders were particularly sceptical about the impact of their research and studies on their practice, although they were positive about the experience. Interestingly in Romania

and Portugal, master's students felt that the programme contributed significantly to their future professional practice. The benefit that most candidates from all the countries agreed on was an understanding of the role of research in education (Kowalczuk-Walędziak et al., 2020).

The CEOs in this study who had completed one of the courses by the independent providers such as Cambridge Education, The Ambition Institute and the SSAT which were all very practically focussed and relatively short-term valued them:

> *"I did the [SSAT] Executive Leader course which I found very valuable. I really did enjoy that." Jessica, Founder CEO*
>
> *"So I did the course that you and I both did, is it Ambition? I think it …*
>
> *Ambition – the executive leaders course, wasn't it? Yeah. I found that brilliant. I thought that was excellent. Before that I did the Specialist Schools and Academy Trust training course for executive principals, I think it was. I also did a very good course that Cambridge Educational Associates did around being a CEO. That was a really practical course – this is how you run a trust board; this is how you do that." Jane, Founder CEO*
>
> *"I did do Ambition's CEO course. Again, one of the best things about it – the course was very good, but again, it's not about the course and it's not about the material in the course. It's about who you're meeting." Ruth, Successor CEO*

The Regional Schools Directors (RD) in some areas run new CEO induction programmes and facilitate local networks of CEOs. These have been seen as very practical hands-on programmes and the value of strong educational networks for school leaders are well established and discussed in more detail elsewhere in this

study. One CEO also referred to having worked as an Ofsted inspector as a valuable part of his preparation for trust leadership. Many school leaders have at various times worked as Additional Inspectors for Ofsted (Waldegrave & Simons, 2014) and one of the reasons is to help them prepare their own school for success in future inspections (Ofsted, 2021). Up to 2700 Additional Inspectors have been employed many of them serving school leaders, in 2011 the recruitment of serving headteachers of "Good" and "Outstanding" schools was made a key performance indicator with a view to allowing them to share best practice and to build bridges between the inspectorate and the wider profession in a move welcomed by many heads (Baxter, 2013). This remains common with around 800 school leaders currently working as Ofsted inspectors (Carr, 2022). James, a founding CEO, described how inspector training had benefited him:

> *"so that whole experience of working with head teachers across the country … LA training, inspector training, all of that prepared me." James, Founder CEO*

Jane describes working for Ofsted as a school inspector while serving as a school leader:

> *"That was at the time when Ofsted started. So I became a – well all of the advisory team did the training, which in those days was a week-long course with exams … so I did the secondary and the primary Ofsted qualification, so I then did some Ofsted inspection alongside my role as an advisor." Jane, Founder CEO*

The evidence from this study would suggest that trust CEOs have arrived in post with considerable variation in formal executive leadership preparation, partly as some

were relatively early CEOs at a time when the formal training offer such as the NPQEL was still being developed, but also because they have a wide range of levels of experience and attitudes to formal training. The idea that formal qualifications such as the NPQEL are not enough to equip future CEOs is identified in a recent case study of CEOs (Culpin & Male, 2022). Most CEOs in this study clearly felt that a relatively long career working up through the levels of school leadership and wider system leadership was what had equipped them with the skills and knowledge required to lead a MAT. The one consistent theme is that all found the greatest value in building strong professional networks and working and talking with colleagues in similar roles, as discussed later.

4.5 Experience out of school

In a wide ranging study of educational leadership in many countries for the OECD, Pont et al. (2008) found that providing opportunities for school leaders to work in educational administration or consultancy roles beyond schools had the benefit of spreading best practice and making the career of school leaders more rewarding and sustainable (Pont et al., 2008). Earley (2020) also makes an impassioned plea for sabbaticals for school leaders that will help school leaders survive as well as giving them valuable experience beyond the school setting (Earley, 2020). Seven of the CEOs in this study described having worked in roles outside school. Some reflected on jobs prior to becoming a teacher and some who, during their career, moved to roles in LAs, national regulatory organisations, educational businesses or trade unions.

The experience of working in LAs had particular relevance for three CEOs in this sample as there are direct parallels to the work of a trust CEO in supporting multiple

schools, which had been valuable, as well as the understanding of how LAs work and relationships with key staff as Neil, Jane and Megan explain:

> *"So I think as a director of education we had more good moments than bad moments, but in a week we'd have an outstanding inspection and a special measures inspection. So it was constantly a rollercoaster across the authority of things going better, things getting worse. You sort of had to just be able to take it in your stride and not be too knocked down. It felt to me like watching your football team, to not be over-elated by a victory and over-depressed by defeat. I think in a trust it's a bit like that." Neil, Successor CEO*
>
> *"I was seconded to a position as Advisory Teacher for History, working for [the LA]. That was – that would have been in the '80s because that was at the time when the national curriculum came in. So my post was 4 to 19[age], so that was really interesting. So I went from being a secondary teacher to working cross-phase. I think actually that has been quite instrumental in – certainly it's been incredibly useful in being a Chief Exec of a cross-phase organisation … I'd sat in heads' offices, I'd had conversations with heads. I'd had difficult conversations with heads. So I'd done it before, it wasn't new." Jane, Founder CEO*
>
> *"I worked at County Hall for a term, so built some relationships there." Megan, Founder CEO*

Two CEOs in the group reflected on the value of their careers prior to teaching and how it was of value to them in the role as a trust leader

"I was actually an engineering geologist. Therefore, I had to manage my own time and work with others and bring them along with me. So, I think there was an element of that I took into education which allowed me to progress quite quickly." Ben, Founder CEO.

"I worked in educational software writing and authoring their content and then they went through a series of corporate buyouts … but I'd got the taste for that kind of world." Gareth, Successor CEO

4.6 What roles do coaching and mentoring play in supporting new CEOS?

Building on the growing use of coaches and mentors by business leaders which has been described as "meteoric" over the last 20 years (Hawkins, 2008), coaching and mentoring are increasingly widely used by school and trust leaders (Bryant, 2020; Speirs & Berkeley, 2020) and many report that they find them more valuable than generic training courses.

Mentoring from both within education and from business are also felt to be very valuable (Cliffe et al., 2018), with mentoring being "sharing expertise and some guidance" (Whitmore, 2010, p. 249) and this is echoed by the CEOs in this study. There is evidence in the business literature of the value of experienced mentors for CEOs (de Janasz & Peiperl, 2015) and the importance of mentoring schemes for school leaders is not new; it was first introduced as early as 1992 through the Headteacher Mentoring Pilot Scheme. The support for mentoring continued through the various early headteacher training initiatives such as the Headteachers' Leadership and Management Programme (HEADLAMP) and Headteacher Induction Programme (HIP)

supported by the NCSL (Hobson & Sharp, 2005). Matthews et al. (2011), in their review of professional development for the NCSL, identify that effective leaders share their experience through mentoring and coaching less experienced colleagues (Matthews et al., 2011).

Ben, Gareth and Milly were helped in finding a mentor by national organisations such as Academy Ambassadors which is now part of the DfE funded New Schools Network (Long, 2021) while others were recommended through their own networks or by their chair of trustees.

> *"Academy Ambassadors – free CEO mentors, and I did apply, and got matched with somebody in London, and he has been absolutely my lifeline." Milly, Founder CEO.*
>
> *"The New Schools Network … a mentoring programme … one came through, I suppose I can confess to you, there was a little bit of me that thought, I'm a bit of an old dog really, I'm not sure I've got much capacity to learn new tricks from another trust that's somewhere up the country. So, I was a bit uncertain, but I put myself in for it anyway because I think you've got to be progressive. I do recognise that I am – although I've been a CEO for four years, the trust is small and therefore I haven't been through that growth journey that other trusts have been through. So, I went along with it and they paired me up … We had a really good conversation last week." Ben, Founder CEO*
>
> *"I got this email one day, saying did I want to part of a Trust Development Programme … What it is, is they've identified groups of trusts that have [stopped] more than grown, and what structures have they had to put in place*

to allow growth, have been successful with it, paired with a start-up trust. Similar position to how we started, to help you work with that CEO [to align the journey], and it's with somebody in [city] which is just absolutely fascinating, working with a CEO, it's a completely different context. Very large primary schools, huge deprivation, really high pupil premium, how they've grown their trust. That's really useful." Gareth, Successor CEO

Hobson and Sharp (2005) found that there was considerable evidence that both headteachers receiving mentoring and their mentors reported that it was effective, although there was little empirical evidence to support this (Hobson & Sharp, 2005).

Four of the CEOs in this study referred to having specific coaching as opposed to more general mentoring; in this context coaching is less focussed on providing advice based on expertise as a school leader and more about using skilful questioning to allow the CEO to develop their own thinking and answers in order to enhance their awareness and performance (Boon, 2022).

"I have one-to-one sessions with the – coaching sessions, with [x], on a monthly basis, and again, that's been really helpful. I can think of several occasions when I've been dealing with something really quite thorny. I've really benefited from those sessions, to find a way through. Because if headship's lonely, being CEO is even more lonely, isn't it?" Anne, Founder CEO

"Having [x] as a coach has been helpful, so I've worked with him, he's worked with our leadership team … He's been helpful in helping me think, I suppose." Megan, Founder CEO

"one of the things that we did in the last 12/18 months is we buy in an executive coach called [x] who leads up the coaching element of all our leadership programmes." Gareth, Successor CEO

"I've got a coach, which is a bit intermittent but … I've got his coaching." James, Founder CEO

While the three CEOs in this study who reported having coaching all regarded it as generally positive it is important to recognise that coaching remains an unregulated profession (Hawkins, 2008) and there is a lack of hard evidence for the positive impact of coaching for school leaders.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has considered the CEOs' perceptions of leadership succession planning; there is a discussion of the importance of the size and stage of development of a trust when considering a succession plan. The CEOs reflect on the wide range of leadership development courses they have undertaken over their career and in preparation for their CEO role. There is a discussion of the role of coaching and mentoring that six of the CEOs in the study had benefitted from.

The next chapter looks at founder CEOs and what makes them different from successors.

Chapter 5 Analysis II: Founding CEOs

In this chapter I continue the analysis of the data gathered and focus on the participants' perception of the distinctive role and nature of founding CEOs. Three sub-questions are particularly analysed:

Q. Is there something distinctive about founders?

Q. What role have professional networks played in supporting founding CEOs and their successors?

Q. How important is a CEO's professional credibility in the establishment of a trust?

5.1 Is there something distinctive about founders?

It is widely accepted in the business literature on founding CEOs that founders have distinct personality characteristics that have an impact on the organisation, its culture and success (Hendricks et al., 2022). There is considerable evidence in the business literature that while the skills and personalities of founders may make them suited to founding an organisation they may not be the right person to grow and develop the enterprise (Wasserman, 2003). The literature is, unsurprisingly, divided on whether founder succession is good, bad or neutral for the success of the company (Kaehr Serra & Borzillo, 2013).

The notion of founders suffering from founder's syndrome has been discussed in Chapter 2. There is evidence that some founders suffer from a narcisistic tendancy and can become very controlling (Ceaser, 2018; Kislenko, 2022).

