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# An examination of professional support in the life of the experienced urban primary teacher

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University of Plymouth

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# UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

An examination of professional support in the life of the  
experienced urban primary teacher

by

SUSAN JANE LANGFORD

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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## **Author's Signed Declaration**

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

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## **Abstract**

### **An examination of professional support in the life of the experienced urban primary teacher by SUSAN JANE LANGFORD**

The purpose of this study was to determine how experienced primary school teachers, in urban settings, can be supported in their professional lives. Teacher turnover is a challenge both here in England and internationally. Teacher turnover can be expensive for schools, disruptive for students and problematic for both the teachers who stay and for the teachers who leave.

I argue that, developing a deeper understanding of how experienced primary teachers can be supported in their professional lives appears necessary to improve teacher retention and consequently have a positive impact on a student's school experience.

This research examined the experiences of twelve urban, primary school teachers who had been teaching for more than five years. Using semi structured in-depth walking interviews, data was audio recorded, transcribed and then coded with themes. Findings from this research are that working conditions have a huge impact on a teacher's professional experience, with leaders being the key to whether a teacher feels supported or not. Leaders may wish to consider foregrounding working conditions as a priority in their management of a school.

The three key findings are: leaders set the context for the teachers' supportive environment; teachers who have worked for more than five years appear to experience additional emotions due to a better understanding of their professional role; walking interviews are an effective way to elicit quality data.

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## List of Haiku

Throughout this thesis you will find haiku poems which have been penned by the participants. Please take a moment to read and enjoy.

Section:

- 2.3 Donna
- 4.0 Barbara
- 4.5.2 John
- 5.0 Carl
- 5.5.4 Karen
- 6.0 Carolyn
- 7.7 Jenna

## **Glossary of Terms**

This section lists definitions that are used throughout the thesis and are relevant to understanding as many terms used are interchangeable between American and British educational research. An important example of this is the British and American terms of head teacher and principal. Where possible leader has been used to reflect both these terms.

**Assumptions:** Values, beliefs, or perceptions that are known to be correct by the general population without having to show actual evidence (Peterson & Deal, 2011).

**Attrition:** The rate of teachers who are leaving the educational profession (Ingersoll, 2001).

**Authoritative leadership style:** This style of leadership was task oriented and characterized by the use of authority by the leader (Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1973).

**Beliefs:** Ideas about what is believed to be real about the world around us (Deal & Peterson, 2016).

**Bureaucratic leadership style:** This leadership style was dominated by rules and regulations. The leader did not deviate from established regulations, and the rules became more important than the rules' intended purpose (Bush, 2011).

**Communication tool:** Verbal or non-verbal interaction that transmits facts, stories, needs, or feelings. Communication is also the medium that influences or persuades (Bolman & Deal, 1984).

**Competencies:** The specific abilities or capabilities a person or people possess (Gulcan, 2012).

**Culture:** Underlying feel of the organisation. These values can be traditions, values, norms, beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, language, purpose, mission and vision of an organization that can lead a school to high achievement and are what gives the organization its identity (Hoy & Sabo, 1998). Or, the personality of a group of people that presents itself in an organization in its values, beliefs, and assumptions, is its culture (Schein, 2004).

**Distributed Leadership:** Recognizes coaches, mentors, and teacher leaders, in addition to administrative staff, as part of the leadership process that takes place within a school. Such a perspective decentralizes the principal as the sole person enacting authority and recognizes that there are others to whom the principal delegates tasks (Spillane & Healey, 2010).

**Elementary school teacher:** An elementary school teacher is an American term for professional staff member who instructs students in grades kindergarten through to sixth grade and maintains daily student attendance, commonly referred to as a Primary school teacher in Britain.

**Head teacher:** A person in a school organization who holds a position of leadership and must ensure adequate education for all students in a school site while adhering to school district and state policies, usually responsible for curriculum, instruction, and management; also known as the educational leader, instructional leader, transformational leader. Commonly referred to as an administrator or principal in America.

**Instructional Leadership:** Model of leadership described by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) which involves setting clear goals, managing curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, allocating resources and evaluating teachers regularly to promote student learning and growth.

**Leadership:** A skill that a person embraces that inspires others to act in a particular way (Cashman, 2008).

**Leavers:** teachers who leave the profession completely (Ingersoll, 2001). More recently the Department of Education now included qualified teachers who are out of service. These are teachers who are taking a break from teaching (e.g. career break, secondment) and who may come back as returners in a later year (Department for Education, 2018b).

**Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT):** Newly qualified teacher is a category of teacher in England. They are teachers who have gained qualified teacher status but not yet completed the statutory twelve-month probationary period of working within a school (Department for Education, 2018a).

**Principal:** An American term referring to a person in a school organization who holds a position of leadership and must ensure adequate education for all students in a school site while adhering to school district and state policies, usually responsible for curriculum, instruction, and management; also known as the educational leader, instructional leader, transformational leader, administrator, or head teacher.

**Professional Learning Communities (PLC):** A group of educators working collaboratively to improve student achievement and expand the pedagogy of the individual as well as the group (Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008).

**Retention:** Maintaining or holding a certain position in teaching (Boyd *et al.*, 2011).

**Satisfaction:** A feeling of happiness or contentment in a person or organization (Boyd *et al.*, 2011).

**School culture:** The extent to which the school environment is characterized by mutual trust, respect, openness, and commitment to student achievement (Johnson, Kraft & Papay, 2012). A set of norms, practices, values, and beliefs that drive the functioning of a school (Turan & Bektas, 2013).

**Second-stage teachers:** Teachers with 4–10 years of experience (Kirkpatrick, 2009).

**Teacher attrition:** Teacher attrition refers to those who leave the teaching profession completely, often known as “leavers” (Ingersoll, 2001).



**Transactional leadership:** Transactional leadership was a managerial leadership style characterized by the promotion of compliance to organization rules and culture. Rewards were given for obeying the rules, and punishment was given for disobeying the rules (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999).

**Transformational leadership:** Transformational leadership was a leadership style that promoted change for improving the organization and encouraged the subordinates to work as a cohesive team (Leithwood, 1992). Subsequent research has refined the transformation leadership definition to include a focus on establishing a school culture and vision to enhance the quality of school teaching and learning, develop people, and improve the organization (Shatzer *et al.*, 2014).

**Turnover:** The departure of teachers from their teaching jobs (Ingersoll, 2001).

**Urban Education:** Urban Education refers to a wide range of issues related to living and working in urban settings. More specifically, it refers to issues concerning the education of children in inner cities. Current important issues are the education of children whose ethnicity differs from the dominant society, the education of children living in poverty, and the shortage of teachers in urban settings (European Teacher Education Network, 2019).

**Urban primary school teacher:** A teacher who is working in an inner city context or urban environment.

**Vision:** An image or idea that is presented to one's self or to others (Mitgang, 2012).

**Wastage:** Qualified teachers who are not identified as teaching in either a primary or secondary school now, but who were teaching in either a primary or secondary school the previous year (Worth, 2017).

**Working conditions:** All aspects of teachers' work, e.g. collegial support, facilities and resources, managing student conduct, professional development, school culture, school leadership, student demographics and teacher leadership (Worth, 2017).

## **Chapter One - Rationale and Context**

### **1.1 Introduction**

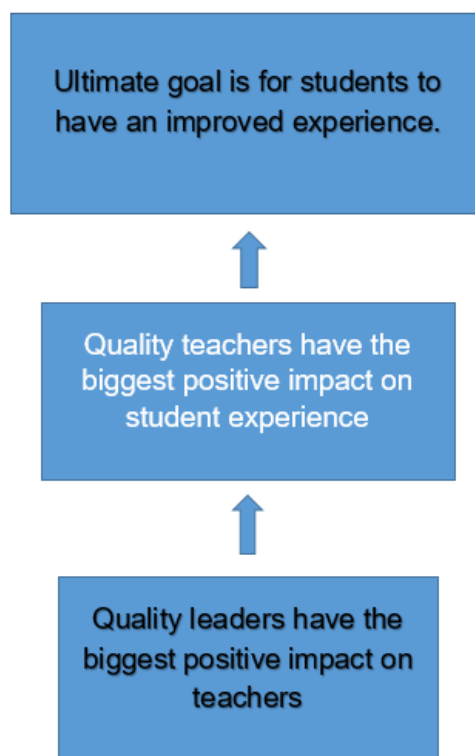
Marmot *et al.* (2010) argue that the foundations for virtually every aspect of human development— physical, intellectual and emotional—are laid in early childhood. When children attend school, teachers are entrusted with their development and well-being: they have enormous influence over these children during their most formative years (Robinson & Aronica, 2019). Coffield (2008) states that teachers play a pivotal role in creating the conditions for learning. Moreover, Riley (2017) notes that the impact of teachers on young people is extremely important.

If England is to provide excellent schooling for all students, as set out by the education inspection framework from Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, 2019), I believe that primary school teachers turnover and retention rates require further research, if we are to understand these ideas more fully. The World Bank (2017) concludes that shortfalls in student learning start early in a child's educational journey, with increasing difficulty to reduce the gap as the student gets older. In agreement, Muijs (2018) argues that children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are most likely to lack reading or numeracy skills when they enter primary school, this is a particularly important issue in terms of social justice. I believe it is appropriate to examine what supports our urban primary school teachers need, how those supports are provided and what can be done to improve them. Over the last 20 years, there has been significant investment in the UK to improve educational opportunities for all. Yet, there appears little evidence that student mobility rates are making positive progress, in fact, there is evidence that the gulf in student inequality is widening (Atkinson, 2015; Hoskins & Barker, 2019).

Another concern is the future teacher supply. In May 2019 'teachvac', a teacher vacancy website, stated that across the English education sector, there were over 40,000 vacancies, an all-time high, with urban schools posting the higher number of job vacancies (Howson, 2019). Alongside this, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS, 2017) published figures which show that applications for teacher training in the UK are declining, resulting in a growth in the predicted deficit of available teachers. Hazell (2018) reported on this in the Times Educational Supplement. Descriptions such as 'disastrous' and 'alarming' were used and there was a call for clearer routes into teaching, in conjunction with policies to tackle the concerns over workload and accountability in the teaching profession. With a rise in student population numbers, the National Audit Office (2016) is predicting there will be a deficit of teachers which cannot be satisfied by new teachers entering the profession. Sutchter, Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas (2019) deem high teacher attrition as the most important driving factor of teacher shortage. Clearly there is a need to look at England's teacher supply. Cook (2018, p.1499) argues that teachers are widely considered the most important public input in the 'education production function' of students, and so, retaining or reemploying experienced teachers appears to be a possible solution to addressing England's teacher turnover and attrition challenge.

See and Gorard (2019) conclude that the issue of England's teacher supply, and with it, turnover and retention is a complex issue. Initial teacher training programmes are below their intake targets, student populations are rising and more teachers are leaving the profession before retirement. Yet, despite investment from the British government, there remains concern around England's capacity to provide appropriate support for all students.

Over the course of my research, I hoped to gain an understanding of what urban primary school teachers, who have more than five years of teaching experience, need, or wish for, to support their role as classroom teachers. One goal of this research is for students to have an improved experience during their time in school. In Hanushek, Piopiunik & Wiederhold (2019) international research they demonstrated that an increase in teacher skills had a significant impact on a student's performance and school experience. In Sutchter, Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas (2019), research they suggest that leaders have the biggest influence on teachers, hence the relationship between leaders and the teaching staff appears worthy of investigation. The following model shows one way of looking at support and appears worthy of investigation.



The understandings gained from this research will hopefully contribute to the paucity of research concerning experienced teachers in urban primary schools. Additionally, it has the potential to provide school leaders useful information in relation to support strategies for experienced teachers in their professional lives, which in turn could reduce teacher turnover and increase teacher retention, hopefully with the additional benefit of an improved student school experience.

This goal, of an improved student experience, stems from my understanding of social justice. Adams and Bell (2016, p.3) define it as 'a full and equal participation of all groups in society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs'. Kumari and Kandasamy (2017, p.1) state that, 'social justice is by and large compared with the principle of equity or equivalent open door in the public arena.... When people are able to get the quality education, they can break the cycle of poverty and get the livelihood opportunity'. The World Bank (2017) hypothesises that, if education can equip students with the skills they need to lead healthy, productive, meaningful lives, society benefits as it spurs innovation, strengthens institutions, and fosters social cohesion. I argue that, in order for that to happen, we need to look at supporting teachers in their roles to enable them to provide students with these skills to lead healthy, productive, meaningful lives.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to understand the phenomenon of teacher retention and attrition from an experienced primary school teacher's viewpoint. The focus being an exploration of the needs of urban primary school teachers who have been teaching more than five years by examining how these teachers can be supported in their professional lives.

## 1.2 Research Questions

This thesis aims to add to the literature on experienced primary school teacher turnover by addressing the following research questions:

**Main Research Question:** How can experienced primary teachers in urban settings be supported in their professional lives?

**Sub Research questions:**

- What does the current literature say about this?
- What kinds of support do teacher's value?
- What can more senior staff do to support teachers in their professional lives?
- What can be learnt from the teachers themselves?

This study is situated in the body of literature of leadership, teacher efficacy, wellbeing and professional development. Using qualitative methodology this empirical study will use semi-structured walking interviews with twelve urban primary school teachers who have been in the profession for more than five years.

The findings of this original research study are intended to highlight and contribute to this under researched area of primary school teachers who are beyond their newly qualified status and have more than five years of experience, especially in the urban context. By researching this area, I hope to inform my own practice as well as providing current and future head teachers alongside policy makers, practical and relevant knowledge that may reduce teacher turnover.

I strongly believe that one of the main role of leadership, in all schools, is to support every teacher to enable them to do their best work. I aspire to be an assistant

principal/duty head teacher and so have a deep professional interest in these research findings, they are invaluable to my own personal knowledge on how I can support teachers in the primary setting and hopefully ameliorate the teacher turnover challenge.



### **1.3 Thesis Outline and Structure**

This thesis is presented in seven chapters.

**Chapter one** - outlines the rationale and purpose of this research. It provides an explanation of my personal interest, why this is an important research area and looks at the prominent literature.

**Chapter two** - presents a literature review on staff retention and attrition. In order to begin to answer the research questions set out, the literature review looks at several sets of theories including educational leadership. Teacher workload and policy implications are also addressed.

**Chapter three** - continues to look at pertinent literature in regards to teacher career cycles, teacher professional development, teacher efficacy, teacher quality, teacher well-being and trust.

**Chapter four** - discusses the rationale for the use of research approach used through data generation, data analysis and results interpretation and dissemination - a qualitative approach with semi – structured walking interviews. Ethical issues of conducting research is also discussed here.

**Chapter five** - offers up the findings of the research. Highlighting themes which emerge from the study.

**Chapter six** - considers the findings in relation to the original research questions.

**Chapter seven** - I summarise the thesis and argue the contribution to original knowledge in defence of my PhD. Chapter seven also looks at possible avenues of future research.

## 1.4 The Urban Primary Context

I have chosen to situate my research in urban/inner-city primary for several reasons. In September 2016 there were 12,460 urban primary schools and 4,734 rural primary schools in England (Department for Education, 2016b). More than twice the amount of schools recruiting teachers in the urban environment. My very first teaching role was in Portsmouth, UK, in an inner-city junior school. I then moved to Baltimore, USA and continued to teach on and off for the next 15 years. I have always worked in an urban environment in both expensive private schools and free urban charter schools. The private schools with impressive facilities and healthy professional development funds were inspiring and what every teacher would like for themselves and their students. Unfortunately, the majority of children's educational journey is not that. I taught children who had not eaten the night before, who fell asleep at their desks, whose parents were working two jobs to pay the rent or had a family member in prison. Roofe's (2018) study suggests that urban students are often struggling financially and have many unmet academic, emotional and physical needs which pose a challenge to students' success in education and beyond.

Sibley *et al.* (2019) write that there is a general consensus that children who are raised in poverty are faced with serious barriers to academic achievement and healthy personal development. This may be a result of food insecurity, a disruptive home life with no routines or merely the inability of parents to be able to provide learning opportunities within their home due to time or financial restraints. Marryat *et al.* (2017) findings indicated that children who are living in the most deprived area often have higher levels of mental health difficulties. In earlier research, Pingault *et al.* (2013) offered that mental health disorders in childhood are associated with a range of future negative outcomes, including poorer academic achievement, future

mental health problems, increased criminality, risky sexual behaviours, poorer relationships and unemployment. Rosemond *et al.*'s (2019) work highlights the strain that food insecurity can have on students and their interpersonal relationships. Regular family meals foster positive social development of children. Consequently, families experiencing 'chaos' in their lives from poverty, food shortage, working extra hours or managing extended families miss the opportunity to strengthen their own emotional connection. Alongside this, Berger *et al.* (2019) study highlighted the impact a regular sleep routine has on a child's development, concluding that children in higher chaos homes do have lower academic achievement. Overall it can be seen that often students in the urban environment lead chaotic lives which may have a negative impact on their lives. In the light of this, Curtis (2018) offers that education can be a tool to reduce the poverty gap and with it the associated social injustice by educating and informing students.

In the report, *The Schools workforce in England 2010 to 2015: trends and geographical comparisons* (Department for Education, 2016b, p.3), the DfE states that, 'schools in areas with a high level of deprivation had slightly higher rates of [teacher] school-to-school mobility and wastage', and, 'within these higher deprived areas, those that were in urban areas had the highest rate of [teachers] leavers to other schools', it also stated that, 'urban schools in general recruited a higher number of newly qualified teachers'. This sits in agreement with Kini and Podolsky (2016) who conclude that hard-to-staff schools typically end up with a disproportionate number of inexperienced teachers. Hargreaves (2017) argues that schools in England will not improve just by 'tightening the ship', or by replacing people, he argues there needs to be a genuine emphasis on transforming teaching

and learning within the school. Experienced urban teachers may be the key to this and thus further supports justification on the chosen research focus.

