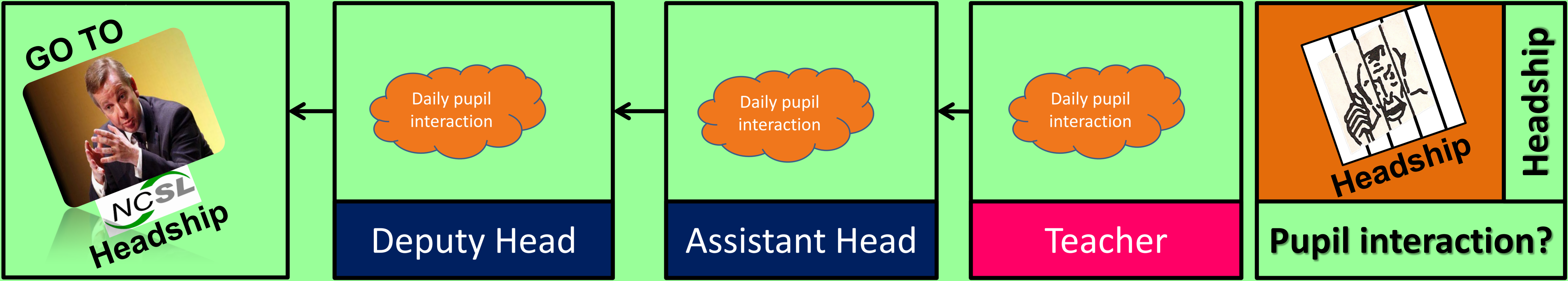


# DEPUTY AND ASSISTANT HEADTEACHERS: WHY HEADSHIP IS NO LONGER A CHOICE

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**Abstract**

Succession planning and how to address the “baby boomer” era of Headteachers retiring from their role has become a key area on the Government’s agenda along with how to identify and encourage Deputy and Assistant Headteachers to make that ‘expected’ transition to Headship. This research project aims to elicit the views and experiences of Secondary School Deputy and Assistant Headteachers about their career journey and why they do not want to enter into the Headship role using a life histories approach. This study builds on research undertaken by Hayes (2005) and Oplatka and Tamir (2009) into the Deputy and Assistant Headteacher roles.

**Research Questions**

- What are the current views of Deputy and Assistant Headteachers on their career?
- What are the perceived barriers to Headship experienced within the Deputy and Assistant Headteacher role?
- Which management/training strategies can be used to address the perceived “barriers” to Headship?

**Method**

This multiple case study research is a mainly qualitative approach, involving a survey, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. The research is undertaken through two phases:

- Phase 1: Survey sent to 100 Deputy/Assistant Headteachers in Birmingham schools linked to career progression (adapted from Hayes, 2005).
- Phase 2: Semi-structured interviews with 15 Deputy and Assistant Head teachers in order to obtain views, thoughts and experiences linked to Headship and the reasons why Headship is no longer an option.
- Documentary analysis of educational research documents relating to the career journeys of Deputy and Assistant Headteachers and the transition to Headship.

**Analysis of qualitative measures**

**On Deputy and Assistant Headship:**

- Highly valued pupil centred teaching role
- Emotionally and physically stimulating role
- Accepted role ambiguity
- Long hours
- Limited professional freedom

**Perceptions of Headship**

- Admired and respected role
- Administration and data driven
- Limited pupil involvement
- Hindered work life balance
- Evidence of health related illnesses due to stress

**Barriers**

Gender, age and cultural barriers have been experienced in some of the Deputy and Assistant Headteacher career journeys.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Deputy and Assistant Headteachers that do not opt for Headship should not be stigmatized and alternate career pathways employed to support development within the role.

Structured career pathways and career counselling opportunities with “hands on” training programs for Deputy and Assistant Headteachers “actively” seeking Headship.

External recruitment and selection monitoring of gender, race and age for the teaching workforce in order to ensure that selection bias is addressed throughout the teaching journey and diversity reflected.

Reinvention of the Deputy and Assistant Headship role acknowledging “static” and effective Deputy and Assistant Headteachers.

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