Gareth and Janet, both successor CEOs, reflect on the character of their predecessor the founder CEO:

> *"[x] was definitely a surgeon; she was needed to set the trust up because it probably wouldn't have happened. I think it was easier for us because [x] made clear even before the trust had arrived that she had been talking about her exit strategy before we were a trust." Gareth, Successor CEO*
>
> *"I can remember in the interview process, a couple of the governors or directors kind of asking me, right, basically, these are big shoes to fill. How are you going to be able to live up to this, sort of thing? I can remember getting a little bit shirty at one point … You know, some suggestion that, would I feel inferior or something, because I didn't have this great accolade? I said, look, I don't feel I lack intellect, so I don't feel that I have anything to particularly prove on that. You know, so I did sort of push back a bit." Janet, Successor CEO*

The succession from founder to second generation can occur as a two-stage process as described by Janet:

> *"He then went on – yeah, he became CEO of the trust. I became the principal there. Yes, I sort of took over from him at that point. Then, when he then in 2018, decided that he was going to retire, then they advertised nationally the role for that. So, although, I guess there may have been some succession planning in selecting somebody to take on the role of principal there, I'm not sure. It wasn't a shoe in, you know. It wasn't like it was obvious that I was going to be his successor, although that is then what later sort of came to pass. I obviously got the job as the CEO. Yeah." Janet, Successor CEO.*

There is also variation in views about the extent to which the founder can or should be involved in the selection of their successor:

> *"I don't think it had been planned really. The founder, I think, had been very clear that he had another year to go, 18 months to go, all of those sorts of things. So I think he gave the trust plenty of notice of his thoughts towards retirement, which is what he was doing. Probably the extent of their succession planning was him saying to me we're looking around for a new chief executive, any suggestions?" Neil, Successor CEO.*

There have been well documented examples of "founding super heads" who got things very wrong and clearly suffered from founder's syndrome (Block & Rosenberg, 2002; Ceaser, 2018) and this led to the failures of the trusts they established such as Perry Beeches, Durand, Barnfield, Lilac Sky Schools Academy Trust and Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT) (Ball, 2018; Pain, 2019; Vaughan, 2016). This is reflected by one of the CEOs in this study:

> *"The pressure on founders, I think that pressure to be up there, to be a celebrity in education, to be so feted that you're the sponsor and all of that, I think certainly for the trust I worked in, became so big it tilted them to go over the line in terms of things*." Neil, Successor CEO

The notion that founding CEOs are more intrinsically risk takers with entrepreneurial skills is common in the business literature (Hongdiyanto, 2018; McConaughy & Phillips, 1999) and is identified as a key characteristic of founder CEOs of MATs by James, one of the founding CEOs in this this study:

"Well, I think we know that there's the entrepreneurial spirit that has to lie within you, and that's around risk-taking isn't it, or opportunistic risk-taking." James, Founder CEO

This entrepreneurial aspect of MAT leadership is identified by several authors as a key aspect of the role and one that constituted one of the founding principles of the academy movement (Daniels, 2012; Greany & McGinity, 2021a; Hatcher, 2006; Hughes, 2020; Woods et al., 2007). Hughes (2020) identified it as one of four elements in her detailed study on one MAT CEO.

It involves playing a role in a hierarchical government system and involvement in policy development and implementation as a recognised credible educational expert, with a legitimate place in civic society, as an entrepreneur, understanding the educational "marketplace" as having well developed professional networks (Hughes, 2020).

The element of an appetite for risk (Woods et al., 2007) and personal drive are needed to establish a MAT, as described below by Milly and James:

"At that time, I was approached by a group of primary schools, saying, actually, we hear you're looking at a multi-academy trust, we're starting to think about it. Can we bring that discussion together? But that was really hard to navigate the ship through it, because at that point, I wasn't CEO, it was just an idea, but somebody has got to grasp the nettle and push it forward, to make the application to the RSC and so on. I stepped into that role, became CEO designate." Milly, Founder CEO

"Well I think we know that there's the entrepreneurial spirit that has to lie within you, and that's around risk-taking isn't it, or opportunistic risk-taking. When you're brought up in a world which is just so – everything's going wrong and you're told to fill in your written register before you leave the house in the morning, I think it's perhaps not been the best thing in terms of encouraging entrepreneurial behaviours within the public sector. I think that's – however, and there's the other side to it, in the period which I now refer to as the Wild West." James, Founder CEO

It is worth noting that there is considerable evidence that the notion of the CEO as the sole source of entrepreneurial drive in an organisation is contested (Willard et al., 1992). James went on to voice his concerns about the potentially macho culture of some founding CEOs, reflecting some of the failures of early trusts identified above and echoing Kulz (2017) in her description of Sir Michael Wilshaw as a gunslinging lone ranger character (Kulz, 2017) and Bennett (2004) with his cowboy university leaders (Bennett, 2004) clearly suffering from the ego-centric founder's syndrome (Block & Rosenberg, 2002).

"There were some cowboys who used that entrepreneurial spirit but misused that entrepreneurial spirit. When it was misused, we saw character traits which were circling around large egos, masculine, traditionally masculine behaviours, language of takeovers, domination, strong leadership, interpreted to be harsh leadership. That kind of thing and those people really changed the system." James, Founder CEO

"But now I think we need something different. Again, I go back to this different zeitgeist. The days of the cowboys are over and the Wild West is gone; we have a much more legitimised playing field to work on with the ESFA and much more lined up. Plus we've got expectation of the public and of the profession which are far higher in terms of people's ethical behaviour and about working for all children, rather than just lording your results over others. I think there's a change in the people we lead, there's much more focus on doing the right thing in the right way, rather than it all costs, and it doesn't matter how you do it, just get your progress 8 in.

I think things have changed, and people have seen the shallowness and downside of that. So the new leaders are going to have to be, I think – we don't need the dinosaurs of the past, we need a new generation that are highly skilled communicators, networkers, still have a strong entrepreneurial spirit to take opportunities, to be able to balance risk against opportunity and do the right thing." James, Founder CEO

Daniels' (2012) study of senior leaders in 24 early academy trusts shows that some academy leaders clearly felt that they were expected to be entrepreneurs, quoting the leader of one of the academies in his study (Academy 22) who argued that autonomy "requires" school leaders (SLs) to become more entrepreneurial: "one of the consequences of schools becoming more autonomous independent institutions is that headteachers are forced to think more laterally, entrepreneurially, about their role" (Daniels, 2012, pp. 185-186). He identifies two types of senior leaders: those (a small minority) with a very business-focussed entrepreneurial drive and those (the

vast majority of his sample) with a more ethically driven style of social entrepreneurship as distinct from financial entrepreneurship.

> "With respect to the field of entrepreneurism, few academies would appear to be best described as financially entrepreneurial. In two cases only (Academies 11 and 24) had the SLs[school leaders] deliberately set out to establish 'trading arms' to market a particular product for which they had identified a niche in the educational market" (Daniels, 2012, p. 202).

The risk-taking element of entrepreneurism is manifested in a number of areas including the process of growing an academy trust through a mergers and acquisitions process (Greany & Higham, 2018; Greany & McGinity, 2021b). The language of mergers and acquisitions is itself drawn from the private sector. As a CEO of a trust that has grown to include seven schools and having been through the due diligence process with schools that were in Special Measures and "triple Requires Improvement" in Ofsted judgements and with financial deficits, leaky roofs, complex staffing issues and on-going capability procedures, I have been very aware of the element of risk both to the organisation and personal professional risk to me as the CEO if a growth project goes wrong. A number of CEOs in this study refer to the process of growth and mergers either or in their own trust or in others they know of. Anne describes an ultimately unsuccessful process:

> *"we were actually embarking on a merger. At one point, actually, about a year ago, in November, we were looking at a three-way merger …*
>
> *For various sort of local political reasons, it didn't happen.*

That was actually a really interesting exercise, because we went through all this process, and again, we were adopting the very democratic, yeah, we're all in this together, we're all on a level. Then, as we went through the process, we thought, hang on a minute, this is ridiculous. We are way ahead, in terms of our function, as a MAT than either of these other two trusts, for, again, different reasons.

Then, our trust board, at one point, said, hang on a minute, why are we doing all this? We don't want to give up the [x] name. We don't want to create something new. If they want to join us, that's fine." *Anne, Founder CEO*

Another founding CEO identifies the desire to grow to a point where the trust is seen by the RSC as a strong trust with capacity for further growth rather than one suitable to merge.

"We've definitely tried to build ourselves up to be a strong enough trust to stand alone and be counted by the RSC in terms of future growth. I know that my team and I was – they wouldn't want a merger with another trust if they were going to lose their identity, they really wouldn't want that. I think they've invested too much." Jessica, Founder CEO

This reflection certainly echoes my own experience of discussions with my trustees and senior team.

Another founding CEO (John) links the discussion of trust merger to succession planning for his successor:

"They did explicitly have a conversation about, is this the moment to seek out a merger, as a group of 10 schools. They decided no, because we, if the agenda

is about having very big trusts, and very big teaching school alliances and hubs and away from small and niche, then we're a middle-sized group, which is not completely viable in their terms. But we're open to new partners joining us, and they were quite affirmative in that no, we don't want to take advantage of CEO turnover in order to cosy up to [X trust] or another group. They've had that conversation." John, Founder CEO

Other CEOs have also highlighted the risks and issues that other trusts have taken on or where mergers have been a result of a trust failure, such as Milly and Janet:

"I know of some mergers have happened where trusts have got into difficulty and have been disbanded or whatever. But it's a new phase, isn't it, where strong trusts might combine." Milly, Successor CEO

"We have never done that thing which some trusts have done that have really grown rapidly, like somewhere like [x Trust], where you've got a merger. That's where these trusts literally overnight, don't they, almost double in size. That hasn't happened. It's felt like it's quite steady organic growth, even though it has been, I suppose, if you look over that period of time, over five years. Over five, six years, it has probably tripled in size.

We've turned down a number of offers from the RSC around that. Because it's always been firmly my view that you don't take on another school unless you've absolutely got the capacity and you know that you're going to (a) be able to improve that school and (b) not at the detriment of what you've got.

Because we've had a number of particular challenges within the schools that we've got, when they've approached us – when the RSC's approached me a

few times about different schools, I've said, no, sorry, we're just not going to look at that because I'm not in a position where I feel that we can do that. We haven't just taken anything, as it were. We have been quite careful over the growth." Janet, Successor CEO

These reflections demonstrate that while trust CEOs may need an element of entrepreneurial drive, they recognise the need to balance risk and benefit. It also suggests that the desire for growth through mergers and acquisitions is informed by RSC (now RD) policy and the feeling that trusts need to protect themselves as organisations by being an acquirer rather than the subject of an enforced merger or acquisition.