### **1.5 Experienced Teachers**

In 1993, Brown and McIntyre (p.17) referred to the term 'craft knowledge of teaching' to describe the professional knowledge teachers acquire through classroom experience. They argue that this knowledge cannot be taught pre-service or in professional development but is acquired only by experience and as a result is often invaluable to the effectiveness of the teacher. Day (2005) argues that experienced teachers use craft knowledge every day in their classrooms and that it is at the heart of effective teaching. This 'wisdom' that teachers have gained during their practice is hard to quantify and is different for each practitioner. Losing an experienced teacher means losing that teacher's 'craft knowledge', 'wisdom', and 'skills' which they have accumulated over their own professional practice. These 'assets' cannot be handed over at the end of a term or reassigned to a NQT; they have been individually acquired and refined with classroom experience.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) argue that experienced teachers are often seen as committed and capable. Indeed, Allen and Sims (2018) highlight numerous research papers which have shown that experienced teachers are superior and more effective than newly qualified teachers. In Podolsky *et al.* (2019a) research, which focused on high level critical thinking skills, they demonstrated that experienced teachers were the common factor among 156 California school districts where black and Hispanic students, as well as white students, are beating the odds and scoring higher than expected on tests that measure higher-level critical thinking skills. They argued that providing students with qualified, fully prepared teachers is a critical component for raising student achievement across the entire school system. Yet, many countries

continue to experience great difficulty in retaining a core of experienced teachers, especially in disadvantaged areas. In England, head teachers consider a lack of appropriately qualified teaching staff as a particularly pressing concern, which can be seen in the following figure.

**Figure 1: How do head teachers’ views on the factors hindering instruction differ across the UK?**

	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
A lack of teaching staff	45%	27%	45%	20%
Inadequate or poorly qualified teachers	22%	4%	8%	15%
A lack of assisting staff	18%	21%	32%	19%
Inadequate or poorly qualified assisting staff	12%	5%	10%	13%
A lack of educational material	29%	26%	31%	31%
Inadequate or poor quality educational material	26%	23%	26%	28%
A lack of physical infrastructure	48%	45%	24%	44%
Inadequate or poor quality physical infrastructure	45%	45%	24%	48%

Source: PISA 2015 database.

In times of teacher shortages, policymakers often focus on how to get more teachers teaching. However, Sutchter, Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas (2019) argue that it is as equally important to focus on how to keep effective teachers, who are already in the workforce, teaching. I argue that teachers working in a school over an extended period acquire cultural knowledge about the school and its students; they have a confidence from experience; they have survived the newly qualified teaching years and have the potential to become key assets in the future of the education system.

For the purpose of this study, my definition of experienced teacher is someone who has been teaching full time in a primary school for five or more years. I interviewed mid and late career teachers as defined by Huberman (1989). He identifies three main stages: novice, mid and late career. Although the definitions of teacher career cycles differ: Fessler (1985) identified nine life cycles stages; Steffy and Wolfe (2001) listed six phases; Leithwood (1992) five. They all have similar themes, such as, the number of years teaching, self-confidence, a shift from focusing on one-self to the student and pedagogical mastery. As Leithwood (1992) points out, the school administration and the principal need to possess an awareness of the career cycle. For example, teachers in different phases of the cycle have different life experiences, which in turn, can alter the way they respond to change. Experienced teachers are often the ones who must deal with larger amounts of change in their professional lives, with new Governments come new policy initiatives. McIntyre (2010, p.597) argues alongside an increase in today's audit culture, and the emphasis on testing the accountability, the administrative aspects of teaching have intensified. Smith and Benavot (2019, p.201) state that, 'the introduction of externally driven, results-oriented accountability in education has fostered unwanted competition and undermined trust'. These changes have happened over the career of many experienced teachers. As a result, Biesta (2009) speculates that maintaining a positive professional identity can become a challenge for many experienced teachers. Linda and Daria (2007) add that an additional stress experienced teachers may feel is being trapped in the education system, as they tend to have less opportunities to move to other jobs, either in or outside of education.

There is a substantial body of current research on the needs of newly qualified teachers and the support that they require to help reduce teacher turnover and

increase self-efficacy. Research includes: how early career teachers value different types of support (Burke *et al.*, 2015); the experiences of early career teachers (Schuck *et al.*, 2018); how new teachers learn (Shanks, 2018); the value of mentoring (Shanks, 2017); the impact of induction (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011); professional development (Gaikhorst *et al.*, 2015; Ovenden-Hope *et al.*, 2018); whole school impact on newly qualified teachers (Sims & Allen, 2018); leadership influences (Thomas *et al.*, 2018); factors that lead to early career teachers leaving the profession (Kelly *et al.*, 2019), and collegial support new teachers receive (Thomas *et al.*, 2019). A noteworthy study is by Ryan *et al.* (2017). Their results suggest that early career teachers may not be more susceptible to leaving the profession than experienced teachers. Rather, early career teachers may be more likely to change schools until they find a more suitable school teaching position. Whilst findings from Kukla-Acevedo's (2009) study showed that early career teachers do decide to move schools or leave education on the basis of a different set of factors than more experienced teachers. This is an additional reason to focus this research on the needs of experienced teachers.

Jephcote, Salisbury and Rees (2008) suggest that the support needs of mid and late career teachers are often ignored, resulting in considerably less research on the needs of experienced teachers, who have been teaching for more than five years. Much in the same way that Carrillo's (2018) research paper on experienced teachers' identity, hoped to generate knowledge contributing to preventing teachers from leaving the profession before retirement age, this thesis has a similar objective, although by identifying professional supports that may reduce attrition. Carrillo's (2018) study echoes Beltman, Mansfield and Price (2011, p.186) in which they argue

that there is a desire to generate knowledge to ensure that those who remain in the teaching profession 'thrive professionally'.

McCaffrey *et al.* (2003) conclude that the quality of students' teachers can have lifelong consequences and equipped with this knowledge there is a strong justification to undertake research on how to improve, retain and inspire our current experienced teachers, with the ultimate aim of an improved experience for our students. Podolsky *et al.* (2019a) recently confirmed that a teacher's experience level is positively associated with student achievement, especially in underserved populations. This demonstrates again that experienced teachers may have additional competencies as compared to newly qualified teachers. Hargreaves (2005, p.974) considers, 'the wisdom and expertise that experienced teachers can provide to the field should not be dismissed'. Hattie's (2008) work has also been influential in discussing teacher effect. He acknowledges that in much of the educational literature, they are the greatest in-school influence on student learning. Stronge (2018) also agrees that teachers have the greatest in-school impact on student success and goes on to argue that investing in improving a teacher effectiveness and equitably distributing this resource throughout all schools, would be enough to close the achievement gap.

Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999, p.viii), state, 'If good learning depends on good teaching, good teaching ultimately depends on excellent leadership'. In this statement they sums up an important connection; successful students depend on successful teachers, who depend on their leaders.



## 1.6 Education

Over a century ago, Dewey (1916, p.107) wrote in *Democracy and Education*, 'the aim of education is to enable individuals to continue their education....the object and reward of learning is continued capacity for growth', later (1930/1984, p.289) he added, 'the ultimate aim of education is nothing other than the creation of human beings in the fullness of their capacities'. Contemporary researchers, Witschge, Rözer and van de Werfhorst (2019) offer that the three core tasks of education are: increasing students' cognitive skills; preparing students for the labour market; whilst preparing citizens for participation in democracy. Clearly, researchers and educational policy makers find difficulty in reaching a consensus on what the aim of education is, nonetheless, most can agree on the need to improve the current situation. If we can assume that the purpose of a school is to provide a quality student experience, equipping students with the skills they need to function productively and responsibly within society at large, many researchers agree that, having a high-quality teacher in every classroom is the most influential factor in attaining this (Allen & Sims, 2018b; Rivkin & Hanushek, 2003).

With reference to the notions of social justice, Allen and Sims (2018b, p.1) state, 'Education is unique among the public services in its ability to propel people forward. Health care, social care and policing are, of course, vital....education gives us the power to go further. Learning is a source of dignity and an important element of human flourishing'. Yet as Bottery (2000) had previously highlighted issues of economic competitiveness are often prioritised by policy makers over those of justice and equality.

Worth (2017) puts forth that the UK government is facing an ongoing challenge of keeping experienced teachers in the profession. Clement, Tschannen-Moran and

Erdogan (2018, p.384), characterise the challenge when they state 'there is a deep longing, among educators and parents alike, for schools to be places where children thrive, places where they want to be rather than have to be and are eager to engage in their biological imperative to connect with others, to learn and to grow'. Providing an education to students, and what that education looks like, clearly remains a contested issue.

Robinson & Aronica (2019), concluded that when parents are asked what they want for their children they often list the following: for their child to be excited about learning and for attending school; for their child to be happy and to be able to make good friends; and to be in a safe and inspiring school environment. On the other hand, parents often worry that there is too much testing and are concerned about the level of stress children are experiencing during the school day. Parents also mention their frustration at the narrowing of the school curriculum, often highlighting the cuts in arts, sports, and unstructured outdoor time. An additional area of concern is the increase in perceived learning problems and the way in which these leaning differences are being addressed. An increased use of medication and a decrease in outdoor activities, skills and lunch times is adding to parent's frustration. Parents feel that their children's strengths are not being valued, celebrated, and built upon whilst often their weaknesses are magnified and focused on as grades become more important than the children themselves.

Robinson and Aronica (2019) continue that children love to learn, that learning is natural for them, as for most of our human history children educated themselves through observation, exploring, questioning, playing and participating. In contrast, in today's educational climate most children receive over 22,000 hours of official schooling with some students having limited opportunity to observe, explore,

question, play or participate. For children to be excited about learning, to be inspired in school, have the opportunity to make good friends and be happy, I argue that they must have teachers who provide a learning environment that provides opportunity for those experiences to happen. Yet, it appears that the current focus in education reform does not provide teachers with the development opportunities to support this, instead the focus is on raising test scores and other simplistic metrics of performance. Robinson and Aronica (2019, p.3-18) argue that businesses are calling out for employees who are adaptable, creative, full of ideas and employees who can work collaboratively within their organisation, not employees who are excellent test takers. Podolsky *et al.* (2019a) concur with Robinson and Aronica, asserting that success does not depend on knowledge but knowledge use, students need to be able to think critically, collaborate effectively and be open to lifelong learning.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

According to the UK's Health & Safety Executive (2017) teaching staff and education professionals report the highest rates of work-related stress, depression and anxiety when compared to other professions in Britain. The focus of this research is on retaining experienced primary school teachers, and so, this topic has the potential to inform the teacher recruitment and retention strategy in England and therefore warrants further investigation. I strongly agree with Slavin (2019) who sees education as the linchpin for progressing an economy and society.

As mentioned, many factors lead to teachers becoming dissatisfied, demoralised or overwhelmed, resulting in them moving schools or leaving the profession entirely. I argue that educational leaders must turn their attention to effective strategies that promote teacher retention, with the aim of enabling one of the most valuable resource in a school to thrive. As Rt Hon Damien Hinds MP (2018), the UK

education secretary said, when addressing the Association of School and College Leaders' annual conference, 'There are no great schools without great teachers'. Podolsky *et al.* (2019b, p.5) further add that a highly competent teacher workforce is a necessary foundation for improving children's educational outcomes. Their results highlight the importance of investing in preparing and keeping quality teachers. As many researchers agree, with improved educational outcomes, come benefits to both the individual and the society as a whole, some of these can be seen in the following figure.

**Figure 2: Examples of Education's Benefits**

	<b>Individual/family</b>	<b>Community/society</b>
<b>Monetary</b>	Higher probability of employment Greater productivity Higher earnings Reduced poverty	Higher productivity More rapid economic growth Poverty reduction Long-run development
<b>Nonmonetary</b>	Better health Improved education and health of children/family Greater resilience and adaptability More engaged citizenship Better choices Greater life satisfaction	Increased social mobility Better-functioning institutions/service delivery Higher levels of civic engagement Greater social cohesion Reduced negative externalities

Source: (World Bank, 2017, p.39)

There is a comprehensive body of academic research on the relationship between leaders and high school teachers in regards to style of leadership, burn out, and self-efficacy (Eboka, 2016; O'Brennan, Pas & Bradshaw, 2017; Sarikaya & Erdogan,

2016). There is also wide ranging research on the retention of newly qualified teachers (Martinez, 2019), teacher pre-service education and preparation (Ingersoll, Merrill & May, 2014), turnover in hard to staff subjects (Feng & Sass, 2018; Ingersoll & May, 2012), special educational teacher attrition and turnover (Hagaman & Casey, 2018; Hale, 2015) and the impact policy has on secondary school teacher recruitment (See & Gorard, 2019). Nonetheless, Towers and Maguire (2017) argue that what appears to be a crowded field of research reveals that there is a paucity of published work in regards to turnover in the context of primary school teachers and especially those who are experienced.

Teachers wear many hats. In any one day, a teacher can be an educator, disciplinarian and councillor whilst constantly under pressure to making numerous decisions that they are fully accountable for. Beghetto and Kaufman (2014) argue that the way teachers approach their day, their mood and behaviours affect the children's experience of school. Teachers are asked to be experts in their field of knowledge, plus often, other fields that they have not initially been trained in. They should be confident presenters of knowledge whilst motivating and sparking creative thinking. Teachers also have to tolerate and manage disagreement, be self-starters, make learning fun, be fair, and communicate well with the senior leadership team, parents, students, colleagues, and support staff. Alexander *et al.* (2017) add that technology is developing at an unprecedented pace, and as a result educators are called upon to be tech-savvy to keep up with their students. They also have to provide feedback to children and parents, be organised, achieve order and harmony in their class with appropriate discipline policies and approaches, plan for Ofsted, complete mandatory assessment and attend many out of school hour events. All of this whilst rarely getting a lunchtime to themselves! These pressures are clearly

reflected in Herman, Hickmon-Rosa and Reinke (2018) study, where only 7% of the 121 urban, elementary teachers interviewed fell into the well-adjusted category with low stress levels, high coping ability, and low teacher burnout. 93% of the teachers were experiencing low job satisfaction.

Cooley and Yovanoff (1996) determined that there was a strong correlation between job satisfaction and special educators' turnover. Later in Tickle, Chang and Kim's (2011) US study, that drew upon extensive national trend data, they concluded that, support from the administrative team and/or head teacher was identified as the most significant predictor of teachers' job satisfaction, but not only that, it also indicated a teachers' intent to stay in teaching. Furthermore, the following year, Curtis and Wise (2012) interviewed teachers who had left the role of classroom teacher and again found the most common reason given for leaving was a lack of administrative support. Teachers whose leaders rarely visited their classrooms, lacked regular communication, and remained inaccessible reported lower levels of job satisfaction, leading to higher levels of teacher turnover and lower student achievement. On the other hand, Moran (2018) attributes stress and anxiety as the main causes of the teacher recruitment and retention crisis. She speculates the stress and anxiety which stems from the mandatory student assessment and the government's OFSTED inspections which teachers, teaching in England, are subjected to.

Based on figures obtained through a freedom of information request, the Liberal Democrats state that in the academic year 2016/2017, 3,750 teachers in England were on long-term stress leave, an increase of over 5% from the previous year. This equates to over 300,000 days teachers missed due to stress and mental health reasons. These figures suggest that there is a broader issue within the education system that cannot be easily explained.

## 1.8 Context is Important

Since Coleman's seminal 1966 study, researchers have been searching for school factors that affect student achievement to mitigate a student's socioeconomic status. In Hoy's (2012) article *School characteristics that make a difference for the achievement of all students: A 40-year odyssey*, he identified three characteristics of schools that made a positive difference for student achievement: collective efficacy, collective trust in parents and students, and academic emphasis of the school. Riley (2013a, p.54) writes that there are gaps in understanding the contextual challenges of city schools, as discussions of context typically focus on measurable demographic or social-economic features. Cukurova et al. (2018) argue that the omission of contextual factors in any research is hard to justify and devalues the impact and reliability of that research. Many studies illustrate that it is hard to understand how people work and learn without considering context. Guba and Lincoln (1981, p.62) stated that, 'it is virtually impossible to imagine any kind of human behaviour that is not heavily mediated by the context in which it occurs'. Southworth (2003, p.8) concurs and offers that one of the most meaningful findings from leadership research is that context does matter, he argues that leadership is contingent upon both environmental and contextual factors and for educational leaders to be successful they must understand the context in which they work. He continues, context is not a straightforward phenomenon but consists of many variables that do not remain static and will change over time. These factors relate and interrelate with one another and influence the leadership in a school, effective heads have a highly developed contextual literacy. This sits in agreement with earlier researchers who have indicated that effective leaders are exquisitely sensitive to the context (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999, p.3-4). More recently, Day et al.

(2016) highlighted that school context and the influence that it has on context-specific leadership responses are an important mediating influences on teacher and student learning and by interpreting individual school contexts, a clearer understanding of teacher learning, and development needs become apparent (Furner & McCulla, 2019). Newton *et al.* (2011) argue that understanding context can help understand teacher turnover. For example when comparing US traditional public schools to charter schools, charter schools have had consistently lower annual teacher retention, which would at first appear contrary to popular opinion.

Context is certainly acknowledged as a major influence on how a school operates and runs, however, some researchers prefer to put forward other explanations for effective schools. Oates (2011) lists curriculum coherence and control. Mourshed, Chijioke and Barber (2011) state that context is important, but it is secondary to getting the 'fundamentals right', such as a set of school interventions that are appropriate to the stage that school is in. Evidence from Harris, Jones and Adams (2016) study suggest that while the characteristics of an intervention can be readily replicated or copied in a new school, the cultural and contextual conditions in which an intervention was originally successful cannot be. Dimmock and Tan (2016, p.4) argue that the tendency to highlight the importance of contextual and cultural influences but then move on and not make allowances for this consideration is a major flaw in many research papers. The oversimplification of school characteristics does not consider the 'unique complexities of culture and context that characterise each system in its developmental trajectory'.

