



# Headteachers: Leaders of Learning or Business Managers?

An analysis of all Headteacher job descriptions advertised in Wales in 2016-17.

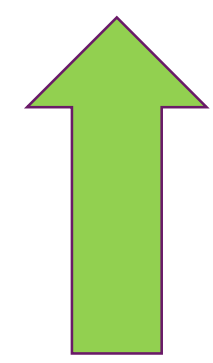
Dr Andrew James Davies (Aberystwyth University); Emmajane Milton, Dr Alexandra Morgan, Dr Mark Connolly, Dr Damian Donnelly and Iwan Ellis (all Cardiff University).

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

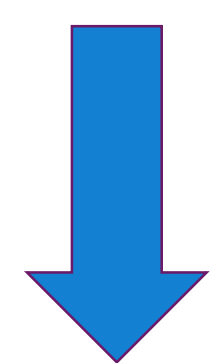
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## Background Literature

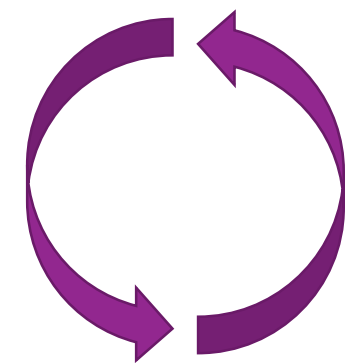
- Concern about HT Recruitment in Wales (NAHT Cymru 2016; EWC 2017; Connolly et al 2018; Davies et al. 2018).



High rates of vacant posts



Falling numbers of applications per posts.



Frequent advertisement of HT posts.

- HT recruitment crises a 'policymaker's puzzle' (MacBeath 2009): eligible and suitable people often outnumber unfilled vacancies.
- The 'Career Deputy' (MacBeath 2009) – no desire to progress to Headship.
- Perception that the HT role becomes increasingly distant from the locus of teaching and learning;
- Finance and budgeting; workload and poor work-life balance; external pressure and accountabilities; more visible profile; exposure to litigation; HR, staff management, physical spaces.
- Away from 'core' function of leading teaching and curriculum development (MacBeath, 2009; Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011).
- HTs assume a 'new professional identity', incongruous with the professional role, values and competencies of teachers and deputies (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009).

## ETHICS

No direct human participants – discourse and content analysis of publicly-available documents. However, sensitivity and careful negotiation was needed of considerations relating to anonymity and attribution when citing and quoting and individual Job Descriptions.

## Methods

Less work done on demand side of HT recruitment – how recruiters define and frame the role and its responsibilities (Kwan and Walker, 2009).

Systematic collection and analysis of jobs advertisements from Sept 2016-August 2017;

69 in depth with a content and discourse analysis.

Examination of how the concept of leadership is constructed and articulated.