The level of personal investment in the organisation by founders is a significant factor in the business literature and is echoed by CEOs in this study. The relationship of the founder to the organisation is very close (Kaehr Serra & Borzillo, 2013) with "huge emotional and financial capital in their company" (Hinks, 2011, p. 24) and their character is evident in its organisational culture (Schein, 1983). This relationship can be described as "stewardship" defined as "the unusual devotion to the continuity of the company through the assiduous nurturing of a community of employees and by seeking closer connections with customer … stewardship places the long-term interests of a group ahead of an individuals" (Chen et al., 2016, p. 5112). Holly, Milly and Ben explain that founder CEOs have a high degree of stewardship because they are very emotionally invested in the long-term prospects of the company and the family's investment and the company reputation.

“When you've been so engrained in one institution and you've invested so much in it, it's actually very difficult to step away.” Holly, Founder CEO

“I loved working with him [the chair of trustees], just doing the landscape, the branding, what is a multi-academy trust doing? Coming down to the name, what does the name mean, there were a lot of options around that, should we go geographical, should we go with something with meaning?” Milly, Founder CEO

“I just feel the writing’s on the wall in terms of multi-academy trusts and I wanted to be in at an early stage. Like most of us, I wanted to guide the future of the school that I’d helped to make outstanding and stand on its own two feet. I wanted to make sure that that was at the centre of things in the future.” Ben, Founder CEO

This concern about the characters of some founders was echoed by Holly, a founder CEO:

“*I think the ethical leadership piece is for me what's important. I don't think MAT CEOs are the best advert for multi-academy trusts. I don't take a lot of pleasure in being in a room full of MAT CEOs … talking about how many schools they've got, as if they're like bumper stickers on their engines.” Holly, Founder CEO*

Networking and network theory has been discussed previously in this study and it is clear this is a key attribute of founding CEOs. The importance of valuing networks and being driven to be ahead of the game is described by Ben, a founder CEO:

"So, I took that opportunity to start a teaching school … That kept me really interested for a couple of years. I really enjoyed the teaching school and the challenges of setting up a teaching school and so forth. But then once again, the itchy feet start to settle in after a couple of years and I also felt – I'd already turned [school] into a single academy trust – I also felt – I'm passionate about staying ahead of the game and keeping an eye on the local landscape and the national landscape and trying to guess what's coming next and be ready for it. Back then in 2015, I did strongly feel, and I do strongly feel that the future is going to be multi-academy trusts." Ben, Founder CEO

This restlessness is also identified by Anne, a founder CEO:

"I think a lot of it was to do with the knowledge that I had. Maybe it's the kind of person I am. I like – I do like to look out and I do like to look for, what's the next thing? What's the next big piece of growth? What's the big next development that we can do? So, I tend to grab those and will communicate them with enthusiasm and energy, to others. Maybe that was possibly part of it." Anne, Founder CEO

The ability to see the big picture is also one of the characteristics that Jane describes herself as having:

"I think I'm quite tough, I don't dwell on things. I think I've got that sort of interest in strategy, the ability to see the big picture and put the pieces together and work it out that way. Definitely you have to be very hard-working but you can't be a perfectionist." Jane, Founder CEO

The route into becoming a founding CEO via existing school to school support is a common one and is described by Peter:

> *"So we were working very closely with them; they decided that they would like us to set up a being a trust. I'm, okay we'll do it with you guys, and I found out that was quite good. It was a new challenge. It was very close; it was only two schools like that. I can still run [my school], still do that job that I love because it has been my biggest concern is missing the whole being the head teacher bit." Peter, Founder CEO*

The founder CEOs in this study share a sense of having been part of a unique moment in education and are deeply connected to the academy trusts that they have founded. There is a strong sense of values that can be viewed through the prism of Stewardship Theory which itself has roots in stakeholder theory (Caldwell et al., 2008) and positions the leaders of the trusts as stewards whose values are strongly aligned with those of the stakeholders in the organisations that they have built (Chrisman, 2019). While there is an undoubted level of self-interest and entrepreneurial behaviour, there is a deep sense of values and ethical leadership that seeks to build an educational organisation that supports its community and improves the outcomes for students.

5.2 Networking and networks

The founder CEOs in this study describe growing MATs from their existing local networks with local primary schools, partner secondary schools or as a result of sponsorship of "failing schools".

There is a growing focus on networks of MAT CEOs and the government's focus on the "Self Improving School System" (Hargreaves, 2012) and "System Leadership" (Hatcher, 2008; Hopkins, 2007; Matthews et al., 2011) both of which rely on professional and personal networks of school leaders and a networked system of schools (Hadfield & Ainscow, 2018; Matthews et al., 2011; Southworth & Quesnay, 2005).

Matthews et al. (2011) identify the risks that, within the trust system, the strong ties within trusts mean that staff are cut off from experience beyond the organisation and become inward looking (Matthews et al., 2011). Jane below recognises the importance of links beyond her trust:

> *"I think collaborating outside of your own trust is absolutely essential. You've got to know where the best practice is and the only way you can do that really is through working in networks." Jane, Founder CEO*

Due to the widespread overlap of Teaching School Alliances and MATs (Greany & Higham, 2018) and the sponsorship of "failing" schools by MATs there is a clear connection between MATs and wider system leadership. The importance of the networks and professional standing or "capital" of the school leaders who established and, in many cases, still run MATs is central to their development. Ben reflects on the value of having led a Teaching School Alliance:

> *"The partnership value you gain from the professional generosity that comes out of working at a teaching school … I believe I've got a fairly good network of contacts in comprehensive, primary, secondary, MATs, that I can pick up the phone to and just say, look, what do you think about this, I'm thinking of doing*

this. What do you think about this? What do you do? I found that invaluable over the years." Ben, Founder CEO

In a study involving interviews with CEOs and trustees working in eight MATs, Baxter and John (2021) found that all the CEOs in their study had well developed networks that they could call upon in developing trust strategy. These networks while valuable, are to some extent, limited by the competitive environment that trusts operate in which limits information sharing (Baxter & John, 2021). Fortheringham et al. (2021) found that local/regional networks that developed originally informally from partnerships of colleagues in an area were the most powerful, as highlighted by Janet:

"The informal side of that is always terribly important. Then there's the informal, particularly there would be the being part of the [x region] Leaders' Network. That was always good. You'd bump into all sorts of people there. There would be a lot of informal stuff as well as the formal stuff that went on alongside that. Networking is very important. Learning from others is probably the way I learn most, to be honest." Janet, Successor CEO

Hughes (2020) describes powerfully the importance of "network capital" for a CEO in her case study of on a trust leader. She describes how networking skills enable the CEO to move through a variety of interconnected spaces such as Ofsted, the DfE and Parliamentary Select Committees as well as local councils and other community leaders. These powerful network relationships are credited with direct tangible benefits such as kit sponsorship for a school and access to large funding streams (Hughes, 2020). Peter describes some of the groups he has become involved with:

"I'm part of an on and off Ofsted consultative group for early years and I'm on a DfE COVID response group and I'm on [x's] primary exec group. So at the moment the two COVID ones are important, but the Ofsted one is annoying but interesting always to be able to have those robust conversations. So being able to talk in that tier with those people, even though I don't always like the way it plays out on the ground, have quite a lot to say about what the process is actually like as a leader when you're doing a really difficult bit of work and you just feel hauled over the coals rather than recognised or celebrated in that role as an NLE normally." Peter, Founder CEO

During the COVID pandemic many networks have moved into the online space and in a study of the social media networks of school principals in the US, Rehm et al. (2020) found that this has become a very important space for the sharing of information, specific resources and experiences. This evidence is supported by a study by Fotheringham et al. (2022) of English school leaders who found that self-organised networks were very effective in supporting school leaders to navigate the complex policy landscape (Fotheringham et al., 2022). Networks and peer support have also been identified as a crucial way of supporting the well-being of school leaders and reducing the risk of "burn-out" (DeMatthews et al., 2021). This adds to the wider research on the importance of social capital and the understanding of the importance of networks that the participants in this study identified (Rehm et al., 2021).

"COVID again has reinforced the importance of those strong networks between CEOs and heads and the ability to have trusted colleagues in different organisations that you can talk to." John, Founder CEO

While social media and online/remote meetings have become increasingly important for school leaders during the restrictions due to COVID, most of the subjects in this study are over the age of 50 and experienced headteachers and CEOs and this might explain in part a preference for face-to-face networks over social media as Janet suggests:

> *"You've got to know where the best practice is and the only way you can do that really is through working in networks unless you spend your whole life on Twitter, which I'm not a great user of." Jane, Founder CEO*

This is consistent with a study in the US of school principals and their informal networks which demonstrated a clear preference for face-to-face/in-person professional learning and networking with the least experienced school leaders (in post for less than four years) most likely to favour the online environment (Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020).

Studying the relationships between the actors in educational systems is increasingly applied in educational research into school collaboration and wider policy reform (Woodland & Mazur, 2018) and the CEOs in this study highlight the importance of relationships for support and peer learning.

> *"I think what helps you get through that is collaborating with other heads in the local area. I don't think you can do that job or any job in education unless you do that, and trusting people." Ruth, Successor CEO*
>
> *"I can pick up the phone to and just say, look, what do you think about this, I'm thinking of doing this. What do you think about this? What do you do? I found that invaluable over the years. I'm always seeking advice from colleagues,*

those that are less experienced from me, because they sometimes bring great ideas to the table and those that are more experienced than me. I think it's the only way to operate." Ben, Founder CEO

The social network approach highlights the importance of both relationships and structures. Relationships are important as they inform the way in which individuals within the system interact and the level of trust that exists between them. Trust or relational elements of social capital have been identified as one of the most important factors influencing the effectiveness of networks (Daly & Finnigan, 2012). Trust is highlighted as a crucial issue by John and Holly:

"COVID again has reinforced the importance of those strong networks between CEOs and heads and the ability to have trusted colleagues in different organisations that you can talk to." John, Founder CEO

The importance and challenge of trust between CEOs is highlighted by Holly who describes the difficulties of maintaining professional trust when there is competition for growth:

"But I think that's where developing those networks can be difficult, because you're trying to build up a sense of trust and openness and cross-MAT support. Then behind the scenes there might be things or conversations going on that might mean that it's difficult. The real example is pitching for a new school. You're meeting with your MAT leaders, your MAT CEOs and nobody is putting on the agenda who's going for the free school." Holly, Founder CEO

Structures are also important as they provide the framework that creates opportunities and constraints for the actors within the network. Actors within social

networks can be both individuals and organisations in this area; this is an important consideration as within schools, individual school leaders have been fundamental to the development of the networks that have developed in creating MATs and as we move beyond the "founding period". There are now established trusts that are no longer led by the founders; organisations with a culture that has grown beyond the initial period.

Many of the CEOs in this study also point to the importance of rust-specific national structures/organisations as forums for sharing best practice and gathering information. The organisation most commonly cited is the Confederation of School Trusts (CST) which has become a well-regarded voice for academies in the system and been particularly effective in working with the DfE and other sector bodies (Taneva et al., 2021; Woods et al., 2021).