Riley (2003) suggest that school leadership is intrinsically bound in context: global, national, local and school based. Hallinger (2018) upholds the importance of examining leadership in context. He argues that in order to understand context, it is



important to understand the culture of the school: everything from the school's reputation; the community the school is situated in; to the condition of the school buildings. Furner and McCulla (2019, p.506) define school context as the distinctive features of a school shaped by socio-economic, cultural, historical and geographical circumstances and it is in such contexts that professional supports are shaped. Context is also evident in recent work by Passy and Ovenden-Hope (2019) where they explored school leadership aims and priorities in highly deprived coastal areas in England. This echoes a point that Riley (2013a, p.4-35) made in which she suggested that it is critical for leaders to be aware of the internal life of their school but also how it is connected to the external realities and possibilities. She refers this to as 'Leadership of Place' which goes beyond understanding context and begins with the lives and experiences of the students, not blaming challenging circumstances for underachievement but recognizing ways in which leaders can work with others to influence and (hopefully) improve a student's experience. She explores the power of place and highlights the significant role that schools play in the lives of children, especially in the urban environment where she describes cities as being the place that bear first witness to the social transformation of societies. She argues that schools, by default, act as the interface between the poor, the aspirational, the established and the elite. Having said this, each city is unique and the context for this study is Plymouth, Devon.

Plymouth is a port city located in the south of England, an early trading post for the Roman Empire. Now it is the largest dockyard in Western Europe and Royal Naval home port. Due to the city's naval importance, Plymouth was heavily bombed by the Germans in World War II, resulting in large parts of the city having to be rebuilt. The city is currently home to over 250,000 people, 96.2% white, making it the 30<sup>th</sup> most

populous built-up area in the UK. The unemployment rate in Plymouth is significantly higher than the average for the whole of the UK. Fenton (2016) highlighted the 2014 profile by the National Health Service which showed Plymouth also had higher than average levels of poverty and deprivation. Plymouth is in one of Britain's worst performing local authorities. Every day Plymouth's 71 primary schools deal with the consequences of these facts. Like many cities in the UK, Plymouth experiences social disparities, as do many urban environments. In a recent British Government publication, *The State of the Nation* (2017), they argue that in today's Britain, where you are born has a huge effect on your own social mobility, the link between demography and destiny is becoming stronger not weaker. This reflects Harris *et al.* (2006) study which suggested that while schools in challenging contexts can raise attainment and performance through their own internal efforts, the environment a school is situated in, remains an important influence upon a school's ability to provide a quality education for all. They state (p.420), 'it is naïve to believe that individual schools can reverse the deep-rooted inequalities in our society...but, it is equally naïve to ignore the fact that some schools do "buck the trend" and add significant value to the learning and lives of young people'. This highlights that a student's address, and therefore schooling, can have a significant impact on them reaching their potential, as disadvantaged pupils are often clustered in particular geographical areas resulting in negative lifelong consequences as suggested by Gorard (2018). Yet Schleicher (2018) argues, poor results does not have to be an inevitable outcome of social disadvantage.

Definitions of disadvantage students vary widely throughout the educational literature. Crenna-Jennings (2018) argue that in order to have a comprehensive understanding of disadvantaged students, you need to consider not only income

poverty, but also a lack of social and cultural capital and control over decisions that impact life outcomes. This has recently been addressed by the Office for Standards in Education (2019, p.4) where they propose, in their educational inspection framework, 'leaders adopt or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give learners, particularly the most disadvantaged, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.'

Riley (2013a, p.73) states that, 'In many contexts, but especially cities, education is a way forward, a way out. Education is liberation....it can transform poor communities, it can provide young people with option and choices'. I argue that understanding the context within which schools exist, the needs of our schools, alongside the supports our teachers desire, is the first step to providing a quality education for all.

## **Chapter Two – A Review of the Literature on Staff Retention and Attrition**

### **2.1 Introduction - Defining the Research Field**

This chapter will provide a background for the empirical research in relation to teacher retention and attrition. Starting with a discussion around factors that influence teacher retention and issues that may influence staff attrition. In their 2019 research, Sutchter, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas (2019) attributed teacher attrition as a major factor of the teacher turnover challenge. They suggest that school leaders have the biggest influence on a teacher's professional experience and as a result the likeliness of a teacher remaining in or leaving a school. With this in mind, Chapter 2 will look at workplace conditions and the influence a school leader has on them. Chapter 3 will continue to look at educational literature but through the lens of experienced teachers. Allen and Sims (2018b) argue it is the quality of instruction, the teachers' knowledge, skills and disposition that is the determinant of student learning. This professional knowledge, which teachers acquire through classroom experience, appears invaluable to the effectiveness of the teacher and cannot be acquired pre-service. This 'craft knowledge' often leads to experienced teachers being viewed as committed, capable and more effective than newly qualified teachers (Allen & Sims, 2018b). Chapter 2 and 3 present literature in order to answer the following research questions.

**Main Research Question:** How can experienced primary teachers in urban settings be supported in their professional lives?

**Sub Research questions:**

- What does the current literature say about this?
- What kinds of support do teacher's value?

- What can more senior staff do to support teachers in their professional lives?
- What can be learnt from the teachers themselves?

## **2.2 Teacher Retention and Attrition**

The UK spends over £700 million a year to train new teachers (National Audit Office, 2016). Yet, Worth (2017) argues that one of the key challenges currently facing education in England is recruiting and retaining enough teachers to serve the growing numbers of pupils. Worth and Van den Brande (2019b, p.3) state that, 'the recruitment, development and retention of teachers and school leaders is a crucial underpinning for a successful education system'. Alongside, 83 per cent of school leaders reporting 'unprecedented challenges in recruiting teachers' (House of Commons, 2016, p.5) there is a clear challenge for the English Education system.

The article *Should I Stay or Should I Go?*, published by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER, 2015) provides analysis on the numbers of teachers who are actually leaving the teaching profession. The UK Government statistics indicate that 27,500 or nearly a third of teachers who joined the profession in 2010 had left teaching within five years. With teacher turnover rates being as high as 50% in those schools serving the most deprived communities (DfE, 2016). 20% of English teachers feel tense about their job most or all of the time - compared to 13% in similar professions and 41% of teachers are dissatisfied with their amount of leisure time (Worth & van den Brande, 2019b). The first annual report from NFER on the teacher labour market in England concluded that England's school system faces a substantial and growing challenge of ensuring there are sufficient numbers of high-quality teachers employed in schools (Worth & Van den Brande, 2019a). The report

argues that the secondary school system is facing a substantial teacher supply challenge, with a forecasted 15,000 more teachers needed before 2025. For primary schools, the attrition rate and the rate of vacancies has also increased particularly for experienced teachers.

Perryman and Calvert (2019, p.16) argue that teaching in England is still generally viewed as a long-term career by the majority of teachers entering the profession, with only 7% of newly qualified teachers seeing teacher training as a route to another career. They state, 'this amplifies the problem of teacher attrition, as those who want to be teachers are committed to the profession and yet, somehow, that commitment is eroded in a very short space of time. It is not as if they were not aware that teaching was going to be demanding; however, they feel that the demands of the job outstrip their capacity to adapt'.

In Sutchter, Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas (2016) analysis of American teacher employment data, they showed that reducing teacher turnover and attrition would virtually eliminate the current teacher shortage in the United States. Recently, the teacher shortage in America (the number of teachers demanded in relation to the number of qualified teachers willing to offer their services to fill these demanded positions) for 2017-2018 was 112,000 teachers (Sutchter, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2019). One might agree that the same is true for England. Worth & Van den Brande (2019b) argue that if we can reverse the trend of experienced teachers leaving, it would be easier for primary recruitment targets to be met and schools would retain the expertise of experienced teachers in the classroom, rather than relying more heavily on newly qualified teachers. What is more, Podolsky *et al.* (2019a) conclude that school districts that are able to avoid the effects of teacher

attrition, realise many benefits, including increased student achievement across their schools.

British graduates have a wide range of professional careers open to them. Many of these career choices offer more pay, better opportunities for career advancement and a well-resourced work environment. With teaching in England being rated as one of the most stressful professions (Nash, 2005) and primary school teachers among the occupations with the highest levels of work-related stress (Rose, 2003), it is not surprising that graduates don't apply for teaching courses or that newly qualified teachers (NQT) have such a high dropout rate (Burghes *et al.*, 2009).

Marvel *et al.* (2007) research showed that these teachers are leaving the educational profession to seek employment in other fields. Although contrary to the usual educational discourse, Bryson, Stokes and Wilkinson's (2019a) research suggested that school staff are more satisfied with their jobs than employees in other fields, with little variation in job contentment between different industries and the educational sector. This suggests that school employees are no more stressed by their jobs than employees in other forms of employment. Notwithstanding this, teacher attrition is a long standing, complex, international issue. Over sixty ago, Charters (1956) identified teacher turnover to be a major educational problem in USA with some schools in Illinois experiencing as much as an annual 30% teacher turnover.

See and Gorard (2019) argue that in order for a country to provide a quality education to all its students there must be a good supply of qualified and knowledgeable teachers. Countries such as North America (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2016), Sweden (Lindqvist, Nordäng & Carlsson, 2014), Finland (Heikkinen *et al.*, 2012; Länsikallio & Ilves, 2016) and Australia (Gallant & Riley, 2017) are all experiencing similar issues to England. Teacher

attrition and turnover is a global and ongoing concern which has been written about since the mid-1930s (Behrstock-Sherratt, 2016; Sykes, 1983), and historically attributed to stress, burnout, salary, and job dissatisfaction (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In his seminal report, Gardner (1983) wrote about the severe teacher shortages that certain fields of education in America were experiencing. They appear to be very similar to today; mathematics, science, foreign languages and special educational needs teachers (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2019). Perryman and Calvert (2019) argue that although teacher retention is an international issue, it is particularly problematic in England, with little research regarding urban primary school teachers.

In fact, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (UIS) predicts that the world needs almost 69 million new teachers to reach its 2030 education goals, 24 million of them being primary school teachers. Alarming, over 40 countries across the world are predicted to have a shortfall of primary school teachers by 2030 (Declaration, 2015). It is clear from the research, that teacher recruitment, retention and attrition is a contentious issue but perhaps not insurmountable. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017b) conclude that some countries, and several American states, have increased their retention rates with educational policies and conditions: such as competitive compensation; high-quality training; reducing potential low-quality teachers who enter the profession through backdoor routes; and positive working conditions. However, Aldeman (2016) has questioned whether widespread teacher shortages actually exist. He queried the definition of “supply” stating that it significantly undercounts the number of people who potentially could fill a teaching position. Many researchers agree with Sutcher, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas (2019) who



argue that real-world indicators present convincing evidence that widespread shortages are a reality.

Staff turnover is inevitable in organisations and could be argued beneficial in some situations. For example, if a school loses an employee who falls below the required standard, the school now has the opportunity to recruit a more suited individual, resulting in a new composition of the teaching workforce which may benefit student achievement (Cullen, Koedel & Parsons, 2016; Ingersoll, May & Collins, 2019).

However, Watlington *et al.* (2010) argue that high levels of turnover usually hamper school improvement efforts, either by draining school funds or adding to the administration time needed to advertise, interview and employ new teachers. Not only is the school affected fiscally but the departure of an effective teacher reduces the school's ability to serve its students, with evidence suggesting that urban or underperforming schools tend to lose the more effective teachers (Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2013). Alongside this, Grissom and Reininger (2012) argue that only one third of teachers who do leave teaching will return to the classroom. This attrition results in classroom expertise being permanently lost to the teaching profession.

Barnes, Crowe and Schaefer (2007) argue that from the institution's perspective, attrition increases the administrative workload and can frustrate the experienced staff who remain. The departing teacher takes with them knowledge about the students, the curriculum and the school culture. The resources, both time and energy, spent on recruiting, hiring and training a new teacher could have been used for other purposes. In addition, this changing composition of teachers often causes disruptions to the organisational functioning within a school, especially if this happens in the middle of an academic year. Redding and Henry (2018) write that in some schools this can be on average 4.6% of teachers, which is the equivalent to

roughly one quarter of the total annual teacher turnover, with the highest percentage leaving at the beginning of the spring semester. A teacher leaving mid-year usually has a greater negative impact than a teacher leaving at the end of the school year. If a teacher leaves mid-year the disruption faced by students is likely to be compounded when they are assigned to a long-term substitute while the school hires a replacement teacher for that class.

Gallant and Riley (2017) argue that from the students' perspective, this attrition reduces instructional continuity, and has a negative effect on students' performance, as students who lose a teacher during the school year score, on average, 7.5% of a standard deviation lower on standardised tests. (Donitsa-Schmidt & Zuzovsky, 2014; Redding & Henry, 2018). This resulting poorer pupil attainment (Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2013), potentially decreases their income over their own lifetime (Chetty, Friedman & Rockoff, 2014b). All of these factors place an emotional and/or psychological cost on the students (Dunn *et al.*, 2017). Redding & Henry (2018) argue that the only time attrition of teachers could be beneficial for students, is if the teacher leaving had extremely poor performance prior to her or his exit.

Ronfeldt *et al.* (2015) writes that when there is high turnover in a school, it can become increasingly difficult to maintain a work environment and a positive school culture with a high degree of collaboration for the teachers who remain. However, Allen and Sims (2018b) argue that from a more personal level, from the perspective of the teachers who leave, there may be a huge personal loss, both financially and emotionally. Teachers are often committed to teaching because they see intrinsic benefits from doing so. Their commitment to their school is bound to the education of the children and not the employer. Besley and Ghatak (2005) had previously suggested that teachers who feel they are failing the children in their care frequently

experience additional emotional stress. This additional stress may contribute to the likelihood that they will leave a school before their retirement age. What is more, Mawhinney and Rinke (2018) found that urban teachers who leave struggled emotionally with their choice to leave the classroom, experiencing guilt and frustration at not being able to advocate for their students.

One theory used to understand attrition of teachers is the 'push/pull' theory. (Hoxby & Leigh, 2004). Push factors are literally pushing the teacher out of the school, for example poor leadership or unacceptable working conditions (Johnson, Kraft & Papay, 2012). Whereas pull factors may be higher pay, working in a different geographical location or different demographic student body. These "pull factors" literally draw teachers from the field (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll and Perda (2010) discuss the phenomenon called the 'revolving door' issue, where teachers not only move from one school to another but leave the profession and return a few years later. Leaders of schools may wish to consider if and how the current teaching workforce is changing, either by looking at the demographics of teachers or in the expectations of teachers as turnover does appear to be more common with younger employees (Rath & Harter, 2010). This current generation of workers have been described as entitled, easily distracted, globalized and tech-savvy and that they enter the workforce with different attitudes and ambitions than those held by their predecessors. Millennials expect positive work culture, work-life balance, meaningful work, and social responsibility and are quick to change employment if they are not happy (Deal & Levenson, 2016; Hennings, 2019). Yet, Costanza *et al.*'s (2012) research suggests that there is no generational difference, millennials want the same as everyone else. There is statistical evidence that millennials are gravitating towards an economy of temporary or freelance jobs, sometimes known as the gig

economy, with numbers of workers increasing 60 percent between 1997 and 2014, however, the evidence is unclear as to whether this is by necessity or choice. Brown (2017) highlights that many millennials expect to leave their jobs within two years, it therefore appears prudent for leaders to anticipate this turnover. Many researchers have contributed to the body of knowledge regarding attrition and retention, especially with regards to newly qualified teachers (Hong, 2012). Towers and Maguire (2017) argue that few have studied the reasons experienced teachers leave the teaching profession, especially in the urban context.

In a recent working paper, from The Department of Education, it highlighted that job satisfaction in England's schools is below that of other English-speaking countries that participate in the TALIS survey (Sims, 2017). A common definition of job satisfaction, which appears unchallenged over the last two decades, is the level of happiness or comfort an individual attains from a career choice or daily occupation, such as teaching (Evans, 1998). In Ingersoll and Perda's (2014) study of American Public School teachers they reported that there were various reasons listed for why teachers were leaving, however, nearly 50% stated dissatisfaction as the leading cause. Lynch (2016) argues that a teacher's level of job satisfaction may be the most important predictor for teacher retention, with variables such as: adequate resources, appropriate pay, and being well supported by management all impacting the level perceived by the teacher. Worth and Van den Brande (2019) agree with Lynch and add that teachers who are happy and satisfied are more likely to feel fulfilled in their role and as a result stay in the teaching profession. In their most recent work, Worth and Van den Brande (2019b p.10) state, 'Job satisfaction is a key factor for retention: teachers who are satisfied and motivated are more likely to stay.' In Veldman *et al.*'s (2016) research they looked at experienced teachers who retained high job

satisfaction. They surmised that it was important to know more about how these teachers stayed satisfied in the profession because the chance that they leave the profession before retirement age will probably be larger when they are less satisfied. They hypothesise that teachers' job satisfaction appeared positively related to the self-reported quality of the teacher–student relationships.

In the light of the above, many researchers accept the idea that job dissatisfaction is strongly linked to higher attrition rates for workers in general, not just teachers (Green, 2010). Alongside recent research confirming that job satisfaction is an essential component of teacher retention (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018; Worth & Van den Brande, 2019a), plus evidence that increasing job satisfaction is associated with higher workplace performance in non-schools (Bryson, Forth, and Stokes 2017a), there appears a justification in understanding teacher job satisfaction and the impact it has on teacher retention and attrition.