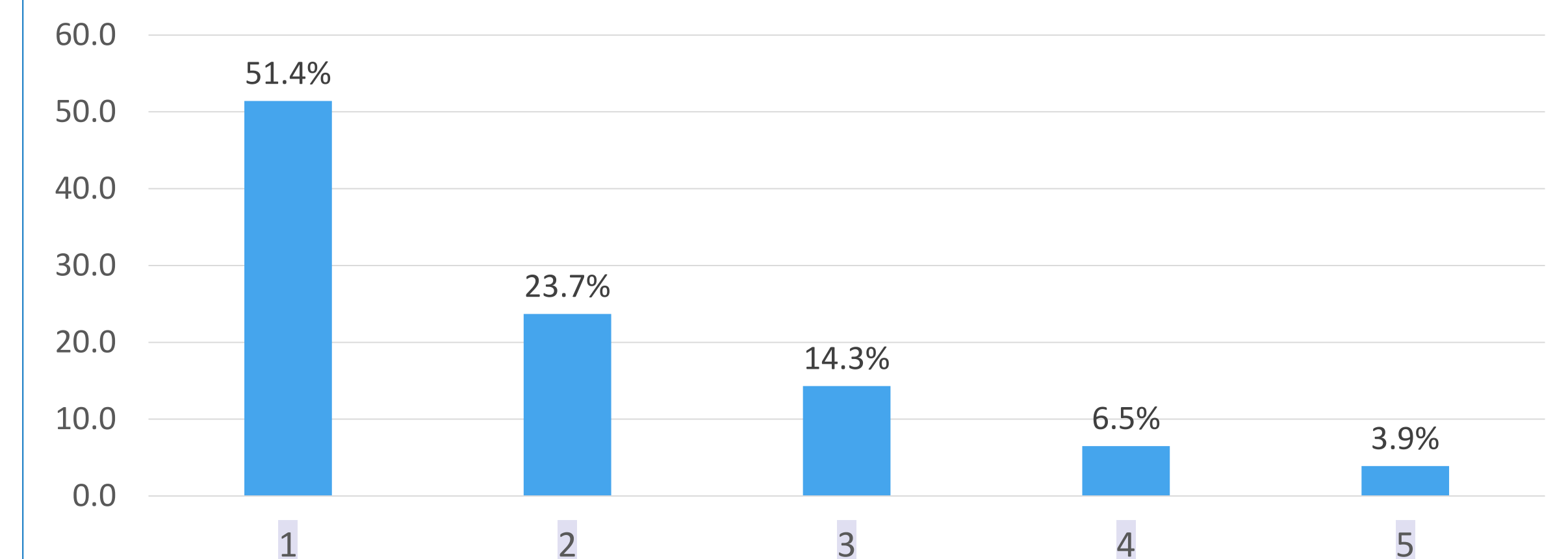
Five point evaluation scale developed.

Extent to which they align with a continuum.

Category	Definition
1	Competencies grounded in techno-rationalist notions of professionalism, lone 'hero' Headship (Kulz, 2017), highly managerialist professional practices. Often expressed as embedded within rigidly hierarchical vertical management structures with little scope for 'horizontal' autonomy or collegiate practice; typically foregrounding compliance and performativity in relation to external accountabilities. (Ball 2003; Bottery & Wright, 2000).
2	Competencies and descriptors primarily grounded in techno-rationalist and managerialist approaches to professional practice, normally within a vertical system with the HT at the top; tends to foreground external accountabilities as key driver of improvement and change. However, the articulation of these may make some minor concessions to collaboration and shared enterprise.
3	Competencies and descriptors which may display a mixed vocabulary, often balancing collaborative approaches more with more managerialist practices. Compliance with external accountabilities, though integral, may be expressed as something to be achieved through collaborative practice.
4	Purposeful use of competencies and task descriptors grounded variously in distributed leadership; collaborative professional practice; professional autonomy; educative mentorship; learner-centred practice; and notions of internal accountability, based on mutual obligation and shared enterprise (Fullan, Rincón-Gallard and Hargreaves, 2015). However, these were not as fully expressed as in the references that were coded 5.
5	Role and task descriptors typically display an explicit and unqualified commitment to competencies grounded in one or more of the following frameworks of professional practice; distributed leadership; collaborative professional practice; professional autonomy; educative mentorship; learner-centred practice; and notions of internal accountability, based on mutual obligation and shared enterprise. (Fullan, Rincón-Gallard and Hargreaves, 2015, Harris 2008; OECD, 2009).

## Findings, Discussion and Conclusions

Percentage of competencies coverage coded 1 to 5



- The Headteacher role, as expressed in Job Descriptions is heavily dominated by managerial and techno-rationalist approaches to professional practice.
- Typically foregrounded in Job Descriptions are compliance and performativity with regard to external accountabilities; articulating pupil learning and school development primarily against public-facing measures of success and 'mandated outcomes' (Thomson, 2009).
- Competencies based on an unqualified commitment to collaboration, professional autonomy; educative mentorship; learner-centred practice; and notions of internal accountability are rare.

## Key Questions

What are the implications of the changing nature of the Headship role?

Do we accept that the role is becoming dominated by techno-rationalist and managerialist practices?

How can we 'free up' HTs to re-focus on teaching and learning?

How can we shift towards a different model and orientation of leadership practice in Wales?

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