> *"You can't have these islands. If we really want to make a difference, it's strength in numbers, and that's why I love CST. CST has been a massive – that's been training for me." Ruth, Successor CEO*
>
> *"We are now a member of CST and I find Leora's thinking interesting and challenging. I quite like her clarity and her gentle but relentless determination to be heard and to have the voice of trusts heard." Megan, Founder CEO*
>
> *"The CST – I'm sure you're in the CST. I think this CST has been hugely helpful as well." Ben, Founder CEO*
>
> *"Mm, definitely. I think our [region] group … I think that's really important, and CST, of course – brilliant, absolutely brilliant." Anne, Founder CEO*

5.3 Credibility

As discussed in Chapter 2, credibility is an important element of effective leadership (Campbell, 1993).

The credibility of the CEO is crucial in building the reputation of the organisation and this is highly influential for school leaders in establishing academy trusts where schools can choose which trust to join based on the perceived skills and experience of the CEO. The covid pandemic particularly highlighted the need for credible school leadership in managing significant change in schools (Netolicky, 2020).

> *"I was leading the strongest school, in terms of outcomes and progress. I was leading the most financially secure school, as well, because actually, the other two schools, they both came in with deficits. Quite a hefty deficit, in one case. I think a lot of it was to do with the knowledge that I had. Maybe it's the kind of person I am." Anne, Founder CEO*

In the context of this study, which focusses on the CEO and rather than the structure of the system, it is the perceived credibility that the academy trust CEO has that is most relevant. The overall credibility of academy trusts remains contested particularly in relation to their effectiveness as vehicles for school improvement (C. Simon et al., 2021).

> *"I think I have a certain credibility because of my experience and I guess my knowledge." Jane, Founder CEO*
>
> *"I became a headteacher in 1990, but I think it's still pretty important for credibility, even though it was a long time ago it was in a different era and so*

many circumstances are different. I think probably in this job almost more than any other jobs that I've done previously of the last few jobs I've done, I think with the colleagues I work with it still counts for a lot, the fact that they feel I sort of understand their world." Neil, Successor CEO

Williams et al. (2018) describe other terms used to describe credibility "trust, consistency, follow-through and walks the talk" (Williams Jr et al., 2018). Both James and Janet recognise the importance of credibility:

"When you go to speak to head teachers, you have credibility. You challenge them all; you offer support that is credible." James, Founder CEO

"It's being able to then give them practical examples of what that looks like in reality for their school, and also to be able to demonstrate that we've achieved that." Janet, Successor CEO

Six of the CEOs in this study had been designated as National Leaders of Education (NLE), which was considered a highly desirable route into establishing a MAT and designed to establish the credibility of school leaders to work as system leaders supporting other schools. NLEs were originally established in 2005 with accreditation awarded to headteachers of schools graded "Outstanding" by the Office for Standards in Education (Cousin, 2019). Clearly, one of the main ways in which CEOs have been prepared to take on their roles leading MATs has been through their work as NLEs, and by 2012 almost all the leadership capacity in the system was provided by NLEs and by 2013 most NLEs had become CEOs of MATs (Cousin, 2019). The award of the NLE status can be seen as conferring a degree of professional capital on the system leaders and playing on their desire for professionalism, autonomy and moral purpose

(Cousin, 2019). There is now a National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership that is designed to equip CEOs in their role. Megan describes some aspects of the role:

> *"I became an NLE, they were linked together, so I became an NLE and we became a national support school in – I was second cohort NLE, so 2007, I think. Then I worked with quite a lot of schools that have now become sponsored academies locally, primary schools that have now gone into trusts that were special measures or vulnerable." Megan, Founder CEO*

The CEOs in this study feel that their credibility to establish, lead and grow their trusts came from a mixture of experience (all except one as headteacher), success (demonstrated by Ofsted grades, exam success and financial stability) and reputation as someone who can be trusted and knows how to improve schools.

5.4 Summary

This chapter considered the CEO views about the distinctive nature of founders in terms of establishing MATs and the particular skills, experience and character that they had. The notion of stewardship was considered as a reflection of the personal commitment and sense of responsibility that some CEOs considered a defining feature of their relationship with their trust. CEOs also reflected on the notion of entrepreneurship and risk taking as a feature of founding CEOs. The importance of professional credibility as a school leader with a track record of school improvement and ethical leadership was highlighted as was the crucial role of strong supportive professional networks.

The next chapter will consider how academy trusts develop their organisational culture from the founding and other constituent schools and the role of the founding CEO in establishing the culture.

Chapter 6 Analysis III

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider how the culture of academy trusts has developed from the founding schools and the roles of both founder CEOs and their successors in developing a trust culture. The specific factor of whether the sponsorship of “failing” academies at the start of the trust had an impact on cultural development will be considered.

The chapter considers to what extent the organisational culture of an academy trust is determined by its founding CEO and their school and how successor CEOs manage the cultural transition from the founder and the impact of sponsorship on developing the culture of the Trust.

6.2 Culture in academy trusts

While the business literature suggests that the character of the founding CEO is very important in creating the company culture, there is conflicting evidence as to how long the influence of the founder lasts; Ahn (2018) suggests that founders create a cultural legacy that dominates the company for years through a process of "imprinting" where the founder's views and ethos are transmitted to leaders; however, it can be the case that as they near the point of transition, their power and influence declines (Souder et al., 2012). In this study none of the trusts are more than 10 years old, so in examining MATs and the lasting influence of founder CEOs, we are still at the very early stages of seeing how long their legacy lasts. Ogbonna and Harris (2001) emphasise the long-term legacies of the founders and how their initial vison for the companies is passed down in various ways; through documents (employee handbooks) and company "stories" such as in retirement speeches i.e. through a strong company culture. This notion chimes powerfully with my experience as a headteacher and founder CEO; I have always found staff leavers speeches to be very powerful important moments in a school's life (Ogbonna & Harris, 2001). The point at which founders may have the greatest influence on the long-term culture and success of the firm is at the point of leadership transition through the role they play in choosing a successor (White et al., 1994).

Greany and McGinty (2021) apply the evidence from the literature concerning mergers and acquisitions and post-merger integration to a study of MATs. While there are differences in the absence of a profit motive and possibly less complexity in the growth of trusts, they argue that there are useful lessons to be learnt for the

education sector and offer a framework of different approaches to organisational culture in MATs. They also reference the risk of founder's syndrome (Block & Rosenberg, 2002) in the autocratic "kingdom" style MAT (Greany & McGinity, 2021a).

Table 11. Framework for categorising MAT approaches to integration and knowledge transfer (Greany & McGinity, 2021a, p. 327)

	Organisational Culture	Decision-making	Association	Advantages	Disadvantages
Family	Relationships	Paternalism	Membership	Trust	Cliques
Kingdom	Hierarchy	Dictat	Proprietor	Decisiveness	Autocratic
Machine	Standardised	Rule-based	Hierarchy	Consistency	De-motivating
Institution	Professional	Aligned	Partnership	Commitment	Diffused effect

The extent to which the framework of mergers and acquisitions can be applied to MATs is contested by Baxter and Jewitt (2021) who prefer to regard them as "collaborations or alliances" (Baxter & Jewitt, 2021, p. 3)

Schein (2010) identifies the significance of the role of the founding leader in forming and establishing a culture. This is of particular relevance in this study of MAT founders, "what we end up calling a culture in such systems is usually the result of the embedding of what a founder or leader has imposed on a group that has worked out" (Schein, 2010, p. 3). This is certainly backed up by the comments of three of the CEOs in this study as shown below.

The challenge of bringing together schools with their own distinct cultures into a new structure has clearly been a focus for the trust leaders in this study. One of the main discussion points in thinking about trust culture has been the consideration of the role of the "lead school" school and its culture.

Three of the founder CEOs, Jessica, Holly and Ben, described very clearly how the culture of the trust stemmed from the culture of the founding (lead) school:

> *"I think essentially that [the trust} culture is [the founding school] culture. I think – there's no doubt that [the founding school] school has gifted an awful lot to the establishment of a trust. Because there's no way you could have done all you've done without the capacity of a large school and the large infrastructure of people to take on and set up a new business, which is essentially what it was." Jessica, Founder CEO*

The idea of the founding school "gifting" capacity and resources to the "acquired" schools is a common one in the narrative of the founding CEOs in business (Martin, 2016).

> *"I think that the answer is, it's probably the trust culture has evolved from [the founding school] culture, in that it was driven by me." Ben, Founder CEO*
>
> *"I think inevitably I took something from [the founding school] into the trust. I did want to create something new, because it was different to have primary schools and secondary schools working together." Holly, Founder CEO*

Interestingly three other founder CEOs explained that they had tried to avoid taking the culture and values from the founding school into the trust as it developed:

> *"We came together as three schools, as it were, on a level, so it was very much three converter academies, all good … That has very much led the culture in the MAT, because we came together on a level, it wasn't one lead school, and even though I was then leading the trust … and we had to be very careful that we didn't suggest that xx school was the lead school." Anne, Founder CEO*

"I played down the role of xx School, where I was headteacher, played it down completely, because I just don't believe that any school should be singled out to be brilliant. I just don't think it works. It was always about the alliance." James, Founder CEO

"But I think we've resisted putting a [founding school] stamp on everything, because people didn't – that didn't feel like a mosaic. People didn't especially want that. I felt that the values had to bubble up from those conversations with heads, so they were arrived at separately, really. Schools do now have their own values, as well as the values of the trust." John, Founder CEO

"I think the culture is very, very heavily centred on collaboration. We do stuff together. We share together. What everybody has to offer is of value, and we seek out the best practice in the schools, and so on." Jessica, Founder CEO

The literature relating to business mergers would suggest that a merger positioned as a partnership of equals is more likely to succeed than when there is a dominant organisation and a taker over (Martin, 2016).

The importance of maintaining individual schools' identities was also identified by Simkins et al. (2019) in their study of primary school heads in three different LAs. They identified a strong theme of primary heads wishing to protect their identity when joining a MAT, particularly if it was a cross-phase trust (Simkins et al., 2019). There remains considerable concern about and opposition to the development of a business-like system of mergers and acquisitions: "'Takeovers', hostile or not, where a school is transferred to an incoming academy trust, seem likely to be an increasingly important aspect of English education" (Mansell, 2016, p. 23).

Schein's concept of "Temporary Cultural Islands" (Schein, 2010, p. 390) can be related to the importance of subcultures within and between schools; one successor CEO talked about how sub-cultures can exist during the growth of a trust:

> *"I think getting culture across a group of schools is different from cultures within each school. I think how one does that, because I think one starts with a very headteacher mindset of culture running through everything, yet culture across a group of schools has to allow for some subcultures, doesn't it? But then as a headteacher you allow that, you allow a subculture in the maths department, don't you?" Neil, Successor CEO*

It is significant that as a successor CEO rather than the founder, Neil was able to move away from the dominant culture of the founding school:

> *"So probably I came at a good moment, because obviously I wasn't identified and my predecessor was identified with the founding school because he was the headteacher, of course he was. So of course, he was closely aligned with that founding school. So, I think coming in not aligned with it was hugely helpful for me, because in a sense I could treat the school as a much-loved school, but as a school rather than the school. I could in a sense be more even-handed." Neil, Successor CEO*

As trusts are still new organisations, Stoll's view that culture in schools is situationally specific, with the age of the organisation and the social and political context playing a central role, is directly relevant to the trusts in this study which are mostly relatively new organisations and therefore have had little time to develop an embedded culture (Stoll, 1998).