In order to address England's teacher supply challenge, in January 2019 the Department for Education published a strategy with the aim of making careers in teaching attractive, sustainable and rewarding. Carole Willis, Chief Executive, of National Foundation for Educational Research stated, 'It is clear we need to encourage more teachers to stay, and offer those who have left teaching the prospect of an exciting, rewarding and manageable career that they want to return to' (Worth & Van den Brande, 2019b, p.3). Hanushek, Piopiunik and Wiederhold (2019) estimate that increasing teacher salaries would increase the pool of potential teachers and help to reduce teacher turnover. They did caution that there would be no guarantee that the more talented teachers would be hired from a larger pool or that the teachers who decided to stay in education, and not leave, would be the most effective.

Literature analysing the attrition of teachers (Imazeki, 2005) plus, the movement between schools (Scafidi, Sjoquist & Stinebrickner, 2007) often looks at school and student characteristics to explain trends. For example Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin (2004) found that teacher mobility is strongly related to characteristics of the students, particularly race and achievement. However in contrast, recent research states working conditions as one of the most significant factors in teacher turnover (Cook, 2018). Cook (2018) lists improvements in school leadership that foster an environment of safety, professional support, and respect as a factor in reducing turnover and retaining effective teachers. Sims (2017) argues that all schools, no matter their student characteristics, can sustain a stable, experienced body of teaching staff by improving workplace conditions. Geiger and Pivovarova's (2018) findings support the hypothesis that it is the teachers' perceived working conditions that mitigate the relationship between high attrition rates and school demographics. This is a powerful knowledge shift as statistics do show that teachers tend to transfer to schools serving wealthier, whiter student populations (Allen, Burgess & Mayo, 2018; Boyd *et al.*, 2005), but the research is suggesting that teachers are not fleeing their students but the poor working conditions that make it difficult to teach and therefore difficult for their students to learn (Simon & Johnson, 2015). These poor working conditions are more common in schools that serve minority and low-income students (Borman & Dowling, 2008). In America, large urban districts often report the highest rates of attrition, Carey (2004, p.8) states that, 'no matter which study you examine, no matter which measure of teacher qualities you use, the pattern is always the same—poor students, low-performing students, and students of colour are far more likely than other students to have teachers who are inexperienced, uncertified, poorly educated, and underperforming' More recently, Simon and

Johnson (2015) research counters this. They looked at research which included both working conditions and race in their model and found that working conditions explained away all or most of the relationship between student demographics and teacher turnover.

In their contemporary research of teachers in England, Allen, Burgess and Mayo (2018) also found a positive association between the level of school disadvantage and the attrition rate of teachers. After school, pupil and local teacher labour market characteristics were accounted for, the remaining positive association was attributed to teacher characteristics, with the poorer schools hiring, on average, much younger teachers reflecting the low market attractiveness of disadvantaged schools. In addition, these underserved students are often more likely to be exposed to 'churning teachers', teachers who have been asked to switch grade or subject, resulting in teachers not teaching the subject, or the student demographic they trained in. Holme and Rangel (2012) argue this with-in school churn typically has a negative effect on student achievement as teachers find it difficult to establish professional networks of support if the staff makeup is constantly changing. Atteberry, Loeb and Wyckoff (2017) add that it is also more difficult to be effective at complex tasks when the task or context is unfamiliar.

From the discourse in turnover literature, researchers and policy makers do assume that turnover harms student achievement, either by 'compositional' factors, which is the difference in quality between teachers who leave and those who replace them, or by 'disruptive' factors, where turnover is considered to have a disruptive organisational influence on all members of a school community, including the teachers and their students who stay (Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2013). Therefore, teacher turnover does appear to presents a challenge to educational equity, as it

may only affect students in certain contexts. Abelson and Baysinger (1984) speculate that some schools may benefit from teacher attrition. Teacher attrition provides a school an opportunity to create better teacher-job matches, plus employing new teachers may create an infusion of new ideas and enthusiasm to a school environment. Hanushek and Rivkin (2010) also argue that turnover constitutes a productive component of a teacher's job search, leading to better teacher-school match, as less productive teachers appear to be more likely to leave low achieving schools. In Feng and Sass's (2017) research they agreed that teachers in the lowest performance quartile were leaving the classroom in greater numbers than their peers. However, they also discovered that the teachers in the top quartile were also leaving at similar rates. This mirrors Guarino, Santibanez and Daley's (2006) research in which they discovered that the academic qualifications of teachers often had an influence over their potential for leaving their school. Teachers who scored higher on measured academic ability had a higher probability of leaving teaching.

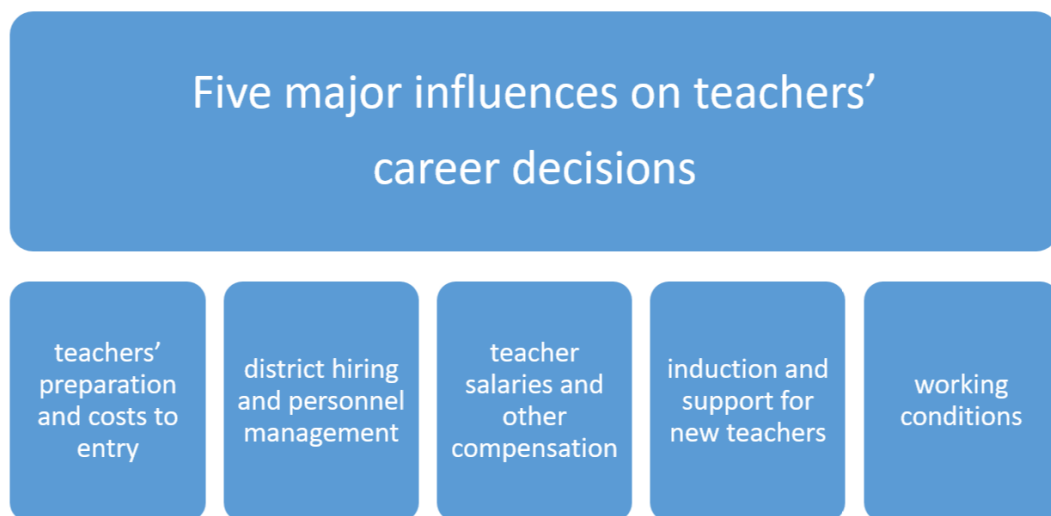
Bomia *et al.* (1997) conclude that it is clear in the research that intrinsic rewards are the most typical motivating factor for teachers, with two main types. One reward comes from the simple act of enjoying working with the students: the other reward resulting from feelings of being instrumental in the students' achievements. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) offer that one reason more effective teachers stay is that good teachers actually experience more psychological rewards, such as feelings of success, from teaching in their schools and therefore choose not to leave. This feeling of success has been reported as being important to many teachers' career decisions, raising the question of whether turnover is all negative, especially for those schools serving disadvantaged populations. Fonseca (2018, p.100) writes that



one thing is clear, there is a strong correlation between working conditions and turnover: the more positively the teachers view the social and organisational conditions of their schools, the less likely it is that they will leave.

The drivers of teacher recruitment and retention, were recently analysed in Podolsky *et al.*'s (2019b) research. They grouped turnover and attrition influences, the reason teachers stay or leave a school or education, under five broad categories: teachers' preparation and costs to entry; district hiring and personnel management; teacher salaries and other compensation; induction and support for new teachers; and finally working conditions, including school leadership and professional collaboration.

**Figure 3: Influences on Teachers' career decisions**



Podolsky, A., Kini, T., Darling-Hammond, L. & Bishop, J. (2019b)

This research is focused on retention of experienced teachers, and as Allensworth, Ponisciak and Mazzeo (2009, p.31) succinctly state, 'Schools retain their teachers when they have strong collaborative relationships among teachers, parents, and administrators and where the learning climate for students is safe and non-disruptive, regardless of the backgrounds of their students.' This suggests that

efforts to improve school environments can help in reducing teacher turnover and may further assist these schools in building their overall capacity to support student learning. With this in mind, the following literature focuses on the last influence Podolsky *et al.* (2019b) discusses which is school working conditions. This next section of the thesis focuses on what constitute professional supports and the significant impact working conditions such as workload, professional development and leadership can have on experienced urban teachers.

### **2.3 Workplace Conditions**

*'Escape from the mayhem*

*Time to reflect and share aims*

*Need to relax more'*

*Donna*

Ingersoll (2001) argues that the characteristics of an educational environment can determine who enters a teaching role and ultimately who remains in teaching. Gu and Day (2013) add that understanding the importance of workplace conditions in enabling teachers to teach and teach at their best is fundamental. In teacher turnover literature frequently investigated working conditions include: teacher workload, school leadership, teacher's career stage, professional development, teacher efficacy and quality, employee well-being, and institutional trust. Boyd *et al.* (2011) argue supportive working conditions have a quantifiable impact on the retention of teachers and may have a bigger impact on student achievement than

previously thought (Protheroe, 2011). Johnson (2019) concludes that professional working conditions are the key to teachers thriving professionally.

Kapa and Gimbert (2018) argue that job satisfaction is an essential component of teacher retention, and that teacher job satisfaction is primarily affected by workplace conditions. Workplace conditions might include the following: the workload the teacher experiences; the physical features of a building, equipment, and resources; the sociological features that shape how teachers experience their work; the political features of the school such as their decision making capacity; the cultural features of a school such as values, traditions and norms; and educational features such as curriculum and testing. Johnson (2006) highlighted that in order for teachers to be retained in teaching and supported in doing their best work with students, they must have a workplace that promotes their efforts in a variety of ways. Johnson, Kraft and Papay (2012) added that schools where teachers perceive a positive workplace have students achieving at higher levels, even after demographic factors are considered. Hargreaves (2001) argues that colleagues play a significant role in how teachers experience their work and workplace conditions, with teachers seeking and enjoying the rewards of affiliation with colleagues. This source of personal support and social acceptance is strongly related to a teacher's perception of culture of the school. Following is an in-depth discussion of the above influences, starting with a teacher's workload.

## **2.4 Workload**

In 2016, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) surveyed its teachers to discover the reasons why teachers leave their profession. At the NUT Conference that year, Christine Blower, the then General Secretary of the NUT stated, 'The causes of the retention problem are clear: workload, workload, workload...' (Blower, 2016).

Recently at the 2018 NUT conference, the new General Secretary, Kevin Courtney, declared that they are still in the process of reducing workload and announced a national campaign to drive down teacher workload (Courtney, 2018).

Higton *et al.* (2017) write that British primary school teachers work on average 55.5 hours a week which is more than most secondary teachers and more than primary school teachers working in other developed countries (Weldon & Ingvarson, 2016). Once school holidays have been accounted for, these hours worked may be similar to the number of hours worked by other professionals. Though Worth and Van den Brande (2019) offer that the intensively that teachers experience, leads to higher stress levels and with it a poorer work life balance. According to the National Foundation for Educational Research (Walker, Worth & Van den Brande, 2019), workload is the main reason teachers consider leaving the teaching profession, and Worth and Van den Brande (2019) theorise that reducing teacher's unnecessary workload, provides the biggest opportunity for increasing retention and reducing attrition in the education system.

Recent data from the Teacher Workload Survey 2019 does offer some hope. Primary teachers' perception of workload from 2019 compared to 2016 shows a slight improvement. In 2016, 49% thought workload was a 'very serious problem', in 2019 that had reduced to 21%. Nevertheless, 52% of primary school teacher still feel teacher workload is a 'fairly serious problem'. Combining these two figures results in over 73% of teachers still perceiving workload as either a 'serious' or 'fairly serious' problem (Walker, Worth & Van den Brande, 2019). This sits in agreement with Perryman and Calvert (2019) who analysed data from graduates from UCL Institute of Education in London. They discovered that workload was still the most frequently cited reason for leaving, despite the teachers claiming to have been aware of this

challenge before entering the profession. What is noteworthy from this study is that they said it was not necessarily the quantity of work but the very nature of the work they were being asked to complete, especially when linked to accountability. Many of the participants in Perryman and Calvert's study thought they could cope with the workload, but lack of support and the target accountability culture was worse than they had imagined, which led to many teachers leaving the profession.

When analysing workload, one working condition that Sutchter, Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas (2019) consider important to teachers is the average number of students they teach, their class sizes or pupil loads, as this impacts their workload proportionality. While other perceive the excessive workload is a result from policy and inspections decisions the school makes or must adhere to and not as a direct result of the teaching role (Lynch, 2016). Allen & Sims (2018a) speculate that these policy and inspection decisions have resulted in an audit culture which is causing dissatisfaction amongst effective teachers. Teachers feel they are required to do significantly more, in less time, to wear multiple hats and be accountable for various, often confusing, goals, which teachers attribute to Ofsted inspections (Higton *et al.*, 2017). This, over the years, has resulted in a feeling that teacher professionalism is on the decline (Gemedda, Fiorucci & Catarci, 2014). Allen & Sims (2018a) add that often teachers say that they feel the tasks are dictated to them and are frequently not seen as tasks that support learning for the student population, such as high stakes testing. Testing not only burdens the teachers with tedious clerical work but also costs the school system a great deal of money to administer. In England alone, Hendrick and Macpherson (2017) write that teachers spend the equivalent of two and half billion pounds per year on marking and giving feedback with no evidence that this has a significant effect on student achievement. This would appear contrary

to what Robinson and Aronica (2019) claim is the main role of teachers, which is to help students learn, not set and administer tests.

In November 2014 the Department of Education asked teachers in Britain to share their ideas and solutions on how to reduce unnecessary and unproductive workload, known as the Workload Challenge survey 2014. Over 32,832 teachers responded and identified the following as the most successful strategies in reducing workload: reducing written lesson plans; the use of support staff in the classroom; increased planning and preparation time individually and across the school; less marking and use of software for tracking pupil progress (Gibson, Oliver & Dennison, 2015).

To help schools address the issues identified, three documents were published.

These focused on marking, planning and teaching resources, and workload associated with data management. In these documents the emphasis was placed on head teachers to be cognisant of the administration requests they place on their teaching staff and the impact it has on their workload. Higton *et al.* (2017) argue that Ofsted and the ever present threat of an inspection plays heavily on all school leaders and often, against their better judgement, head teachers ask their staff to undertake many tasks that teachers do not perceive as enhancing student learning. There may be several reasons why leaders do burden their teachers with these tasks. For example, perhaps teachers who have previously subscribe to an audit culture have been promoted to leadership roles and therefore have a mind-set towards the benefits of such a culture. Or, in some instances leaders take comfort in doing what all the other schools are doing who are successful at Ofsted inspections, and finally it might be that, deep down, leaders just don't trust their teachers to do an effective job (Allen & Sims, 2018b). Bottery (2016) discusses an important phenomenon 'function creep', which is often described as the hidden work

completed at home in the evening, during the weekends or holidays. This work is undertaken in order to meet the number of tasks needed to be fulfilled to run a classroom and a school. Previously teachers had the opportunity to recharge their batteries during the year with a natural ebb and flow to the academic calendar, now with function creep they don't have this breathing space to balance their work load. A further consideration of this work intensification, is the detrimental effect it can have on a teachers' psychological sense of occupational identity. Berkovich and Eyal (2019) argue that as a teacher's workload increases teachers start to feel they are inadequately prepared to care for their students.

Recently, Ofsted have made it clear that they had no intention of creating an audit trail for inspection, and consequently the additional work load to administer it. In order to address this grey area, Ofsted have produced documents to help schools comprehend what Ofsted is really looking for (Ofsted, 2017). Ofsted's Chief inspector, Amanda Spielman, has asked her inspectors to focus on the substance, rather than performance metric, in order to create a new framework for inspectors to follow during Ofsted inspections ('Wonder Years curriculum conference,' 2019). Damian Hinds, the Education Secretary, stated, 'I do understand the strains that schools and teachers are under and in particular on workload. I've said repeatedly that my top priority is bearing down on teacher workload because teachers are working too many hours, outside of teaching and learning' (Rodgers, 2019). With these statements, it might appear that the focus is now placed with the leader of the school and how they interpret these frameworks and associated pressures. The implication is clear: many of the most stressful causes of dissatisfaction amongst teachers are beyond their control. However, effective leadership has the potential to mitigate these factors, protecting and shielding their teachers from potential causes

of stress. Unfortunately, this has the potential to increase a head-teacher's own work load and as a consequence reduce their well-being. This will be discussed further in the following section.

When a teacher interviews for a role in a school they come with a preconceived idea of what that role will entail. Donaldson and Johnson (2010) concluded that teachers who have more challenging class assignments, for example a Math teacher being asked to teach Spanish, are at greater risk of leaving their schools than those with single-grade, single-subject teacher who was teaching in their field of expertise.

Bogler and Nir (2015) built on these findings arguing that, the teacher's perceived job fit predicted both their commitment and job satisfaction. With one in five teachers being asked to work outside of their field of expertise and as a result increasing their workload (Weldon & Ingvarson, 2016), these findings have important implications for head teachers and their recruitment policies and the requests they place on their staff. By providing teachers stability in their teaching assignments and subject matter there is the possibility that they will become more effective teachers (Atteberry, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2016).

Presenting a relatively new, but noteworthy concern for teachers, van der Want, Schellings and Mommers (2018, p.816) highlight the increased issue of 'Teacher vs. Parent Interactions'. The increased accessibility of teachers via email or social media has enabled both the students and the parents to communicate directly, at any time of the day, with their teachers, often resulting in an increased workload for the teacher and a continued blurring the lines between work and personal time.

Conversely, Ost and Schiman (2017) present a differing view on work load. They revealed that teachers are more likely to be absent when workload decreases, not



increases. An explanation given for this, is that teachers might view absences as more acceptable when a class is running smoothly and requires less intensive effort. They suggest that teacher absences are malleable and not necessarily a reflection of work load or well-being. For example, the absence rate of teachers who switch schools, change to the average rate of absence in their new school. Also, schools that bring in policies that reduce job security, see a reduction in days absent. However, no data is provided on the overall well-being of those same teachers and whether the reduction of short term absences lead to an increase in long term absences.

Perryman and Calvert (2019) conclude in their study that workload is a key factor in teacher turnover. Yet, they warn that part of the problem lies within the culture of teaching, the constant scrutiny, the need for students to perform and hyper-critical management within the school system. They argue that reducing workload will not address these cultural issues. What can be seen from the literature is that a school leader plays a crucial role in the work load a teacher experiences and therefore worthy of investigation.

## **2.5 Leadership and the Role of the Leader**

It is clear in the research that teacher workload and physical conditions of the school are all significant aspects of working conditions. Highton *et al.* (2017) highlight the importance of the more interpersonal aspects of the workplace, such as, school leadership. Robinson (2019, p.74) states, ' the overarching purpose of the work of the educational leader is to ensure that the children and young people for whom they are responsible learn the personal, social, technical and academic skills that enable them to live fulfilling and productive lives'. I would add that leaders also have this responsibilities to the teachers with whom they work.

Teachers cite leader support as one of the most important factors in their decision to stay in a school and in the teaching profession. This demonstrates a need for school leaders to comprehend the importance of supporting teachers in their professional roles (Podolsky *et al.*, 2016). Espinoza *et al.* (2018) add that leaders play a central role attracting and retaining talented teachers. Therefore, how schools are organised and managed plays a part in the operation of a schools performance and the achievement of students. Studies have consistently established the critical role of school leadership (Day *et al.*, 2010; Ingersoll, Sirinides & Dougherty, 2018; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008).

Sims (2017) argues that effective school leadership is strongly associated with higher teacher job satisfaction and a reduction in teacher turnover. In agreement, Levin and Bradley (2019) conclude that leaders are vital for ensuring student success. By maintaining a positive school climate, alongside motivating school staff, and focusing on teachers' professional practice, they play a major role in retaining effective teachers and ensuring both the teacher and the student's success in the classroom. The importance of leadership can also be seen in Sutchter, Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas's (2019) research where they list competent and supportive leadership as major influences on a teacher's decision to stay in or leave a school.

There are many models of leadership and school leaders are often characterised into various groups e.g. instructional; transformational; moral; participative; managerial and contingent (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). These 'labels' have been very influential in leadership research (Crawford, 2009). For understanding the instructional leadership role, Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) conceptual framework is the most widely referred to. Their framework proposes three strands: defining a

school mission, managing the instructional program and promoting a positive school learning climate. Hallinger and Heck (2010) suggest that instructional leadership has been 'upgraded' to 'leadership for learning' with a stress placed on shared leadership as a counter to the leader-centric approach of the instructional model. Shared leadership may also be called collaborative (Wallace, 2002), participative (Vroom & Jago, 1998) or distributed (Harris, 2008) in the literature. The usual counter to instructional leadership is transformational leadership. Transformation leadership focuses on establishing a school culture and vision to enhance the quality of school teaching and learning, develop people, and improve the organization (Shatzer *et al.*, 2014). Bottery (2001) argues that there is little possibility of realising genuinely transformational education and leadership in England. This is due to the centralised and controlled education system within which we work.

Harris (2008, p.176) suggests that the distributed perspective of leadership is an important theoretical lens through which school leadership can be studied. In the form of a web of 'leadership activities and interactions' stretched across people and situations. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) see distributed leadership as limited because distributed leadership may not be a panacea for effective leadership, and finally distributed leadership may result in conflicting priorities and targets within the school (Harris, 2008). Yet, Crawford (2019) argues that distributed leadership has made a major impact on the way leadership has been conceived with the central concept of distributed leadership as not the domain of an individual but one that spreads leadership across the organization, and empowers staff to develop their own capacity as leaders (Bush, 2018c). Research has shown some evidence that effective distributed leadership does have a positive impact on student learning, either by providing teachers with more opportunities to learn from growing school

networks or the potential to increase on-the-job leadership development experiences (Harris & Spillane, 2008). What does become clear from the research is that there is not one best leadership model; it is the leadership practices and actions that influence outcomes (Hallinger, 2011). The following table show a sample of authors who have contributed to an understanding of effective school leadership.

**Table 1 – Sample of relevant research**

	Effective school leaders...
Bubb and Earley (2007)	create a culture of collaboration, build trusting relationships, know their staff development needs, support teachers and model good teaching
Harris (2008)	promote positive activities and interactions that stretched across people and situations (Distributed leadership)
Shatzer <i>et al.</i> , (2014)	establish a school culture and vision to enhance the quality of school teaching and learning, develop people, and improve the organisation (Transformation leadership)
Tschannen-Moran & Gareis (2015)	have a shared school vision, foster an environment conducive to learning, engage the whole school community and cultivate a pervasive culture of trust
Day <i>et al.</i> , (2016).	make daily decisions that support their school staff, articulate their vision for their school and make decisions that have a positive effect on the school's culture
Hallinger (2018)	set a direction for the school, organise the learning environment and develop teaching and learning (Instructional leadership)
Levin and Bradley (2019)	maintain a positive school climate, motivate school staff, and focus on teachers' professional practice
Hargreaves (2019)	encourage, engage and empower teachers in the collaborative quest of running the school

Bubb and Earley (2007) argue if school leaders create a culture of collaboration, build trusting relationships, know their staff development needs, support teachers to see and model good teaching to enable expertise to be shared, there will be a significant improvement in pupil progress and with it increased teacher retention rates (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo, 2009). Leithwood and Sun (2012) add that effective leaders facilitate a high-quality learning environment. Crawford (2014) notes that effective leaders nurture positive relationships between all school stakeholders. Whilst, Day (2016) argues that it is the leader's understanding of their school's needs and their ability to share a vision of the desired educational values that makes an effective leader. There is clearly a shift in the literature away from leadership labels to focusing on the leadership actions such as articulating a school vision, communicating clearly with stakeholders and creating a positive school culture have emerged as key components of effective leadership.

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) reported that the essence of leadership is vision. Indeed, Maxwell (2013) proposed that, vision gives an organisation purpose and is an important characteristic of a school leader. However, for head teachers to be visionary, they must clearly articulate their vision to produce desirable results (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999). Sergiovanni (1990) had previously stated that vision was an important part of leadership, although he suggested that the vision must reflect the needs, values and beliefs of the school community to motivate followers. In Berson *et al.* (2001) study of 141 leaders they found that, if the vision was not grounded in some level of practicality, followers found it as unrealistic and were therefore unlikely to be motivated or inspired by it. What is more, the vision may not always be shared throughout the school and may lead to negative consequences. For example, the striving for academic results may lead the school to make a

decision based on what is best for the school rather than what is best for an individual student or teacher (Bush, 2018b). As early as 1908 a school principal wrote about the need for principals to be aware of the importance of the school atmosphere (Perry, 1908) and since then educators have been searching for school climate variables that make a difference for teachers and students (Hoy, 2012). The benefits of a positive school climate have been widely accepted in educational research (Maxwell *et al.*, 2017). Smith (2016) claims you can immediately sense a school culture on entry and argues it is an important indicator of the health of a school. He continues that one of the main goals of the school leadership should be to make decisions that enables all stakeholders: students, teachers, parents, and community, to truly feel that they are an essential part of a great school culture. School level practices, which form the foundation of a school's culture, are major contributions to the job satisfaction of teachers (Cameron & Lovett, 2015). Smith (2016) argues that leaders who are genuinely committed to the well-being of their staff have the greatest effect on the positive culture in their schools whilst Bennett (2017) highlights the importance of managing school discipline as the seed of a good culture or school climate. Researchers have concluded that student misbehaviour is one of the most influential workplace conditions that can sway a teacher when deciding whether to move schools or leave the teaching profession completely (Stauffer & Mason, 2013). Teachers in schools where appropriate behaviour is the norm and not the exception, have higher level of well-being and retention. Bennett (2017) argues leaders need to prioritise discipline practices in schools.

Hughes, Matt and O'Reilly (2015) states that leadership support is *imperative* to the retention of teachers - especially in hard to staff schools. There are many types of social support; the main two are instrumental and emotional. Instrumental might

include money and time to assist in task completion, whilst emotional would be to improve the individual's state of well-being. House (1983) argued that social support was invaluable in protecting employees against the negative mental and physical health implications of work. In research conducted by Littrell, Billingsley and Cross (1994) teachers valued emotional support above all other social supports, for example, teachers who received support from their leaders were less likely to be emotionally exhausted (Russell, Altmaier & Van Velzen, 1987). Researchers have argued that social support can lessen the negative aspects of a workplace (Almeida *et al.*, 2016). This was seen in Russell, Altmaier and Van Velzen (1987) study where teachers who received positive feedback on their teaching skills and abilities, from their supervisors, saw teacher retention rates rise.

The leaders' role in helping teachers cope with their negative emotions has been recognised in research (Crawford, 2007). Berkovich and Eyal's (2019) research highlights the importance of a school leader's emotional support of teachers through emotional reframing. By reframing teacher's negative thought through communication strategies, such as empathic listening, empowering messages and normalizing messages they provided a vital part of socio-emotional support at work. Empathic listening is defined as attending to a conversation in an intentional, active manner that communicates to the speaker responsiveness and compassion (Sims, 2017). Listening to understand, instead of listening to respond. Lloyd, Boer and Voelpel (2017) highlighted that active supervisor listening contributed not only to improved relationships with the supervisor but also higher job satisfaction. Participants felt that empathic listening was viewed as non-judgemental consideration. Being actively listened to, can promote a positive emotional change. Research has showed that people who have been actively listened to become more

receptive to new ideas and also less defensive in the conversation (Rogers & Farson, 1957). This was demonstrated in Berkovich and Eyal's (2018) study of 113 primary school teachers. They looked at communication within a school environment and concluded that a leaders' ability to listen empathically had a positive correlation on teachers' emotions, plus a leader's emotional support played an important role in promoting the teachers' well-being. This is similar to the conclusion that Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) made that leaders' behaviours do affect the emotions of teachers when they interact with them. In agreement, Bush (2018c) states that to enable a school to be managed successfully, communication between teachers and the leadership team is a vital component since social influence is often at the heart of leadership and that emotion is inherent to the practice of leadership (Crawford, 2007).

When looking at the role leadership has in teacher retention and turnover, one theory to consider is the job demands resources model. Demands are things that require energy or are seen as a hindrance, which leaders placed on teachers such as marking and assessment. These demands drain a teacher's resolve. In contrast resources, training, feedback and other forms of support, help people achieve their goals (Crawford, LePine & Rich, 2010). Allen and Sims (2018a) argue that for a teacher to thrive in an education environment, a leader needs to provide a balance of these resources and demands. They add, it is critical that school leaders motivate their teaching staff and unless they make teaching enjoyable they will never attract or retain the staff they need to run a successful school.

Literature on teacher burnout suggests that rates of burnout are highly embedded in the social interactions of the school community. The implication is that dysfunctional interactions, such as lack of support from colleagues, school leader or leadership



team, often increases a teacher's likelihood of leaving a school (Soini *et al.*, 2019). What is more, Tatar's (2009) research showed that the most frequent sources of support that teachers use are peers, followed immediately by the school leader, thus both colleagues and leaders are important figures in a teacher feeling supported in their professional practice.

In order for a school to be successful with teachers, who are not only surviving, but thriving in a classroom, Johnson (2019) makes an argument for a leader to back a collection of school - based systems and practices that support teachers' professional growth and effectiveness. She reasons that a rich and interactive recruitment process, team - based curriculum planning and assessment, and informative feedback and ongoing professional learning are all critical aspects of the role of the leader.

Hargreaves, Boyle and Harris (2014) argue that leadership should be 'uplifting', as leaders who uplift their employees' passions, intellects and commitments produce remarkable results. As shown, research on why and how leaders affect teachers' emotions, is new in the field of educational leadership (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Crawford, 2018b), but clearly it does impact a teacher's professional life. As Hargreaves (2019) adds, people perform better in their work when others take a positive interest in them. He offers that leadership has to encourage, engage and empower teachers in the collaborative quest of running the school.

An additional consideration for leaders is their own perception of the support they are providing to their staff, especially in disadvantaged schools, as shown, an effective leader may be a significant source of support for their teachers (Allen & Sims, 2018b; Grissom, 2011; Soini *et al.*, 2019). Andrews, Gilbert and Martin (2007) discuss the

disparities in perceptions of support that the leaders say they are giving and what the teachers actually feel like they are receiving. This might be in the form of professional development, mentoring or direct leadership support. For example, head teachers may have assumed that the opportunity for teachers to observe other practitioners were in place, whereas, the teacher did not perceive that to be the situation. It can be seen that the impact of leadership is a very complex area with competing views.

Finally, school leaders should also be considered. Harris and Townsend (2007) write that employment statistics reveal an upward trend in the number of head teachers and principals leaving many educational systems. They argue that this is due to the pressures they are experiencing and the demands that are being paced upon them. Keddie (2017) attributes this pressure to Ofsted and burdens linked to increased high stakes testing.

Educational leadership researchers argue for preparing teachers for headships by helping them to change their identity, from teacher to principal and Bush (2018a) argues that new leaders need to receive a supportive period of organisational socialisation which allows them to learn how to lead in a specific school context. A high-quality school leader affects dozens of teachers and vicariously hundreds of students so this transition period appears significant in their success.

The Wallace Foundation spent \$85 million on a five-year project to improve the principals who hire and oversee the teachers. On analysis, the foundation found that these wide-ranging reforms in training, hiring, mentoring and reviewing the performance of principals did tend to boost student achievement but only slightly and not consistently. However, Gates *et al.* (2019) did conclude that the 'principal pipeline' project was effective and affordable.

In Levin and Bradley (2019) research from America, they used a mixed-methods study which included a literature review on principal turnover and focus groups with principals. They concluded that many of the pressures placed on teachers are magnified for their leaders. The top five reasons principals leave their jobs are inadequate professional development, poor working conditions, insufficient salaries, lack of decision-making authority and high-stakes accountability policies. They also highlight that schools with a large percentage of disadvantaged students are more likely to experience principal turnover – as high as 35% of principals being at their school for less than two years. Again, reflecting and mirroring the research on teacher turnover, the problem is not the demographics of the student population but the school characteristics—such as limited resources, less competitive salaries, and unacceptable working conditions.

Bottery (2016) argues that some of our current crisis in recruitment and retention of educational leaders may be attributed to global and societal issues of sustainability. He writes that there is significant evidence that we are experiencing a leadership crisis. Individuals are failing to apply for leadership roles, retiring early, or not holding the position for any length of time. The reasons given for this are that prospective leaders are unprepared for the role, and that the roles are too big for one individual to handle. However, he argues that the cause may not be poor leadership preparation or work overload but more about the work being requested by the government is not intrinsically desirable to these head teachers. More recently he added that governments, the policies they produce, and the inspectoral systems they create, should look at resolving the long-standing problems of our educational system and take the focus off quick fits for instant success (Bottery, 2019).

Riley (2013b, p.68) offers that being a leader in a challenging context was about passion, belief and possibilities but often the challenges are insurmountable. Passy and Ovenden-Hope (2019) are perhaps more optimistic writing that they hope that more leaders, around the globe, can take heart; disadvantaged areas abound in all nations, however there are practical solutions which are not country-specific that can be followed to improve social justice for their students, unfortunately the evidence is not reflecting this. Bubb and Earley (2018) offer some concrete steps to support leaders in place such as sabbaticals, coaching and study leave to help educational professionals convert the 'survive' and 'thrive'. Sustainable leadership matters. Hargreaves and Fink (2012, p.12) state, 'It preserves, protects, and promotes deep and broad learning for all in relationships of care for others'. From the above it can be seen that leaders themselves are under great pressure from government policy, of which they have appear to have little control.

As seen, teachers cite leader support as one of the most important factors when teachers consider leaving the teaching profession. Dysfunctional interactions, such as lack of support from school leaders, increases teacher attrition (Soini et al., 2019). Podolsky *et al.*, (2016) argue this demonstrates a need for leaders to comprehend the importance of supporting teachers in their professional roles. Using Hallinger's (2011) argument that it is leadership practices and not a leader's style that results in positive outcomes for teachers and their students, many researchers have tried to articulate how these actions might look. Allen and Sims (2018b) present positive actions to support and retain teachers. Firstly, they advise leaders to provide teachers with stable and appropriate teaching assignments. Next, leaders should provide opportunities for teachers to learn from collaborative or mentoring arrangements. They should also analyse the quality of the school's working

environment and target improvements and finally standardise certain routines such as discipline to reduce the number of decisions teachers have to make each day enabling the teachers to focus on developing and practicing new skills. If school leaders are unable to make teaching enjoyable, they will be unable to attract and retain effective staff. Levin and Bradley (2019) suggests in order for leaders to support their teachers they should incorporate the following in their own practice; make decisions that promote a positive school climate, build strong and positive relationships with all school stakeholders, and focus on each teacher's professional practice by providing opportunities for collaboration and expertise to be shared. Open communication channels, empathic listening and positive feedback are all actions that leaders can take to promote teacher retention. Following is a discussion of policy implications in regards to both the experienced teacher and school leaders.

## **2.6 Policy Implications**

Schleicher (2018, p.16) argues that to equip students with skills and knowledge, school systems need to adapt to economic and social changes, as many schools have changed little in the last 100 years. They state, 'education needs to prepare students for *their* future, not *our* past'. In order to do this, Podolsky *et al.* (2016) argue that one of the most pressing issues facing policymakers is how to staff classrooms with a teaching workforce that is stable and responsive to student needs. There has been much policy rhetoric around this challenge, though in today's complex, non-linear world there may be no simple solution. See and Gorard (2019) offer that the typical policy response to teacher shortages have been one of financial incentives to increase recruitment. Recently in England these included bursaries and scholarships for trainees in shortage subjects such as maths and physics but little for primary school teachers. The Department of Education acknowledges that despite

this investment in such interventions, they have been unable to address the nation's teacher shortage (House of Commons Education Committee, 2016).