The social context and complexity of developing a trust culture from schools that are very different from each other was highlighted by one of the CEOs running a trust with one secondary school and two small primary schools:

> *"For instance, we've got a junior school in a deprived area in [x County]. We've got a primary school in a village or a town – the town of [x] and we've got a [secondary] school with a sixth form. So, you can't imagine three schools more different and that creates some challenges in the culture." Ben, Founder CEO*

In a study based in Queensland, Harris (2018) asserts that culture is derived from the way that leaders talk about the organisation and how this reflects their feelings is very influential (Harris, 2018). This is neatly expressed by Jane, a founder CEO who describes the importance of language in developing a sense of belonging to the relatively new organisation of the trust.

> *"So I will never let anybody refer to the MAT. If you want to talk about the MAT, well it's actually a trust and it's not the trust, it's our trust. It's just as much to do with you as it is with me. So the language that we use is really important." Jane, Founder CEO*

The significance of changing the leadership of an educational institution and its impact on organisational culture and the ways in which staff make sense of their place in the organisation and how it might change is examined in Kearney's 2013 study of a US community college during a leadership succession event. Kearney relates the way in which the staff experience the process to the Kubler-Ross stages of grief (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2009). This well-known change management model can also be applied to how school staff feel during mergers or joining MATs (Hodges, 2020).

There is an extensive body of literature relating to cultural integration during mergers and acquisitions in business which has relevance to the growth of academy trusts. The failure of many acquisitions has been attributed to cultural difference between the organisations and the failure of post-merger cultural integration (Elsass & Veiga, 1994; Saunders et al., 2009). The concept of acculturation that has its origins in studies of immigration (Das, 2020) in this context can be thought of as a process in which the culture of one organisation comes into contact with and is imposed on that of another (Elsass & Veiga, 1994).

The concept of acculturation can also be applied to organisational change during mergers and acquisitions (Elsass & Veiga, 1994) and is of relevance to the development and growth of MATs.

6.3 Sponsorship

Sponsored academies were originally established under New Labour in 2000 and grew from the City Technology Colleges of the previous Conservative government. They were established to bring private sector experience and money into the system to support failing LA schools and to foster a sense of business-style entrepreneurship and risk-taking leadership in school leaders. This is in the wider context of growing private sector involvement in the wider education sector such as establishing schools, for example GEMs, providing IT solutions such as Capita, and supporting LAs (Hatcher, 2006; Woods et al., 2007).

In the early development of the system, sponsorship came from private businesses and business leaders. Hatcher (2006) considers the motivations of these early

business leaders who became academy sponsors and contributed considerable financial support to schools such as Peter Shalson, the sponsor of the

Barnet Academy, Alec Reed, sponsor of the West London Academy, and Sir David Garrard, of the Bexley Business Academy, who described their sponsorship of academies as a way of making charitable contributions to local communities (Hatcher, 2006). In this study only one of the CEOs leads a sponsored trust with business origins where the sponsors who contributed £2 million, in the early stages of her leadership, were very actively involved in decision-making but have recently stepped back from being trustees and become members:

> *"Now, I have members who are the original founders, who are not … on the trust board anymore. So I've got my members. Then I've got my trust board, and my trust board are now no longer on my governing boards, so I've now got my three separations. ….. I've literally only just managed to get this through, and the only way I've been able to do it is to say, this is where you are. However, if you really want to come to all the trust board meetings, you can. So they're very happy with that. They didn't like my scheme of delegation, either, because the members wanted to be – to approve everything."*
>
> *Ruth, Successor CEO*

This interesting insight suggests that founding sponsors may also find it difficult to relinquish the control that they had at the trust's foundation in a similar way to founding CEOs.

The system developed when in 2010 the Academies Act opened up the process and many schools converted to become academies and many of them became sponsors (Gibson, 2015; C. Simon et al., 2019).

The motivations for becoming an academy sponsor in this new model are considered in Simon et al. (2019) in their study of 11 MAT CEOs. They identify three motivations:

1. **Pragmatic**: based on the desire for trust leaders to remain in control of their own destiny and enjoy the perceived benefits of possibly additional resources and the ability to retain their trust/school's culture and identity
2. **Altruistic**: many of the CEOs in their study identified the need to support underperforming local schools
3. **Moral purpose:** with CEOs, particularly in primary trusts describing their belief that it would be morally wrong not to support schools that could benefit from their skills and expertise (C. Simon et al., 2019)

These motivations are also evident in the sample of trust CEOs in this study:

> *"[X] School, which had been requiring improvement or predecessor category of satisfactory for some while, over 10 years now, so that joined as a sponsored school with the support of the DfE. They were quite happy to have the neighbouring schools working with them." John, Founder CEO*
>
> *"we felt the only thing we could do, morally, was to offer to join our MAT at that point." James, Founder CEO*
>
> *"the academisation happened; there was a failing school, a primary school in [the local town], so good old [an LA advisor] gets on the phone and says, 'Would you consider becoming the MAT?' That was good for us because that*

was on the backdrop of as she was leaving, we'd been looking at teaching schools. But we'd never done enough work really out of the school in terms of school-to-school support. So this was a real opportunity and really the team and myself we kind of jumped at that. So [our MAT] was formed on the back of failure really, in that it was because of a special measures primary school."

Jessica, Founder CEO

There is a common concern in trusts that taking on a sponsored school can be an excessive drain on the capacity of the trust. This view and the caution that comes from it is highlighted by one CEO:

"We've turned down a number of offers from the RSC around that. Because it's always been firmly my view that you don't take on another school unless you've absolutely got the capacity and you know that you're going to (a) be able to improve that school and (b) not at the detriment of what you've got."

Janet, Successor CEO

6.4 Summary

This chapter has considered the way in which organisational culture develops as MATs form and then grow. The central role of the CEO, particularly the founding CEO is clear in the views of the CEOs interviewed. The specific case of a trust growing through the sponsorship of a school that has been deemed to be failing is examined, with specific consideration of the case of a business-sponsored academy. The importance of considered and consistent language for a trust is highlighted by some CEOs as is the influence of the "lead" or founding school.

The next chapter will draw conclusions relating to the RQs, identify some potential areas for further study and consider the limitations of this study.

The study's claim for originality will be established.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the research project and presents the conclusions to the RQs that are drawn from the discussion and analysis of the data. Implications for professional practice relating to the training and development of trust CEOs are suggested. The main claims for originality are summarised and it presents reflections on the impact of the study on both participants and the researcher and makes some recommendations for areas of further research. Lastly it reflects on the limitations of the study and finishes with a personal reflection on the process of completing the EdD.

7.2 Summary of the study and research aims

A representative literature review was undertaken into founding CEOs, CEO succession in family firms, organisational culture, MATs, school leadership development and school culture.

This led to the framing of three overarching RQs:

1. What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of succession planning in MATs?
2. What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of academy trust leadership development and how effective is it?

3. What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of organisational culture and how do they establish a positive trust culture while incorporating a number of schools with their own cultures?

This was a constructivist, interpretive (Kettley, 2010; Oliver, 2014) study that adopted a qualitative methodology (Bryman, 2016) based on semi-structured interviews (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014) with 14 trust CEOs. A purposive sampling strategy (Staller, 2021) was used to ensure that the sample contained CEOs on either side of a leadership succession event and mixture of size and phase of academy trusts. The sample size was selected to produce manageable, rich data that met the aims of the study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). The interviews were carried out via Microsoft Teams rather than in person due to the constraints of Covid 19 (Lobe et al., 2020; Teti et al., 2020).

A number of implications for policy and practice have been identified below.

7.3 Summary of study in relation to research questions

7.3.1 RQ 1 What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of succession planning in MATs?

This study supports research (De Vries, 1988; Lansberg, 1988; LeCounte, 2022; Umans et al., 2021) showing that some founding CEOs find it difficult to contemplate succession planning and may not have engaged in discussions with their trustees about succession. Successor CEOs find it easier to plan and this is a hopeful sign for the future.

The study provides evidence that the size of the trust makes a difference to the CEO's ability to plan for leadership succession by appointing talented staff to roles such as deputy CEO or director of education.

Several CEOs in this study are considering whether a non-teacher could become the next CEO in their trust; this is an important discussion as it opens up the possibility of a wider pool of talent for CEO roles. It is acknowledged that school leadership experience is a factor to be considered but it is not felt to be the most important one.

7.3.1.1 Is there something distinctive about founders?

The business literature suggests that there are distinctive character traits associated with founders such as entrepreneurial skills and an appetite for risk (Hongdiyanto, 2018). The entrepreneurial aspect of MAT leadership is identified by several authors as a key aspect of the role and one that constituted one of the founding principles of the academy movement (Daniels, 2012; Greany & McGinity, 2021a; Hatcher, 2006; Hughes, 2020; Woods et al., 2007). The entrepreneurial characteristics of founders can be positive ones; such as being visionary (English & Peters, 2011) but also risk being "dominating and intimidating" (Ceaser, 2018, p. 466). There is also a discussion of "founder's syndrome" (Block & Rosenberg, 2002) or "Founderitis" (Sacco & Sani, 2019). The concept refers to the specific influence and power of the founder in the organisation often as implied by the medicalisation of the term in an unhealthy way. Leaders with founder's syndrome are sometimes described as having narcissistic tendencies (Kislenko, 2022).

There is also evidence that the skills needed to found a business are different from those needed to grow and sustain an established firm (Wasserman, 2003). One

successor CEO described the founder of his trust as a “surgeon”, referencing a style of leadership described as “decisive and incisive” (Hill et al., 2016), and explained that while the founder was setting up the trust, she was talking openly about her exit strategy.

The evidence from this study is that founding CEOs in academy trusts share the entrepreneurial skills and willingness to take on professional risk. This is identified as a key characteristic of trust CEOs: “In practice, the CEO is more entrepreneurial in seeking opportunities for commissions and takeovers. S/he oversees the operations and the provision of education services including the selling of these services to the external market” (Hughes, 2020, p. 8). They also have a deep sense of connection to the organisation they found that is described as stewardship; this is also identified in the business literature relating to founders of firms (Caldwell et al., 2008; Chen et al., 2016; Chrisman, 2019). CEOs in this study strongly identify with the notion of stewardship and responsibility for an organisation they have founded and shaped.

7.3.2 RQ2 What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of academy trust leadership development and how effective is it?

Most of the CEOs in this study had undertaken some formal training either for the CEO role or for headship with the NPQH being the most common and some had completed the NPQEL; two had either completed or were completing a master’s degree and others had undertaken executive leadership training. The evidence from the business literature suggests that higher degrees such as MBAs are beneficial to CEOs and their companies. It is not possible to prove that formal qualifications

improve any single output measure for schools or trusts, although the CEOs in this study who had undertaken training were generally positive about its impact.

The most consistent benefit that the CEOs report is the development of professional networks and the opportunities to talk to and learn from colleagues going through the same process. This is an important factor to consider when CEO training is being developed.