Bush's (2019) evaluation of the education system shows that there has been a dramatic change in the English schooling system in the last decade, with the rapid expansion of academies and multi academy trust, which are all independent from local authorities. This policy shift has certainly had implications on the education system and by default the teachers that work within the system. Burgess and Thomson (2019) continue that the education system in England has always struggled to find the best policies for pupils at the lower end of the ability range, furthermore, Gorard and Siddiqui (2018) judge that the increasing use of school selection is damaging for social equality. In agreement, Riley (2009) highlights that schools serving UK urban communities have been high on the policy agenda for decades. Yet, Snodgrass Rangel (2018) argues that relatively little research examines the effect of educational policies on staff turnover in schools and the resulting consequences of that turnover for schools and students. The frustration lies within the recognition that quality teachers have the biggest impact on our students' experiences but little consensus on the appropriate policies that should be followed to ensure a pipeline of quality teachers (Hanushek, 2011). Over a decade ago, Valli (2008, p.2) found that the policy reforms put in place to improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially for students who most needed the support of a rich and engaging school experience, actually had massive detrimental effects. High stakes accountability had a 'corrosive influence' on the quality of teaching and learning - with the only defence against this corrosive influence being strong teachers.

Kukla-Acevedo (2009) contemplate that understanding how education policy influences teacher stress and attrition is an important step in addressing teacher turnover, especially as many studies conclude that teachers are being increasingly held accountable for issues, decisions and outcomes over which they may have little control. This lack of control over policy making has been attributed as a cause of reported levels of high teacher turnover (Ingersoll & Collins, 2018; Ryan *et al.*, 2017). In Datnow's (2018) research looking at educational reforms, she discovered that teachers, in US elementary schools, often experienced stress and frustration with reforms and policy that created additional demands on their time and changes in their teaching. Colleagues were the greatest support for teachers whilst leadership also played an important role in providing emotional support, which in turn allowed the teachers to thrive collectively.

Numerous studies have now evidenced that high stakes testing may be stressful for teachers and therefore linked to teacher attrition (Allen & Sims, 2018b; Ryan *et al.*, 2017). When an education system focuses on high stakes testing, the curriculum often narrows and restricted uninspiring teaching is a by-product. Student characteristics such as the love of learning, curiosity, problem solving, collaboration or resourcefulness cannot be demonstrated using multiple-choice tests and a regurgitation of facts and so teachers are forced into dull and monotonous work (Clement, Tschannen-Moran & Erdogan, 2018). Clement, Tschannen-Moran & Erdogan go on to say that, they fear that the intense focus on testing robs students and teachers of experiencing joy, camaraderie and the opportunity for deep reflective learning. For example, by influencing the content teachers teach, diverting resources to students based on their likelihood of passing the test and spending more class time on test taking strategies, teachers have reduced autonomy, creativity and

passion in the classroom (Spillane, Shirrell & Hopkins, 2016). Likewise, Robinson and Aronica (2019, p.15), view high-stakes testing in a negative light, arguing that high-stakes testing was meant to stimulate higher standards in education - unfortunately it has led to the English education becoming a dreary culture that is demoralizing students and teachers alike. Robinson and Aronica continue that teaching and learning is a long-term relationship between teachers, their students, curriculum content, and the context that they are working in, and in their opinion, the problem is not usually the students but the educational system itself.

Allen and Sims (2018) in agreement argue that the inequalities in educational attainment have persisted, despite a range of policies aimed at narrowing the gap. In England, these policies include The Assisted Places Scheme (1980), the Educational Reform Act (1988) which introduced school choice for parents, also the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) was introduced to put pressure on failing schools and programmes such as the Pupil Premium. These programmes did increase the funding spent on schools, however the evidence is that students are no better off (Coe & Tymms, 2008). Recent results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), appear to confirm this, as they indicate little or no change in pupil performance in England since 2006 (Jerrim & Shure, 2016). Hobbs (2016) offers that, disadvantaged pupils still attend less effective schools, again, underlining that these policies are not successful at eliminating the gap. Allen and Sims (2018) conclude that policy makers are not attending to the research. Research unfailingly demonstrates that teacher quality is amongst the most powerful influences on student achievement especially on the progress of disadvantaged students (Slater, Davies & Burgess, 2012).



Sutcher, Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas (2016) do reveal policy avenues worth pursuing, for example, by identifying ways to make comprehensive teacher preparation affordable and addressing teacher salaries. However, Ingersoll, May and Collins (2019) suggest that improving school organisation and management, for example by increasing a teacher's classroom autonomy, might be less costly than reforms such as teacher salary increases, professional development, and class-size reduction.

Nevertheless, in the foreword to Doris Santoro's book (2018) David C. Berlinger states 'the voices of political leaders are heard, and teachers are required to adhere to the laws they pass. But the voices raised by experienced and admired classroom teachers, as responses to the laws that are made, are neither heard nor respected,' he continues that contemporary educational policy and the leadership of schools that carries out those policies is demoralizing many teachers. In a similar vein, Ingersoll, Sirinides and Dougherty (2018) surmise that it is important that teachers have a voice in these larger decisions related to creating the culture, climate, and ethos of their schools.

Santoro (2018, p.11) postulates that the shortage of classroom teachers is a direct result of these current educational policies, which are 'driving away', experienced talented teachers. She believes that experienced teachers are leaving the education system because they are expected to follow policies and practices that they believe outwardly harm children or violate the trust that they have established with students. Skourdoubis (2019, p.5) adds that the work of teachers, both in pedagogy and performance, is narrowing in order to compete in the current knowledge economy, with grades appearing to be more important than a child 'sense of self'. Policy makers have recognised that high standards in educational systems are vital to national

prosperity but appear to have little regard to teachers and parent voices when they voice their concerns about the narrowing of the curriculum, the stress that high stake testing places on the children, and the cuts in arts, sports and outdoor learning (Robinson & Aronica, 2019).

Many researchers accept the idea that there are choices and decisions that policy makes can make that do attract, develop, and retain a strong and stable teacher workforce. Espinoza *et al.* (2018) report focuses on six evidence-based policies, which states in America are pursuing to address teacher retention and attrition. Strategies include, service scholarships and loan forgiveness focusing on high-retention pathways into teacher, as the cost of high-quality preparation is a significant obstacle to many entering the teaching profession. Well-prepared teachers have a 2 to 3 times higher retention rate than those who enter the profession unprepared, resulting in a need for quality pathways into teaching such as teacher residencies and Grow Your Own teacher preparation programs (Podolsky *et al.*, 2016). Grissom and Reininger (2012) consider that policies focused on the needs of teachers with young children may be an effective means to attract and retain teachers. Another strategy is to focus on mentoring and supported induction for teachers. Teachers who have a mentor from the same teaching field, common planning time with teachers in the same subject and regularly collaborate with other teachers have reduced levels of turnover and higher levels of job satisfaction.

Data from the Department for Education (DfE) May 2017 report, confirms and adds that teachers with permanent contracts do have higher retention rates, but also noted that retention rates increased with the age and experience of teachers and in schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Conversely, schools that receive a

failing grade in England are more likely to lose their best teachers (Feng, Figlio & Sass, 2018).

Sutcher, Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas (2019) do note that some elements of teacher demand are predicted by trends, not influenced by education policy, for example student enrolment numbers directly influence the number of teachers needed. However, others factors, that also create more demand, such as the attrition rates of teachers, are often influenced by policy strategies. They continue that, it is important for policy makers to understand the conditions that will encourage teachers to enter or re-enter the teaching market, particularly in times of teacher shortages. They call for a comprehensive set of strategies, such as effective mentoring, quality induction, improved working conditions, and appropriate career development with a focus on quality teacher preparation to address teacher attrition. Equally, See and Gorard (2019) call for a coherent governmental approach to policy-making, requesting that the government put in place preparatory measures before major reforms are implemented, with a consideration that policies that impact teacher demand are made in relation to policies that impact supply. They argue that planning for teacher supply should not be a political decision based on four years trajectory but a national decision for the good of the country in the long term. In the short term, Bryson, Stokes and Wilkinson (2019b, p.11) reason that, investing in school employees' job quality is a "win-win" for employees and employers because it is strongly associated with both employee wellbeing and, via organisational commitment, to improvements in school performance. I believe this is what most school stakeholders' value – an improved school performance where all stakeholders benefit.

Robinson and Aronica (2019) argue that research has identified high performing school systems. For example by heavily investing in the selecting and training of teachers, Finland, Canada, South Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong appear to be addressing teacher turnover and attrition. However, there are warnings and risks to borrowing policy and system elements from other countries. Finland's education system gives considerable autonomy to its well-educated teachers, who can tailor their teaching to the needs of their students. Yet, if teachers are poorly educated, unmotivated, and loosely managed, working in a lower performing education context then giving them even more autonomy will likely exacerbate the situation.

Hargreaves, Boyle and Harris (2014) add that nations that have ranked among the highest on the international tests of student achievement, such as Singapore, Finland and Canada, didn't get there by wanting to be the best, they got there by making educational policy decisions based on their own cultural beliefs. Sahlberg (2015) identified in the Finnish system that it is not the best and the brightest individuals that make the best teachers but individuals who have a diverse range of academic achievements with talents across a range of subjects and interests - those who have a natural passion for life.

Bergbauer, Hanushek and Woessmann (2018) highlighted the fact that the controversy surrounding testing and accountability has diverted the focus away from the importance of improving the skills of the population. With the recent launch of several important international education initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goal on education (SDG4), the Education 2030 Agenda and Framework for Action, the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), demonstrates that a more qualitative approach to assessment may be possible (Ofei-Manu & Didham, 2018).

Darling-Hammond (2015) argues that teacher shortages will not be solved by market forces alone, and for policy interventions to be successful it is necessary to understand the reasons behind the shortages. In a bid to address teacher shortage in 'underperforming schools' the UK government established plans for a National Teaching Service (Department for Education, 2016a). Unfortunately these plans were abandoned after only recruiting 54 staff onto the scheme (Hazell, 2016).

Currently, in an attempt to attract more teachers in early career maths and physics, the Government is offering teachers an additional £2,000 to work in the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside (Department for Education, 2019b). Hough and Loeb (2013) suggested there are no lasting benefit from financial incentives for retention of teachers in hard-to-staff schools. See *et al.* (2019) argued that financial incentives, in the form of offering remission of student loans, higher salaries or premiums for teaching in hard-to-staff areas *did* appear to work for recruiting teachers, however it was not clear that such external motivation was desirable, or attracted the best teachers, and in agreement with Hough and Loeb, the attraction was not lasting.

In a further bid to attract ITT trainees and teachers the British Government released a Teacher Recruitment Bulletin inviting registration for Train to Teach events, marketing workshops and webinars to support ITT recruitment and access to Teacher Training Advisers. Alongside of this the DfE will fund recruitment costs to recruit qualified math, physics or computer science teachers from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA and Jamaica, but all these initiatives are aimed at secondary schools with nothing available for primary schools (Department for Education, 2019a). In an additional attempt to attract and retain teachers, Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, 2019, p.4) states that 'it exists to be a force for improvement through intelligent, responsible and focused inspection and regulation'. They argue

that they have made a conscientious shift in emphasis from schools being judged primarily on examination results and other performance measures to evaluating the quality of education being provided to achieve these outcomes. Inspectors will now make judgements on the effectiveness of leadership and management and not on examination results alone. Inspectors will look at the results and judge if the results are the outcome of a broad, rich curriculum and real learning, or of teaching to the test and exam cramming.

From the above, it can be seen that policy makers have tried to respond to the teacher turnover challenge, however the evidence shows that little has improved. Clearly as Espinoza *et al.* (2018) warn us, there is no single policy that will solve teacher turnover and attrition. The effectiveness and success of policy strategies will depend upon the specific policies, the quality of implementation of such policies and the context within which they are situated. It appears that one option may be to have less reliance on front-end learning for teachers but pace it across several years, supporting teachers with mentors, counsellors and appropriate individualised professional training across their career stages, but most of all, trust teachers to do the job they are trained to do. Allen and Sims (2018b) state 'for our children to thrive as adults then, our teachers need to thrive in the classroom. For all those involved in education, from the Secretary of State down to the parent-teacher association, there should be no greater priority than nurturing and retaining brilliant teachers. We should be offering them the best possible training, supporting them in any way we can and systematically removing any burdens which stand in the way of their success'. Allen and Sims continue that, 'precisely the opposite is the case. Improving the quality of our teaching workforce has rarely, if ever, been a genuine priority for government'. Allen and Sims conclude that our failure to give teachers the support

that they need to thrive in the classroom is the primary reason behind England's teacher turnover challenge.

## **2.7 Summary**

The purpose of this chapter has been to situate this study within the current educational literature surrounding teacher turnover and the influence of work place conditions. One of the key challenges currently facing the English education system is recruiting and retaining enough high-quality teachers. Sutchter, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas (2016) argue that a major factor in the teacher turnover challenge is teacher attrition. They suggest that school leaders have a significant influence on a teacher's intention to stay in the profession. Government statistics (NFER, 2015) indicate that almost a third of teachers do not stay in the profession long term, contrary to the initial expectation of these teachers. Worth & Van den Brande (2019b) argue that if we reduce this attrition the demand for primary school teachers can be met. Additional benefits in a reduction of turnover includes, teacher expertise in the form of teacher 'craft knowledge' being retained in the profession and instructional continuity for students. In fact, only when a teacher has extremely poor performance is teacher attrition ever beneficial to the students.

Educational literature indicates that job satisfaction is key to teacher retention with working conditions cited as one of the most influential factors (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018). Working conditions may include the workload a teacher experiences, the physical features of the school they work in, the colleagues they work with and the school culture. Strong and fair leadership appears to play a major role in retaining teachers, with teachers citing leader support as one of the most important factor in their decision to stay in a school (Podolsky *et al.*, 2016).

This literature review demonstrates that it is not the leader's style of leadership that is important but the actions a leader takes. Hallinger (2011) suggests that it is the leadership practices, which have the largest impact on positive school and teacher outcomes. Their actions influence every aspect of school life, from the classroom the teacher is assigned, the discipline policy that is followed, the availability of professional development to the workload the teacher experiences. Day *et al* (2016) agree offering that school leaders make daily decisions and every decision can be interpreted as being supportive or not. Further, Allen and Sims (2018b) argue that, for teachers to stay in the profession, it is critical that school leaders do everything they can to make teaching enjoyable. If we are to believe that England's teacher turnover challenge can be addressed by reducing teacher attrition and teacher attrition is so closely linked to leadership, it is clear that school leaders play a fundamental role in addressing this challenge.

Having considered the role of the leader, and the impact policy has on both the leader and the teacher; consideration is now given to whether experienced teachers respond differently in their professional lives than newly qualified teachers. In the following chapter is a review of the educational literature surrounding teachers' career stages, career professional development, teacher efficacy, and teacher quality. Chapter 3 will also consider teacher trust, well-being, and emotions that experience teachers encounter. Chapter 4 then sets out the research perspective, methodology and methods pertinent to this research study.



## **Chapter Three – Experienced Teachers**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter 2 looked at the wider issues of teacher retention and attrition. From the literature, it is clear that workplace conditions strongly influence a teacher's professional life, with leadership cited as the most influential. Chapter 3 will continue to examine the literature but now with a focus on experienced teachers. Experienced teachers tend to be more effective in the classroom than newly qualified teachers and so reducing their attrition rates may provide benefits, both to the school and student, and also to the teacher themselves. This chapter will provide an insight into teachers' career cycles, professional development, teacher self-efficacy, well-being, and finally emotions that teachers may experience. Educational literature has highlighted the importance of school leaders having an awareness of their teachers' career stage in order for them to provide considerate supports, it is to this I now turn.

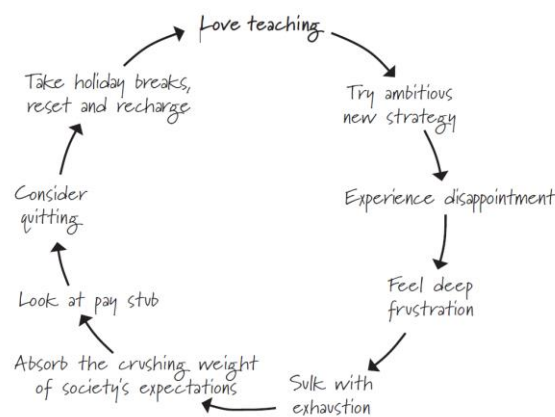
### **3.2 Teachers' Career Stage**

Research has identified that teachers do go through several stages or phases in the course of their teaching careers (Fessler, 1985; Huberman, 1989; Tsui, 2003). With this knowledge and the fact that all participants in this study had been teaching for more than five years there appears justification to investigate this topic.

Newly qualified teachers tended to start in the "survival" phase in which they are coping with the multi-faceted nature of their work in the classroom. Sometimes referred to as the stage of "discovery" or "exploration" where teachers are excited by the fact that they are now working with their own students. Often following this stage, teachers enter a "stabilization" period where they can reflect on their teaching and become concerned about the impact of their teaching. Then some teachers experience the "experimentation" and "diversification" stage where they may

experiment with new ideas. The “reassessment” stage may follow, a phase of uncertainty and/or “serenity” which is marked by a decline in professional investment and enthusiasm on the one hand, and by greater confidence, more tolerance and spontaneity in the classroom on the other. Finally, near the end of teachers’ career cycles, a stage of “disengagement” may be experienced. In 1989, Huberman simplified this and defined three main phases: novice, mid-career, and late career (Huberman, 1989). Mielke (2019) is perhaps more pragmatic when discussing a teacher’s career cycle, stating that the ‘real’ teaching cycle is the following figure and that we should think annually and support accordingly.

**Figure 4: Teachers’ career cycle**



Mielke (2019, p.1) continue, ‘Though we experience different types of ups and downs, every educator experiences moments of doubt, defeat, and exhaustion. At a minimum, these moments distract us from our love of teaching. At most, they make us want to quit’.

Steffy and Wolfe (2001) stated that as teachers progress through their careers, they must grow and transform to remain effective, after two or three years in the classroom, teachers have climbed the steepest part of the learning curve and become more effective (Kraft & Papay, 2014). Rockoff (2004) stated that teaching

beyond three years does positively affect teachers' performance and Fantilli and McDougall suggest that teacher effectiveness spikes sharply after the first few years (2009). In contrast there is some evidence that a teacher's effectiveness doesn't improve much after their first few years in the classroom (Rivkin & Hanushek, 2003) and this is often the story which is reported by the media that teachers face a performance plateau. Papay and Kraft (2016) present evidence to the contrary, finding that teachers continued to refine their practice and invest in improvement well into their careers and go as far as to suggest that 35 percent of a teacher's career improvement happens after year ten.

An important consideration is the knowledge, skills and proficiencies that experienced teachers acquire during their time in the classroom. Grimmer and MacKinnon (1992) describe this as 'craft knowledge', 'know-how' or 'wisdom of practice'. Craft knowledge consists of pedagogical content and pedagogical learner knowledge derived from experience in the practice setting, and includes the teachers' judgment in understanding the events of their practice i.e. reflecting on connecting subject matter to the minds of their individual learners. Craft knowledge could be described as the wisdom gathered by experience. Grimmer and MacKinnon (1992) continue that it is not only intelligent and sensible 'know-how' in the teaching setting but also the 'rightness' of such intelligent and sensible action.

Burney (2004, p.526) defines teacher craft knowledge as:

'a mixture of expertise, theories, propositions, and tacit knowledge applied in the daily conduct of their practice...developed by dealing with students who come from varying social and economic backgrounds and who have different motivations, attitudes, abilities, and cultural experiences.'

This suggests that craft knowledge is acquired during practice, therefore, it is reasonable to expect experienced teachers to possess more. Black-Hawkins and

Florian (2012) argue that the concept of craft knowledge can be used for valuing and recognising teachers' work and it has become a fundamental construct in understanding teachers' classroom practice. Acknowledging that not all teachers are at the same stage in their careers or the same level of craft knowledge and therefore have different professional needs, Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch and Enz (2000) suggest that administrators must support the teacher growth process by addressing unique needs of teachers operating at different phases in a career cycle. By doing this teachers can sustain their own professional development.

Second stage teachers or teachers with 4-10 years of teaching experience make an important contribution to the learning environment - most teachers at this stage feel confident in their teaching ability which allows greater flexibility in decision making when allocating their time and energy (Kirkpatrick, 2007). In contrast to their early career years, second stage teachers may take on leadership roles (Johnson *et al.*, 2004) improving the instructional capacity of a school. On the other hand, second stage teachers may experience waning interest and enthusiasm in teaching (Huberman, Grounauer & Marti, 1993) and start to consider other careers. With pressures on schools to increase student achievement, school leaders need to support second stage teachers with strategies that enable the teacher to grow and develop throughout their career (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Detrimental effects of nation-wide reforms and inspections, together with age-related family commitments, may lead teachers in the key mid-career phase of their professional lives to struggle with work-life tensions (Gu & Day, 2013).

Teachers who have survived these middle years may be idealized as the linchpin of a successful school. On the contrary, they could be seen as standing in the way of progress, misunderstanding the needs of a new generation (Ben - Peretz &

McCulloch, 2009). Either way, these teachers still require support to be effective in the school, especially as Day et al. (2007) concluded that more experienced teachers are not necessarily more effective than newer teachers when pupil's level of achievement was considered. Not all experienced teachers stay happy with their role in the classroom and experiencing negative feelings may mean they leave the profession before retirement (Veldman *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, Ost and Schiman (2015) stated that not all experience equates to improvement in teacher quality. Teachers who are asked to teach out of their subject area or are constantly asked to move year groups do not improve as significantly as teachers who have the opportunity to teach a specific part of the course and focus on their core subject. Experienced teachers may also bear the burden of having to educate new staff or carry additional classes if teachers leave mid-year (Marinell & Coca, 2013).

In Borman and Dowling's (2008) comprehensive meta-analysis study there was strong evidence that attrition of teachers was linked to a teacher's career stage, being higher in the early stages and diminishing towards the later stages, however, Harris and Adams (2007) found that teachers tend to retire considerably earlier than other professionals and hypothesized that this is in part because of the relatively high ratio of pensions to salaries in teaching. This is in line with Ingersoll's study (2001) depicting the relationship between teaching experience and rates of departure as a U-shaped curve and later confirmed by Allen, Burgess and Mayo (2018). Leaving the profession can span several career cycles and be a 'drawn-out' process (Gallant & Riley, 2014), with teachers leaving in the middle years (Day & Gu, 2010) often being characterised by a sense of detachment and loss of motivation (Towers & Maguire, 2017).

In current research it can be seen that school leaders benefit from understanding professional practice and how stages of career influence that practice. Coldwell (2017) notes that for teachers at the start of their career, classroom practice tends to be the focus, unlike mid-career teachers who are focusing on promotion or leadership positions. A large number of teachers, at different career stages, *do not* aspire to leadership but do see themselves as leaders (Harris & Townsend, 2007). In Furner & McCulla's research (2019), teachers knew that their learning was important to them both personally and professionally, and in their capacity to enhance the learning of students. However, they knew very little about career stage learning and wondered why it had not been a well-discussed topic within their own schools. Therefore, one way that leaders can influence teachers is to influence the professional development activities in which teachers participate (Gemedda, Fiorucci & Catarci, 2014). With Towers and Maguire (2017) declaring that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on how to sustain teachers throughout their teaching careers, and the Department for Education acknowledging that effective teaching requires considerable knowledge and skill, (DfE, 2016) it appears essential for leaders to understand the needs of experienced teachers.

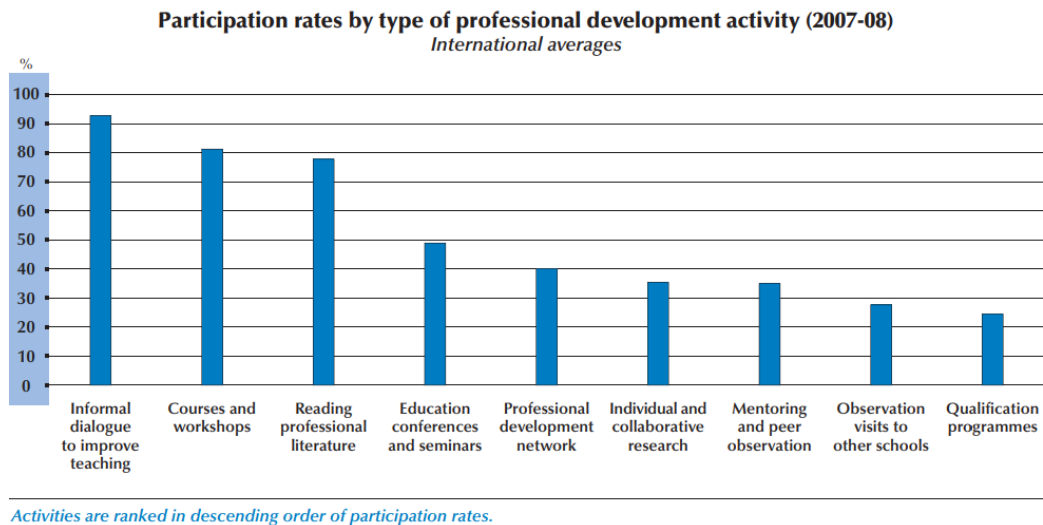
van der Want, Schellings and Mommers (2018) reason that it is very believable that teachers experience different issues at different times in their career. Appropriate, timely, and quality professional development, which is supported year round, has been seen as an antidote to the above dilemma and can therefore be seen as a support to teachers. Following is a look at the literature surrounding professional development.

### **3.3 Professional Development**

Many have contributed to the literature surrounding professional development, and what constitutes high quality professional development (Lindvall, Helenius & Wiberg, 2018). The Department of Education (2016) writes that high-quality professional development requires a workplace to be steeped in rigorous scholarship, with professionals continually developing and supporting each other so that pupils benefit from the best possible teaching. González and Skultety (2018) surmise that promoting teacher learning is the goal of all teacher professional development initiatives. Lindvall, Helenius and Wiberg (2018) argue that professional development should positively influence teacher knowledge and practice and, in turn this will positively influence the student experience. Whilst, Bell (2019, p.109) states, 'professional development is widely accepted as fundamental to the improvement of organisational performance and, therefore, as a core task of management and leadership'.

According to van Driel, et al (2012), professional development refers to the procedures and activities designed to consolidate teacher professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to further improve student learning. In order to help classify professional development Kennedy (2005) proposed 9 key models, which include coaching, action research and communities of practice. Each model describes a set of characteristics, however many models share similar characteristics and need not stand alone. It can be seen from the following table that professional development activities take many different forms (OECD, 2009).

**Figure 6: Types of professional development**



Source: OECD (2009)

Traditionally, professional development was conducted by experts from outside of the school with little or no follow up (Rhodes & Houghton-Hill, 2000), and usually organised for the teachers by individuals other than the teacher themselves e.g. the school, university course, facilitators (Louws *et al.*, 2017). With evidence that the traditional methods and structures are ineffective at improving a teacher's subject knowledge, performance and student learning (Cowan, 2003), approaches have changed (Owen, 2015). Owen *et al.* (2017) argue that many developed countries have now turned to school-based activities, including mentoring, coaching and peer learning with emphasis from within - to between - school (and beyond-school) improvement.

In Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe's (2008) research they highlighted the importance of school leadership supporting teacher learning and the effect it had on student learning. In agreement, the Department of Education (2016) judged that for professional development to be effective it must be prioritised by school leadership. Unfortunately, many professional development initiatives fail to meet this goal (Bates



& Morgan, 2018; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Little (1984) remarked that there is little value in the one-size-fits-all model of staff development that exposes teachers with different backgrounds and from different schools to the same material.

Moreover, Ashdown (2002, p.124) states that compulsory professional development has a huge negative impact. She continues that teachers feel that assigned professional development undermines their sense of professional autonomy; it is time consuming, can be isolating and often frustrating to the experienced teacher.

Furner and McCulla (2019) argue that in the current world of education, testing and a desire for improved student outcomes may have taken the focus away from the fact that teachers are themselves learners. Professional development initiatives should reflect participant input, and should treat teachers as a source of knowledge rather than devaluing teachers' knowledge (Gemedá, Fiorucci & Catarci, 2014).

Unfortunately, this is not a new situation. In Smyth's (1991) research, he suggested that a comprehensive professional learning program intended to foster professional growth was needed for teachers to successfully progress across the stages of their teaching career. Downey et al. (2004) furthered argued that professional development that is effective for teachers at the start of their career is very different for teachers at other stages of their careers. This is reflected in Eros's (2011, p.68) study of second stage music teachers, which highlighted the importance of sustained professional development. He noted, 'it is fundamentally important to acknowledge the presence of different career stages and to build on this knowledge to design stage-appropriate professional development'. Polikoff et al. (2015) add that teachers need support to acquire skills on the job because teaching is complex work and preservice education is often insufficient for providing the knowledge to teach effectively.

Yang, Liu and Gardella Jr (2018) argue that professional development has great potential for improving a teacher's subject knowledge and classroom practice, especially when the professional development is designed and implemented following best practices. In Day *et al's* (2016) study the participants highlighted the importance of linking the professional development to the curriculum with which they were working. By linking the two it ensured that practices in the classroom were adopted, then on-going professional development was necessary to keep those adopted practices consistent and improving.

Gemeda, Fiorucci and Catarci (2014) argue that a high-quality professional development programmes do increase student achievement, as not only does appropriate professional development improve teacher quality but also teacher retention. This was seen in Borko's (2004) situated perspective research on teacher learning. During her research she looked at the professional development program; the teachers, who were the learners in the program; the facilitator who guided the teachers as they constructed new knowledge and practices; and the context in which the professional development occurred.

Gaikhorst *et al.* (2015) theorise that teaching in urban environments does differ from teaching in other environments and so teacher's professional development should also be different. Several studies specifically look at the urban context and how context impacts the teacher. Chou and Tozer (2008) argue that there is little agreement regarding what urban teacher preparation and professional development really is, and that context and situated learning is important when it comes to teacher professional development. Often in America, urban education represents coded language for teaching primarily students of colour (Viesca *et al.*, 2014), and as Milner *et al.* (2015) argues, urban education cannot be divorced from their socio-cultural

and socio-political contexts. For newly qualified teachers, the apprenticeship style teacher preparation program, Teach for All, which originally started in America as Teach for America, involves potential teachers completing a six to eight-week course in a school classified as 'disadvantaged' (Rice, Volkoff & Dulfer, 2015). Yet there appears to be a dearth of research on second stage urban teachers. In Barnatt *et al's* (2017) research on how to address low levels of teacher retention in urban schools, they found that teachers' ability to reconfigure their identity as an urban school teacher was the single most important factor in staying in the field of education. The authors call the disconnect between expectations of teaching in an urban school and the reality, as a feeling of disequilibrium. In order for retention rates to rise, professional development programs must prepare for, and help teachers deal with, this inevitable disequilibrium. Dell'Angelo (2016) concludes in her research that there is a need for more professional development on being self-reflective in order to understand one's positionality in society, in relation to the students in their classroom. Providing teachers with the skills to become reflective practitioners could enable them to address the needs of all students, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. Despite the increase in multicultural professional development, Sleeter (2017) found that teachers are still more likely to cite student and family deficiencies as the cause of poor student outcomes, instead of reflecting upon their own deficit-oriented beliefs.

Huberman (1995) stated that teachers generally see professional development as a pathway to increased competence and greater professional satisfaction. Yet as already seen, Fullan (2015) argues that professional development does not always lead to professional learning despite its intent. Quoting Peter Cole's (2004) research Fullan points out that educators attend lots of conferences, workshops and 'feel' like

they are learning but unfortunately this new knowledge is not always transferred to the classroom. Day *et al.* (2016) agree with Cole, arguing that the outcomes of professional development need to be put into practice for it to have an impact in the classroom.

Now that high-quality professional development is recognised as a major component for improving education and alongside policy-makers acknowledging that schools can be no better than the teachers and administrators who work within them (Guskey, 2002) funds are being directed to this area of research. The Learning Policy Institute examined a substantial body of literature on professional development and found seven design elements that contributed to effective professional development. These included focus on content, active learning, support for collaboration, models of effective practice, coaching and expert support literacy coaches, feedback and reflection and finally, sustained duration of the professional development (Darling-Hammond, Hylar & Gardner, 2017).

In response to the professional development needs of teachers, professional learning communities (PLCs) have emerged (Avidov-Ungar, 2017) as they are seen as a promising way of providing professional development and supporting school improvement (Kools & Stoll, 2016). Evidence suggests that where teachers share good practice and learn together, there is potential for an increase in the quality of teaching (Harris & Muijs, 2004). Lave and Wenger (1991) first coined the term 'communities of practice' and later Wenger defined it as, 'groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly' (Wenger, 1998, p.4). Fullan (2015, p.229) refers to them as 'focused collaborative cultures'. Spillane, Shirrell and Hopkins (2016) state that the label PLC has become ubiquitous with any sort of collaboration or team work.

At the core of the professional community concept lies the belief that simply providing instruction is not enough; educators must also ensure students are learning (DuFour, 2004) and that the teachers' attention to student thinking is fundamental for instructional improvement (González & Skultety, 2018). PLCs can be effective vehicles for teacher learning and instructional improvement, partly because they help change professional culture (Turner *et al.*, 2018), for example, as a paradigm shift from the traditional solo teaching practices to collaborative team teaching. PLCs aim to promote and sustain the learning of all teachers in the school community through collaboration with the shared purpose of improving student learning (Stoll *et al.*, 2006). Additionally, teachers involved in PLCs have the potential to establish an educational culture that improves the success of the school and students (Teague & Anfara Jr, 2012). The ability to undertake collaborative activities, binds people together which in turn helps to facilitate trust relationships (Wenger, 1998). Unfortunately, not all PLCs produce the desired results (Chapman & Muijs, 2014; Lomos, Hofman & Bosker, 2011). This was confirmed in Prenger, Poortman and Handelzalts's (2018) study of 23 PLCs in a Dutch context. Their results regarding PLCs effectiveness was also inconsistent, still, the results did show a positive effect on teachers' perceived satisfaction regarding their knowledge skills, attitude and their application to practice. Zheng, Yin and Li (2018) also analysed leadership and professional learning communities. They concluded that collaborative activity, collective focus on student learning, de-privatized practice, and reflective dialogue were significant predictors of teacher self and school collective efficacy.

An additional form of professional development that has been adopted with the intention of improving a practitioner's craft is action research. Action research is research which is conducted in a specific context with a desire to achieve change

(Townsend, 2014). Kemmis and McTaggart (1982) provide step by step guidelines on how to participate in action research. They start by stating that action research is concerned with a practical form of research, situated in a context with an intentional benefit. Townsend (2014: p. 8) reasons this differs from conventional research in that the ultimate object is the development of practice and not the production of knowledge. Ultimately, the professional development which is adopted may depend upon the aims and intention of desired learning.