7.3.2.1 What role does experience out of school play in becoming a trust CEO?

Half of the CEOs in this study described the value that they had gained from working beyond schools in roles such as advisory teacher, working for LAs or Ofsted and in one case in educational software development.

This chimes with research that shows working in educational administration or consultancy produces benefits both for the system, by enabling the sharing of best practice, and for leaders, in making their work more rewarding and importantly sustainable (Pont et al., 2008). The sustainability of a career in education leadership is an important factor as professionals step up to leadership younger and need to work longer before retirement. With trust leadership involving a broader civic and system leadership style, this external experience has become even more important.

7.3.2.2. What roles do coaching and mentoring play in supporting new CEOs?

Coaching and mentoring have been an established part of business leadership for many years (Hawkins, 2008) and have been growing in education (Bryant, 2020). Six of the CEOs in this study report that coaching and/or mentoring have been a valuable and important part of their development as leaders, with one describing them as a lifeline. This is in line with other evidence from around the world (Boon, 2022;

Glazzard & Stones, 2021b; Matthews et al., 2011). This was particularly important for founding CEOs who were building structures from the start and doing things for the first time. There was praise for some specific organisations including Academy Ambassadors and the Confederation of School Trusts (CST).

7.3.2.3 What role have professional networks played in supporting founding CEOs and their successors?

CEOs in this report say that professional networks and working with colleagues in other trusts and schools are essential. The CEOs in this research were used to working in or leading Teaching School Alliances, working as system leaders as NLEs and being part of networks and organisations that link CEOs together such as The Confederation of School Trusts, professional associations such as the ASCL as well as regional trust leader networks and more informal local networks based on personal contacts and shared experience.

The importance of these networks is a clear outcome of this study and supports other findings in recent literature (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Fotheringham et al., 2022; Hughes, 2022; Rehm et al., 2021). The ability of these networks to function online during the COVID pandemic has been of value in supporting trust and school leaders in extremely challenging times.

7.3.2.4 How important is a CEO's professional credibility in the establishment of a trust?

The CEOs in this study felt that their credibility derived from a mixture of experience as school leaders (all except one as headteacher), professional success and personal and professional reputation as trustworthy and skilled in school improvement. The

issue of credibility is significant in this study, due in part to the debate about the background of successor CEOs; whether they need to be qualified teachers or not and whether their background and experience is in the headship of single schools, wider system leadership or in broader school improvement and leadership roles within academy trusts. The importance of leaders' credibility was highlighted during the pandemic when the community needed to trust school leaders (Netolicky, 2020). The ability to empathise with headteachers in a trust and the knowledge that you have been through something similar were highlighted by CEOs in this study.

Most of the CEOs in this study are still of the view that their successor should be a headteacher, but it is noticeable that there is an acceptance that CFOs and COOs from within trusts are also worthy of serious consideration.

7.3.3 RQ3 What are founder and successor CEO perceptions of organisational culture and how do they establish a positive trust culture while incorporating a number of schools with their own cultures?

The founding CEOS in this study were divided as to whether the culture of the academy trust was derived substantially from the "founding school" culture. Some founders had worked hard to ensure that this was not the case while others were happy to accept it as a fact. Successor CEOs were clear that the succession was an opportunity to move away from a single dominant founding school/CEO lead culture and build a more collaborative and inclusive culture. The idea that the founding school has "gifted" a lot to the trust was a recurring theme from founders but not successors.

The language used by staff in trusts was identified as important with an example being used of never allowing staff to refer to the "trust" as a separate entity but encouraging

them to use more inclusive language. Another CEO highlighted the need to allow clear subcultures to exist in schools within a trust and not to impose a single trust culture.

Trusts undergo a significant change in culture when the founding CEO moves on.

7.3.3.1 How does sponsorship influence the development of a culture?

Many trusts were founded with the sponsorship of a "failing" school by a more successful one with Ofsted grades usually used as the metric for measuring the relative success. Several of the CEOs in the study describe the sponsorship of a struggling local school in terms of the "moral purpose" that was at the heart of the culture that led to the establishment of the trust. One trust that was established by business sponsors is considered and shows some points of difference with the others in this sample.

7.4 Significance of the study and original contribution to knowledge

When this study was conceived, and the research process began there was much more of a gap in the literature relating to the leadership of MATs and leadership succession in schools. The fact that this field of research has grown so much in the past three years points to its importance.

This study has a claim for originality in five main areas:

1. **In its focus on MAT CEOs on either side of a leadership succession.** Although MATs are growing in size and number and the Schools' Bill 2022 suggests that this will continue, very little is known about how founding trust CEOs and their successors perceive succession planning. The business literature is clear in identifying the importance of succession planning and the level of risk associated with founding CEO succession for the organisation. There is evidence that this is a frequent point of failure for family firms.
2. **In its identification of the character of founding CEOs as a significant factor.** This study is one of the first to explore the similarities and differences between founding CEOs in academy trusts and founding CEOs in family firms. It identifies the impact of the character of the founder as potentially important and different from the successor. The importance of educational research drawing on the business literature is clear. There are implications here for CEO recruitment practice and professional development. There is a specific identification of the importance of leadership development programmes in

the success of succession events in business and the potential for that to be the case in academy trusts.

3. **In its consideration of cultural transmission through succession events in academy trusts.** School culture is a rich field of academic research but MAT culture and the process in which it develops from the founding school and the potential for significant cultural change at the point of founder succession is not well understood. This study is amongst the first to make a minor contribution to this field.
4. **In its methodology.** The author is unaware of other studies of MAT CEOs that specifically sample CEOs on either side of leadership succession with both founder and successor CEOs interviewed and their responses considered in the light of their status. This study has demonstrated, albeit in a limited sample, that founding CEOs may have a different perspective on the issues of leadership succession, leadership development and trust culture. This study has shown that by purposefully sampling founder and successor CEOs their different perspectives have produced a richer fuller data set.
5. **In its conceptual frame.** As far as the author is aware this is the first study to bring these three interrelated concepts together to provide a theoretical lens to study MAT leadership and particularly the immediately significant issue of CEO succession in trusts. This study has shown that to fully understand the crucial inflection point of founding CEOs' succession, it is essential to understand the professional development process that contributed to their skills and character. The study also identifies the importance of understanding cultural transmission in growing and developing MATs and the role of the CEO

in this. The study can make some recommendations for areas that must be considered in developing the leadership development pathways that will ensure a pipeline of successful future trust CEOs such as opportunities to work outside a school, the importance of coaching and mentoring and a full understanding of the role of networks of colleagues in supporting CEOs.

7.5 Implications for policy and practice

I believe that this study has provided sufficient evidence to make several recommendations for policy and practice within the academies sector. Below I identify five key areas that I consider worthy of consideration by trust leaders and education policy makers.

1. There should be a study of the importance of succession planning should be a core part of any leadership development programme.
2. There should be a consideration of whether a deputy CEO role should be advised for all trusts.
3. In line with the government's plans, trusts should be supported to grow to a size where a leadership structure can support a clear succession pipeline. Most trustees and CEOs do not have clear plans yet for their succession, but they are beginning to focus on this and the various staffing structures and polices that will support it. Larger trusts that have the scale to have layers of central team support, including a deputy CEO, are in a better position to manage internal successions. Most trust leaders still believe that trust leaders should have school leadership experience to have the credibility to lead headteachers.

4. Networks of trusts and of CEOs should be supported and it should be expected to be a fundamental part of the CEO role to work with colleagues in other trusts and related organisations. Networking and strong networks locally, regionally, and nationally are fundamental to making the CEO role successful and supporting trusts and trust leaders in challenging times. Most training is valued more for the networks it fosters than the knowledge it imparts.
5. The system should provide opportunities for work beyond school – DfE/Ofsted/ LA /University etc. In preparing potential future CEOs it may be of benefit to include secondments with LAs, the DfE (or RSC office), Ofsted or Ofqual to experience the education system through a different lens and provide experience of working across geographical areas and in the development of policy.

7.6 Recommendations for further research

Arising from this study there are four areas that I believe merit further research. These areas are outlined in the following sections.

7.6.1 The role of gender and other protected characteristics.

This study made no attempt to study the role of different genders or other protected characteristics. As educational leadership becomes more diverse and fully representative of society, I believe that this offers a rich area for research.

7.6.2 The role of trustees

Trustees and governance in general are crucial to the establishment, leadership, and succession planning in academy trusts. There is a greater focus on the professional school and trust leaders in the research than on the role and nature of trustees. This is a diverse body that is drawn from the wider community, including parents, local citizens, faith representatives and those with a diverse business background. It is trustees who appoint CEOs and headteachers and ultimately can dismiss them. They have significant statutory responsibilities. A fuller understanding of their backgrounds, roles, and attitudes to trust leadership and succession is important.

7.6.3 Staff perceptions of trust leadership

Much of the literature about academy trust leadership is based on the voices of trust leaders/CEOs. It would be very valuable to hear from staff working within trusts about their view of the quality and character of trust leadership, particularly around leadership succession.

7.6.4 Cultural change

A detailed examination of how staff (rather than leaders) in schools across an academy trust perceive the trust culture and their understanding of how it has developed over time would be of value.

7.7 Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be identified.

A sample size of 14 academy trust CEOs by its very nature cannot be regarded as comprehensive. This study did not seek to investigate a large enough sample to allow for broad generalisation of the findings across the whole academy sector; however, in using detailed one-hour-long semi-structured interviews the study was intended to provide rich deep data and not a broad overview. With a larger sample it may have been possible to investigate other important themes within the data such as gender and the role that it plays in trust leadership development and succession. In a similar vein this study has not investigated issues related to other protected characteristics that could well have a significant impact on trust leadership such as race, sexual orientation, and age. The aim is that the rich data and examples provided may be of value to other researchers investigating related but different areas and contribute to the wider field of MAT leadership research.

The fact that all the CEOs in this study were known professionally to me combined with the fact that I am a serving trust CEO means that there could be limitations relating to a combination of "insiderness" and perceived lack of objectivity. Academy trusts remain controversial structures in some parts of the education sector and there are a wide range of perceptions of the motivations and intentions of trust CEOs. These issues are not addressed in this study; it makes no attempt to consider the impact of academy trusts on student outcomes.

The comparisons between founding academy trust CEOs and founders in business formed an important part of the genesis of this study. It is important to recognise that this comparison is limited; academy trust CEOs have no financial investment and little personal financial risk in establishing a MAT, they will not be passing on a trust to a

family member and they do not have shareholders. There is, however, an element of professional and reputational risk and there are a range of important stakeholders who have a considerable personal and institutional investment in the success or failure of a trust, such as students, staff, parents, and government agencies.

The issue of leadership succession is an issue for trustees as they are responsible for the appointment of trust CEOs and headteachers. This study did not include interviews with trustees as it is focused on CEO perceptions. In general there would appear to be less research about the role of trustees in academy trusts.

The issue of cultural transmission both through a succession event and in its establishment from a single school is a vital area in an academy trust. Many of the CEOs reflect at some length about this; however, it is an area that merits further investigation. This study did not seek the views of other staff members or investigate policies and school documents.

The COVID pandemic meant that all the interviews on which this study is based were carried out online rather than face-to-face and it is possible that an in-person interview would have produced different responses in that it would have brought a whole range of non-verbal communication that may have added another layer to the richness of the data.

The software NVivo was used to help with the storage, coding and analysis of the interview data. I only made use of a very limited part of the capability of this package in the analysis and presentation of data.

I am aware that a more experienced researcher may have been able to elicit more and different data from the interviews, in reflecting when re-reading the transcripts. I felt

that I spent too much time talking and trying to explain the context of questions and that I asked over-complicated compound questions. I also could have been better at keeping the participants on the subject and been more willing to interrupt and refocus them during long answers.

7.8 Reflection

Undertaking this EdD has been challenging and rewarding. I have been surprised at the satisfaction that I have derived from reading academic literature and seeking to find my own academic voice. I am pleased that I decided to embark on an EdD in that I gained a sense of belonging to a department and cohort of students going through the process of part A together. I have recognised from the outset that the reasons for starting this are complicated and reflect my feeling of academic insecurity. Having reached a point in my career when I begin to consider that the time when I move from being a trust CEO into a more varied role in educational consultancy may be coming, the opportunity to reflect on the process of trust growth, development and succession planning has been extremely rewarding. It has been very interesting to read and hear colleagues discussing their experiences and to recognise the differences and similarities with my own. I can reflect on a greater feeling of professional confidence that has grown from undertaking doctoral study and, to an extent, positioning myself and my career within a wider academic framework.

7.8.1 Impact on participants

All the participants reported enjoying the process of being interviewed about their role and the chance to reflect on their career. It was interesting to notice that there

was a sense of the participants being pleased to take part in the study and a suggestion that it might be of interest to read the thesis when it is completed.

There was evident respect for the academic process and the idea of practitioner-led research.

It was clear that the school leaders in this study appreciated the opportunity to discuss their work lives and the organisations they have been involved in. Many of the CEOs I spoke to were close to retirement, and it may be that that makes people more reflective and thoughtful.

7.8.2 Impact on researcher

As I am a founder CEO, all the issues raised in this study have resonated with me. I have very much enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on my career and the system that I have worked in for over 30 years. It is interesting to see the work that I have done put into historical and political context.

The opportunity to read and write about my work and the wider system has been a privilege. I greatly enjoyed the chance to spend an hour talking and listening to colleagues who I respect reflect on their professional life and the system we all work in. Conducting this research has enhanced and enriched my professional identity and sense of being part of a community of educationalists with a shared endeavour.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Interview schedule

Main Research Question **What are academy trust CEOs' perceptions and experiences of succession planning in MATs?**				
Core Concepts	**Research Questions**	**Interview Questions**	**Notes**	**Discussed?** ✓ ✗
Introduction	Study background and aims Participant Prerogatives	**Q**-Could you confirm that you have read the information sheet and signed the consent form? **Q**-Would you state you name for the recording? **Q**-Tell me briefly about your career to date - How long have you been in teaching? How many schools have you worked in? Have you completed and specific training such as an MA or any of the NPQs?		
Founder Succession & Leadership	**RQ**-What are CEO perceptions of succession planning in MATs?	**Q**-Are you the founding CEO? **Q**- If not were you employed within the trust when		

Succession in Academy Trusts		appointed as CEO? **Q**- Why did you establish this trust? **Q**- What personal characteristics do you think you have that equip you or prepared you for the CEO role?		
		Q-Does the trust have a succession plan for CEO and or headteachers? **Q**-Could you describe it? **Q**-Have you discussed succession planning with your trust board or chair? **Q**- What should/could be done to improve succession planning in academy trusts? **Q**-How well equipped is your trust board to deal with the issue of succession planning? **Q**-How would you describe the challenges of		

		succession planning for CEOs in trusts?		
Leadership development	**RQ**- What are CEO perceptions of academy trust leadership development and how effective is it?	**Q**- Have you completed any specific training/professional development in preparation for the role of CEO? **Q**- Did you receive any specific support during your induction period and the first year in post as CEO? **Q**- Could you describe it – How was it delivered, what was the content? **Q**- How effective do you feel the training/support was? **Q**- How does the trust deliver leadership development? **Q**- Are there any types of training that		

		you think would be valuable for your role in the future? **Q**-What are the challenges involved in high quality leadership development for trust CEOs?		
School & Trust Culture	**RQ**- What are CEO perceptions of organisational culture and how do they establish a positive trust culture while incorporating a number of schools with their own cultures?	**Q**- How would you describe the culture of the trust? **Q**- How do you think the staff would describe the culture? **Q**- How did the culture develop? **Q**- How was the trust culture impacted by the succession event if there was one? **Q**- As CEO how have you contributed to the organisational culture? **Q**- What challenges are involved in developing and sustaining a positive trust culture?		

Conclusion	Any other comments? What will happen to data? Follow up meeting/respondent validation	**Q**- Is there anything else you would like to say? **Q**- Do you have any questions about this process?		

Appendix 2 Draft interview questions

- How long have you been CEO of the trust?
- How long were you a headteacher?
- Are you the founding CEO?
- If not, were you employed within the trust when appointed as CEO?
- What personal characteristics do you think you have that equip you or prepared you for the CEO role?
- Are there specific skills you have or that you feel you need in making a success of your role?
- Have you completed any specific training/professional development in preparation for the role of CEO?
- Did you receive any specific support during your induction period and the first year in post as CEO?
- Does the trust have a succession plan for CEO and or headteachers?
- Could you describe it?
- How does the trust deliver leadership development?
- How would you describe the culture of the trust?
- How did the culture develop?
- How was the trust culture impacted by the succession event if there was one?
- As CEO how have you contributed to the organisational culture?

Appendix 3 Ethical approval

University of Reading

Institute of Education

Ethical Approval Form A (version May 2019)

Tick one: Staff project: _____ PhD ____ **EdD X**

Name of applicant (s): Timothy James Gilson

Title of project: **A study of CEO Succession in Multi Academy Trusts**

Name of supervisor (for student projects): **Professor Alan Floyd**

Please complete the form below including relevant sections overleaf.

- Complete **either** Section A **or** Section B below with details of your research project.
- Complete a risk assessment.
- Sign the form in Section C.
- Append at the end of this form all relevant documents: information sheets, consent forms, tests, questionnaires, interview schedules, evidence that you have completed information security training (e.g. screen shot/copy of certificate).
- Email the completed form to the Institute's Ethics Committee for consideration.

Any missing information will result in the form being returned to you.

A: My research goes beyond the 'accepted custom and practice of teaching' but I consider that this project has **no** significant ethical implications. (Please tick the box.)	X

Please state the total number of participants that will be involved in the project and give a breakdown of how many there are in each category e.g. teachers, parents, pupils etc.

12 Multi Academy Trust CEOs

Give a brief description of the aims and the methods (participants, instruments and procedures) of the project in up to 200 words noting:

1. title of project
2. purpose of project and its academic rationale
3. brief description of methods and measurements
4. participants: recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria
5. consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing (attach forms where necessary)
6. a clear and concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with then.
7. estimated start date and duration of project

1. A study of CEO succession in Multi Academy Trusts.
2. *Most Trusts have existed for less than 10 years. Many are at a point of leadership succession from founder to a second generation. There is a gap in the academic literature relating to founder succession in Trusts and this study seeks to contribute to that and suggest ways in which succession planning can be made more effective.*
3. *The study will be based on semi-structured interviews with Trust CEOs. I will gather feedback from two CEOs on the interview questions and also pilot the interview process with them.*
4. I will be interviewing 10-12 Multi Academy Trust CEOs. The sample of Trust CEOs will be opportunistic in that I will interview CEOs that I know professionally, however, I will endeavour to recruit a balanced sample of CEOs and Trusts that include gender of CEOs, size and

location of trust and phase of schools. I will try to ensure a balance between founding CEOs and successor CEOs.

5. Forms attached
6. I do not work with any of the interviewees. I will ensure that no Trusts/ individuals can be identified. I will ensure that recordings and transcripts are stored securely in password protected files on my home laptop.
7. *I will start collecting data in January 2021 and finish in July 2021.*

B: I consider that this project **may** have ethical implications that should be brought before the Institute's Ethics Committee.	

Please state the total number of participants that will be involved in the project and give a breakdown of how many there are in each category e.g. teachers, parents, pupils etc.

Give a brief description of the aims and the methods (participants, instruments and procedures) of the project in up to 200 words.

1. title of project
2. purpose of project and its academic rationale
3. brief description of methods and measurements
4. participants: recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria
5. consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing (attach forms where necessary)
6. a clear and concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with then.
7. estimated start date and duration of project

RISK ASSESSMENT: Please complete the form below

Brief outline of work/activity:	Interviews of 1 hour with Academy CEOs	
Where will data be collected?	either via TEAMs or in Academy Trust CEO offices	
Significant hazards:	none	
Who might be exposed to hazards?	none	
Existing control measures:	na	
Are risks adequately controlled:	yes	
If NO, list additional controls and actions required:	Additional controls	Action by:

C: SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

Note: a signature is required. Typed names are not acceptable.

I have declared all relevant information regarding my proposed project and confirm that ethical good practice will be followed within the project.

Signed: Print Name Tim Gilson Date 4/12/2020

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE ETHICS COMMITTEE

This project has been considered using agreed Institute procedures and is now approved.

Signed: Print Name Holly Joseph Date 22/1/2021

(IoE Research Ethics Committee representative)*

* A decision to allow a project to proceed is not an expert assessment of its content or of the possible risks involved in the investigation, nor does it detract in any way from the ultimate responsibility which students/investigators must themselves have for these matters. Approval is granted on the basis of the information declared by the applicant.

Appendix 4 Consent form

University of Reading

CONSENT FORM

Research Project: A study of CEO succession in Multi Academy Trusts

Name, position and contact address of Researcher	**Name, position and contact address of Supervisor**
Tim Gilson t.j.gilson@reading.pgr.ac.uk	**Alan Floyd** *Professor of Education* *Research Division Lead: Education, Language and Learning* Institute of Education University of Reading London Road Campus 4 Redlands Road Reading RG1 5EX UK E: alan.floyd@reading.ac.uk Tel: +44 (0)118 378 2720

This application has been reviewed by the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. ☐

3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

	Please tick box	
	Yes	**No**
4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded.	☐	☐
5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.	☐	☐

Name of Participant _____ Date _____ Signat _____

Appendix 5 Information Sheet

University of Reading

Participation Information Sheet

A study of CEO succession in Multi Academy Trusts

I am an EdD candidate at the University of Reading. You are being invited to take part in the above research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this research project is to understand how Academy Trust CEOs view the process of succession planning for their role and to try to understand what prepared them for the role. It will also seek to identify how organisational culture changes as a result of a succession process. CEO succession in Academy Trusts is a relatively new phenomenon and as such there is not great deal of research into it.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been identified to take part as someone who has experience as a CEO of an Academy Trust in the UK.

What will happen if I take part?

You will be invited to take part in a one-hour interview either face to face or via Microsoft TEAMs. With your consent the interview will be recorded.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and

without giving reason by contacting me via email on t.j.gilson@reading.pgr.ack.uk.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

In agreeing to take part in this study there will be a time commitment to consider; the interview will take no more than one hour. While there is this time commitment required from participants, it is felt that the benefits of involvement will outweigh the costs: your involvement will allow me to explore key issues related to Academy leadership succession and make recommendations for improved policy and practice which may be of benefit to your Trust and the wider education system.

Will what I say be kept confidential?

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). In order to protect the anonymity of each participant, pseudonyms will be used to ensure participants cannot be identified. The Trust name will also be changed. All electronic data will be held securely in password protected files on a non-shared PC and all paper documentation will be held in locked cabinets in a locked office.

In line with University policy, data generated by the study will be kept securely in electronic form for a period of five years after the completion of the research project.

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at imps@reading.ac.uk, or in writing to: Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.

If we have included any additional requests for use of your data, for example adding you to a registration list for the purposes of inviting you to take part in future studies, this will be done only with your consent where you have provided it to us and should you wish to be removed from the register at a later date, you should contact either Tim Gilson or Alan Floyd.

You have certain rights under data protection law which are:

- Withdraw your consent, for example if you opted in to be added to a participant register
- Access your personal data or ask for a copy
- Rectify inaccuracies in personal data that we hold about you
- Be forgotten, that is your details to be removed from systems that we use to process your personal data
- Restrict uses of your data
- Object to uses of your data, for example retention after you have withdrawn from a study

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes.

You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) at https://ico.org.uk

You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The data will be analysed and used in my EdD. You will be able to receive a summary of the results of the study on request. Extracts of the thesis will form the basis for book chapters and papers that will be submitted to academic journals for publication. It is hoped that the outcomes will be of value to Academy Trust leaders, Trustees, and academic researchers.

Who has reviewed the study?

This application has been reviewed following procedures of the University of Reading Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher	Name, position and contact address of Supervisor
Tim Gilson t.j.gilson@reading.pgr.ac.uk	**Alan Floyd** *Professor of Education Research* *Division Lead: Education, Language and Learning* Institute of Education University of Reading London Road Campus 4 Redlands Road Reading RG1 5EX, UK E: alan.floyd@reading.ac.uk Tel: +44 (0)118 378 2720

University of Reading

Key areas that the interview will cover

1. You career background and Trust origins
2. Founder Succession & Leadership Succession in Academy Trusts
3. Leadership development particularly for Trust /Executive Leadership
4. School & Trust Culture

Data Protection for Information Sheets

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at , or in writing to: University of Reading, Information Management & Policy Services, Whiteknights House, Pepper Lane, Whiteknights, Reading , RG6 6UR, UK.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.

You have certain rights under data protection law which are:

- Withdraw your consent, for example if you opted in to be added to a participant register
- Access your personal data or ask for a copy
- Rectify inaccuracies in personal data that we hold about you
- Be forgotten, that is your details to be removed from systems that we use to process your personal data
- Restrict uses of your data
- Object to uses of your data, for example retention after you have withdrawn from a study

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes.

You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) at https://ico.org.uk

You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

Information Management and Policy Services

University of Reading

data protection declaration for ethical approval

This document can be used to provide assurances to your ethics committee where confirmation of data protection training and awareness is required for ethical approval.

By signing this declaration I confirm that:

- I have read and understood the requirements for data protection within the *Data Protection for Researchers* document located here:

http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/imps/Data_Protection_for_Researchers__Aug_18.v1.pdf

- I have asked for advice on any elements that I am *unclear on* prior to submitting my ethics approval request, either from my supervisor, or the data protection team at: imps@reading.ac.uk
- I understand that I am responsible for the secure handling, and protection of, my research data
- I know who to contact in the event of an information security incident, a data protection complaint or a request made under data subject access rights

Researcher to complete

Project/Study Title **A study of CEO Succession in Multi Academy Trusts**

NAME	**STUDENT ID NUMBER**	**DATE**
Tim Gilson		January 2021

Supervisor signature

Note for supervisors: Please verify that your student has completed the above actions

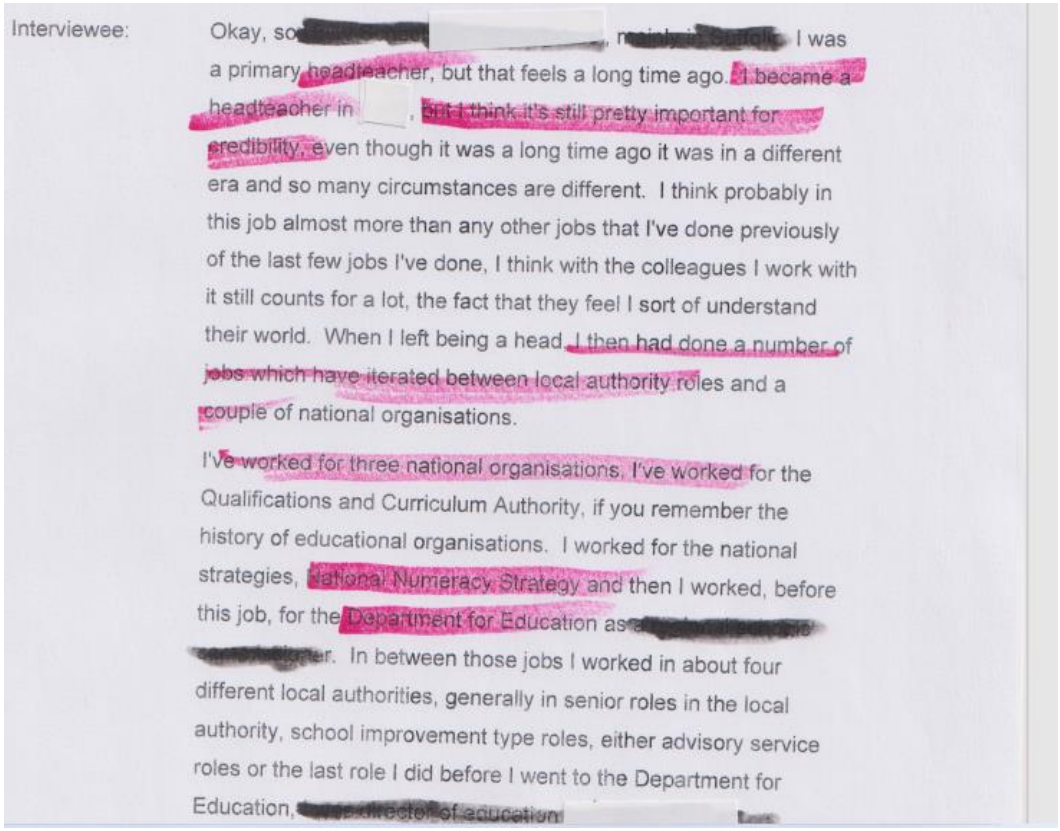
NAME	**STAFF ID NUMBER**	**DATE**
Dr Alan Floyd		20/1/2021

Submit your completed signed copy to your ethical approval committee.

Copies to be retained by ethics committee.

Version	Keeper	Reviewed	Approved by	Approval date
1.0	IMPS	Annually	IMPS	

Appendix 6 Example of coding by hand



Interviewee: Okay, so [redacted], I was a primary headteacher, but that feels a long time ago. I became a headteacher in [redacted], but I think it's still pretty important for credibility, even though it was a long time ago it was in a different era and so many circumstances are different. I think probably in this job almost more than any other jobs that I've done previously of the last few jobs I've done, I think with the colleagues I work with it still counts for a lot, the fact that they feel I sort of understand their world. When I left being a head I then had done a number of jobs which have iterated between local authority roles and a couple of national organisations.

I've worked for three national organisations. I've worked for the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, if you remember the history of educational organisations. I worked for the national strategies, National Numeracy Strategy and then I worked, before this job, for the Department for Education as [redacted]. In between those jobs I worked in about four different local authorities, generally in senior roles in the local authority, school improvement type roles, either advisory service roles or the last role I did before I went to the Department for Education, [redacted]

Appendix 6 Example of initial coding by hand

Appendix 7- introduction to interviews

"Again, the context is, doing my doctorate with Reading and I'm interviewing 14 trust CEOs with three particular themes that are interrelated. One is the leadership development that trust CEOs have experienced. What they've picked up that's useful, what's worked and what hasn't. Another one is around building trust culture particularly trying to get the link between, if you like, founding school culture and trust culture. Then the next bit about succession and I'm really focussing on either side of the founding CEO successions.

So, roughly half of the people I'm speaking to are our founding CEOs and then roughly half are, if you like, the other side of that transition. So that's the second-generation CEOs to try and get a sense of what feels different about that and comparing their career path. Because my sense – all of this obviously reflects where I'm at in my thinking. There's a generation of us who are the people who set up trusts and, as we were just briefly discussing then, I was sort of making it up as I was going along. Then there's another generation coming through who've seen these organisations established and have maybe worked in them at different levels and are then stepping up to look at being CEOs.

I think that's quite an important moment in the profession and there's not been another one quite like it. So that's the background. I've set aside an hour and I know just how busy everyone is so I'm hopeful we can get through it in that time. Everything you say will be anonymised and pseudonymised – I can never quite say that right. Obviously, I will be going through a process of picking out themes from all of the CEO interviews that I'm having. All of the records I'm storing electronically on my laptop here and then it goes off to a commercial transcription service and it's all sort of dealt with there …

The structure goes through in that order, if you like, of questions. The first bit is, if you wouldn't mind just for the recording, saying your name and who you are. Then that first question is just a reflection on your career to date that's meant you've landed up in the position you're in. Much of that will then tease out the follow-up questions about leadership development culture and all those things that come along. I'll try and go through those areas. If you wouldn't mind just name and then a reflection on your career and how you've arrived at where you are."

Appendix 8

(1) Test Zoom ahead of interview.

(2) Provide technical information. Provide participants with specific information that is important for them to know about participating in a Zoom interview.

(3) Have a backup plan. Have a prearranged backup plan with participants in case of technical difficulties or other disturbances.

(4) Plan for distractions. Account for interview time taken up by possible distractions when designing your interview guide.

(5) Provide a direct link to meeting. When a Zoom meeting is scheduled, a meeting invitation is generated with live link to the meeting.

(6) Consider storage needs. Researchers will benefit from budgeting time for the interviews based on how much computer data or cloud storage they have available.

(7) Hardwire computer to Internet. If possible, hardwire the researcher's computer to the Internet instead of using a Wi-Fi connection to secure a stronger and more stable Internet connection.

(8) Uninterrupted Internet connection. Unhook other devices connected to the researcher's Internet provider during the interview.

(9) Create a visual reminder. The researcher can use a visual cue to remind them to press record when they start the interview. While Zoom offers the option to automatically record a meeting, the ethically correct strategy is to confirm consent to record from the participant.

(10) Manage consent processes. Before starting the interview, review the information letter and consent form (even if already signed and returned) to invite questions and ensure participants understand the research processes. Consider recording the participant's verbal consent and interview in two separate recordings. (Gray et al., 2020, pp. 1296–1297)