In order to achieve highly qualified teaching and learning, school leaders must provide professional development opportunities for teachers that build their capacity to teach in ways that are consistent with contemporary understandings about learning (Darling-Hammond, 2004, p.1081). Indeed, Hallinger, Liu and Piyaman (2017) surmised that the role of leadership in creating a culture that motivates, engages and sustains the continued learning of teachers is necessary to survive in today's rapidly changing environment. Allen and Sims (2018b) call for teacher training to emulate that of a doctor's - gradual and sequential, instead of front loaded. Looking at research evidence they state teaching expertise is acquired in stages and so there must be opportunities for training, practice and feedback built into a teacher's career to ensure longevity. For experienced teachers, they present a model of deliberate practice. Here the teachers themselves set their own targets, have opportunities provided for collaboration and get useful feedback. They postulate that experienced teachers will cease to gain expertise if they stop practicing, stop getting useful feedback and stop adjusting their practice in light of this feedback. They do however, highlight the difficulty in experienced teachers acquiring this useful feedback, as the feedback they do receive is often inadequate or misleading, unlike early in a teacher's career (Didau, 2015). This appears to echo

the research of Knowls (1980), who noted that for the professional development to be useful to experienced teachers, they needed to be able to choose content, have the content delivered by an experienced educator and acknowledge that adults learn differently from children.

Allen and Sims (2018a) also present coaching as a means to help experienced teachers move up their own learning curve. Sonesh *et al.* (2015) defined coaching as a one-to-one relationship in which the coach and coachee work together to identify and achieve organisationally, professionally, and personally beneficial developmental goals. Kraft, Blazar and Hogan (2018) argue that by providing a cycle of deliberate practice, feedback and refinement, a teacher can implement and develop new skills effectively. Coaching therefore provides an opportunity for changes in a teacher's own practice. Evidence shows that there is a strong correlation between coaching that promotes changes in teaching practice and improved student attainment (Sonesh *et al.*, 2015) and so long as there is a positive relationship between the coach and coachee there appear to be few negative effects (Graßmann, 2018). Research teams have also studied the peer learning 'spill over effect' - experience acquired while working with skilled colleagues and concluded that learning from peers is the single most important characteristic of a school that is sustaining growth in their teachers' expertise (Kraft & Papay, 2014).

Birkeland (2011) argues that experienced teachers, just like newly qualified teachers, need opportunities to reflect, set goals and assess their own effectiveness as learning to teach effectively is an on-going process. In agreement, Bressman, Winter and Efron (2018) argue that a meaningful mentor program for experienced teachers can provide opportunities for teachers to do this, often resulting in increased job satisfaction, reduced teacher turnover and improved outcomes for student's learning.

In addition, mentor programs help experienced teachers experiment with creative solutions to classroom problems, as they feel safe and supported, resulting in stronger and more intentional teaching (Byington, 2010). Bressman, Winter and Efron (2018) add that understanding the interests, desires and challenges experienced educators face will enable leaders to offer appropriate supports.

From the above research it can be seen that a significant amount of responsibility lies with the school leader to understand the needs of their teachers and to provide appropriate effective professional development. Researchers do warn that the complexity of educational systems makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding the impact professional development has on student achievement (Lindvall, Helenius & Wiberg, 2018). Indeed, in Filges *et al.*'s (2019) systematic review of 51 studies, they argue that there is no clear evidence that teacher professional development improve student academic outcomes at all. They understand that teachers' professional development is of key importance to policy makers and practitioners, yet they argue that there is are several potential barrier to achieving these education aspirations of improved student outcomes. These barriers include the challenges of designing and implementing high quality professional development, the variable quality of the actual professional training delivered, the cost of delivery, and finally, the effects of any professional development programme will significantly depend on the teachers' motivation to learn and to change their own practice. The silver lining from this research is that there may be no positive student academic outcome but there may be positive teacher outcomes, for example, higher job satisfaction. Additionally, the longer term effects on teacher and student outcomes are not known. Filges *et al.* (2019) argue that teachers may become better



at implementing new practices over time, and as improved teacher practices affect additional students, the longer term effects could offer positive results.

Finally, when discussing teacher professional development, Neugebauer, Hopkins and Spillane (2019, p.10) present the following, 'to further the capacity of individual teachers, school and system leaders should invest in supporting social interactions among teacher that afford direct and targeted opportunities to learn about particular instructional practices and to discuss specific teaching episodes'. They argue that by identifying the kinds of social interactions that facilitate positive teaching self-efficacy, schools can bolster teachers' competences and with it, their teaching capacity. So it appears warranted to investigate teacher self- efficacy.

### **3.4 Teacher Self-Efficacy**

In a report by Ofsted (2019) they found that teachers overwhelmingly love their profession and genuinely enjoy teaching and building relationships with pupils. In Perryman and Calvert's (2019) study, the main reasons for becoming a teacher were: wanting to make a difference; wanting to work with young people and the love of a subject. With the greatest rewards from helping students to learn and achieve. Yet, these good intentions and positive factors appear to be outweighed by negative feelings which have a tendency to lead to higher levels of sickness and teacher turnover.

Some of the reasons why teachers leave schools are relatively clear and have been previously discussed; the most noteworthy being: workplace conditions and lack of appropriate support from leadership (Branch, Hanushek & Rivkin, 2009; Gu & Day, 2013; Ingersoll, 2001). However, gaining a deeper understanding of why urban teachers stay, may be beneficial to school leadership decision making and could

lead to insights for new teacher education, recruitment strategies, and appropriate professional development.

A teacher's motivation for staying in a school may be influenced by several elements. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) put forward a theory that suggests the feeling of being successful is a central consideration in a teachers' decision to stay in their school. By having the opportunity to educate students both academically and personally, teachers can gain job satisfaction from their work via their students. However, Johnson *et al.* (2004) offer that the teacher's own ethnicity or social class, or the way they feel about their students has a strong influence on a teacher's motivation to stay. More recent findings from Carmel and Badash (2018) reveal that personal characteristics, such as motivation, enthusiasm, high self-esteem and self-efficacy are important factors for improving retention and decreasing attrition.

Teacher self-efficacy is a well-utilised construct in literature on teaching. Bandura (1997) has defined it as a person's belief about his or her capacity to organise and execute actions required to produce a given level of attainment. In an educational context, Schechter and Tschannen-Moran (2006) offer that a teacher's self-efficacy is defined as the teacher's belief in that students can acquire desired results.

In the mid-1970s RAND researchers, a US research organisation that develops solutions to public policy challenges, were in search of factors that would explain the difference of certain teachers and methods among low income and minority students in an urban setting. Looking at over 20 elementary schools, Armor (1976) concluded that background variables (such as socioeconomic status, health, ethnicity, and attendance) were found to account for the largest part of the variation in 6th grade reading scores for the children. However, they also found that other variables such

as the school and classroom experiences had a significant influence on student outcomes. In their results, teachers who felt efficacious were associated with observed gains in the reading performance of their urban students.

Kurz, Hoy and Hoy (2007) describe effective teachers as possessing high levels of efficacy. These teachers had academic optimism, exerted greater effort in the classroom and persisted with struggling students. Teacher efficacy has been characterised by the level of teacher preparation (Putney & Broughton, 2011), and enthusiasm and commitment to student achievement (Eckert, 2013). In Allinder's (1994) study of special education teachers, she found that teachers with a stronger sense of efficacy tended to exhibit higher levels of organisation and planning. In previous research by Guskey (1988), he concluded that teachers with a stronger sense of efficacy were more open to new ideas and to experimenting with new methods of instruction to meet the needs of their students. This was later supported by Coady, Harper and de Jong (2011) who suggested that efficacious teachers presented academically challenging tasks to their students, no matter their demographics, and that they also had a strong understanding of the content being taught.

In the light of teachers' self-efficacy being linked to important outcomes, including teacher satisfaction, goals for students, and student achievement (Wilhelm & Berebitsky, 2017), attempts have been made to measure and unlock how efficacy works, for example, the Norwegian scale (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010) and the Teacher's sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES). TSES is a task-specific construct that focuses on three domains of classroom teaching: instructional practices, classroom management, and student engagement (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

The first studies on efficacy were grounded in Rotter's (1966) social learning theory. According to Rotter, teachers who believe that they are competent to teach difficult and unmotivated students possess internal locus of control, and teachers who believe that environmental factors had more influence on learning, possess external control. He suggests that within a person exists the ability to control situations that arise. Later Bandura (1977) identified efficacy as a cognitive process in which people construct beliefs regarding their own capacity. He went on to summarise four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physical and emotional state. Both Goddard (2001) and Bandura (1977) highlight 'mastery experiences' – teachers' perception that they can do the task in hand. Later, Bandura (1982) added that perceived efficacy could be supported by social persuasion from colleagues and leadership. Goddard (2001) adds that teachers' perception of collective efficacy increased when they had the opportunity to influence decisions relating to instruction. What is noteworthy in Jerald's (2007) research is that disadvantaged students were more likely to keep up with their peers in schools where teachers had strong collective responsibility for outcomes. Goddard and Goddard (2001, p.808) define collective efficacy as that 'the faculty as a whole can organise and execute the course of action required to have a positive effect on students'.

Hattie (2008) proposes that collective teacher efficacy is the number one influence related to student achievement and learning outcomes. This is a recent change from his earlier work which stated that teacher expectations had the largest impact on learning outcomes. He continues, that collective efficacy is not about making teachers feel good about themselves, but the belief that you can make a difference and then seeing the results. He deems the most important aspect of collective

efficacy is making teachers believe: I cause learning. Collective efficacy is collaborative conversation based on evidence (Donohoo, Hattie & Eells, 2018, p.42). When teachers are presented with the evidence that their students are improving, it is this stimulus that boosts the teacher's own efficacy (Hattie, 2017). Without a positive sense of efficacy, individuals are hesitant to initiate action (Hoy, 2012) and therefore, choices and plans can be affected. Research also indicates that teachers who 'burnout' and leave education tend to have a low self-efficacy (Evers, Brouwers & Tomic, 2002). Additionally, high self-efficacy can be an important motivational factor which influences commitment and teacher retention (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Jerald (2007, p.1) proposed that efficacy perceptions 'were not set in stone', and that it is possible to improve self-efficacy, for example by observing successful teachers. Leadership therefore has a role to provide opportunities to increase teachers' self-efficacy. Schools where the leadership was able to inspire a common sense of purpose among the teachers and where student disorder was kept to a minimum were schools in which teachers felt a greater sense of efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Respect from students and parents also plays a key role in protecting experienced teachers' sense of efficacy, especially during difficult times (Milner & Hoy, 2003). Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2007) demonstrated that there is a difference between experienced and newly qualified teachers. Newly qualified teachers self-efficacy appeared to be influenced by contextual factors for example the availability of resources, whereas, experienced teachers had higher levels of self-efficacy as they had learned to judge their own efficacy on other sources such as student success. Künsting, Neuber and Lipowsky (2016) also confirmed that experienced teachers had higher and more stable self-efficacy and that it was a good long-term

predictor of instructional quality, this is likely to be linked to the previously mentioned concept of craft knowledge.

If school leadership is aware of these differences between newly qualified and experienced teachers, it could inform their decision making in regards to the support that experienced teachers need. Understanding teacher self-efficacy may also provide school leadership a framework to improve teacher quality by focusing on student success as a result of teacher input.

### **3.5 Teacher Quality**

There is powerful evidence that high-quality teachers impact a student's academic achievement (Chetty, Friedman & Rockoff, 2014a) and with it their long term outcomes (Chetty, Friedman & Rockoff, 2014b). Slater, Davies and Burgess (2012) write that research consistently shows that it is not government policy, class size, or the state of the school building that has the most profound impact on student learning but that is the quality of the teacher in the classroom. However government policy, class size, and the state of the school building does have a profound impact on the quality of the teacher the student experiences (Allen & Sims, 2018).

Much has been written in the educational literature about teacher quality and the bearing it has on a student's experience (Hanushek, Piopiunik & Wiederhold, 2019; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006), with many researchers providing definitions of what they believe sum up a teacher of quality. Robinson and Aronica (2019, p.163) offer this contemporary definition, 'to be a great teacher takes knowledge, skill, and a passion for students' achievement'. While there is no widely accepted definition of teacher quality or what a 'qualified' teacher is (Ingersoll, 2000), research does show that the most effective teachers are intellectually able, have a good knowledge of the subject

content that they are teaching, have a selection of teaching methods and strategies at their command, develop positive and empathic relationship with their students, demonstrate strong classroom management skills, and work collaboratively with their colleagues to build a positive school climate (Looney, 2011).

In a recent report by the Albert Shanker Institute (2015, p.9) it states, 'teacher quality has become the dominant paradigm for improving schools. What constitutes "good" teachers, how they are identified, whether and how their test score effects can be quantified, whether they are born or made, and how they can be made better all have been subjects of intense debate'. Schleicher (2018) argues that nothing in a school matters more than the quality of the students' teachers. Yet, countries around the world conceptualise and measure teacher quality in different ways. A teacher's certification or qualification may be used (Wiseman & Al-Bakr, 2013), or a teacher's professional development (Robinson, 2008), whilst in Russia teacher quality may be determined by the scores students get on their final high school exam (Zakharov, Carnoy & Loyalka, 2014).

The universal discourse around teacher quality is that teachers have the greatest influence on student achievement and that student success depends greatly on the quality of the teacher that educational leaders hire (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005) (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Slater, Davies & Burgess, 2012). Unfortunately, the continuous desire to improve teachers' quality alongside increasing the number of qualified teachers, has been shown to actually reduce teacher autonomy resulting in a de-professionalism of a career in education. This appears to have resulted in a decrease in quality teachers in the classroom (Beck, 2008; Johnston, 2015).

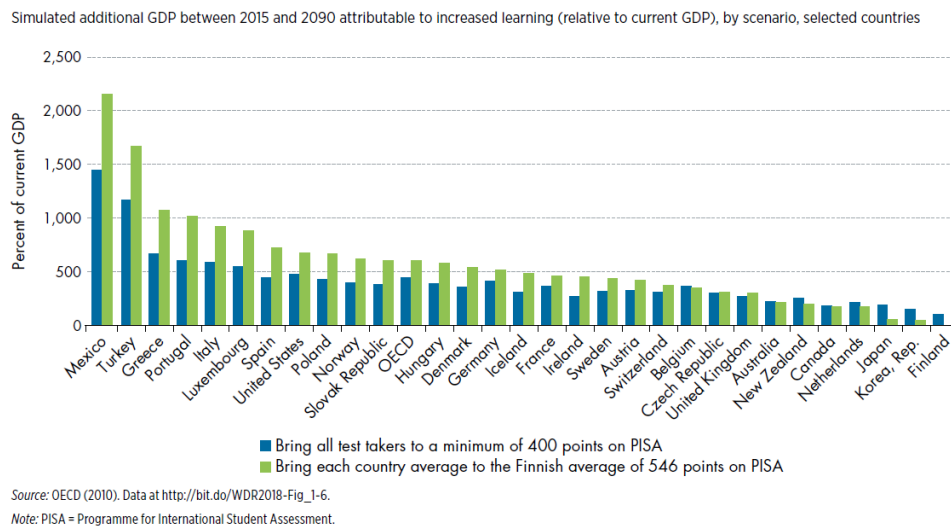
Hanushek (2011) writes that literally hundreds of research studies have focused on the importance of teachers for student achievement. This is recently confirmed in Ingersoll and Collins (2018, p.159) work where they state, ‘the quality of teachers and teaching is undoubtedly among the more important factors shaping the learning and growth of students’. Blachenay and Burns (2016) suggest that by not prioritising the development of teaching quality and ineffective use of a school resources by poor management, schooling quality is often substandard resulting in lower student achievement.

With this wealth of research suggesting that teacher quality is important and that well prepared and capable teachers have the largest positive impact on student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000), it has become widely accepted that high quality teachers are the most important assets of a school (Hanushek, 2011). Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain (2005) concluded that teachers are the most important factor affecting student learning. They highlighted the importance of teacher effectiveness by estimating that, improving the teacher quality by one standard deviation, was more effective and cheaper than removing ten students from the classroom. In Hanushek’s (2011) research he calculated that by replacing the bottom 5–8 percent of teachers, not even with top quality teachers, but with teachers of average quality, the U.S could potential move up the international math and science rankings, adding a predicted value of \$100 trillion into the U.S. economy. Hanushek, Piopiunik and Wiederhold’s (2019) most recent international research suggests that an increase in one standard deviation in a teacher’s cognitive skills has the potential to increase a student’s performance by as much as 15 percent of a standard deviation in the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) test. The following graph illustrates the benefits that different counties could receive from increasing teacher



quality, and potential with it student learning, when compared to Finland’s PISA results.

**Figure 7: Benefit from increasing teacher quality**



From Hanushek’s (2011) research, he published two key findings. Firstly, teachers are very important - he determined that there was no other measured aspect of schools that was nearly as important in determining student achievement. Secondly, after looking at research in a teacher’s own academic achievement, the number of years a teacher had been in the classroom, or the background of the teacher’s own training, he stated that it was impossible to identify any specific characteristics of teachers that are reliably related to student outcomes. Nonetheless, in order to increase student achievement and success many researchers have tried to identify these illusive characteristics of quality teachers. If you search ‘what makes a quality teacher’ in google scholar you get 16,800 results and that is just for a seven month period in 2019, if you open the search for any time period you get 3,740,000 hits - clearly this topic is a weighty issue that academics have been, and still are, writing about.

According to Brock and Grady (2000), the teacher's attitude and own morale towards schooling and their student's ability is a good predictor of student success, and if a teacher's attitude is negative it trickles down and contaminates the student body. Along a similar vein Msila (2014) ties together morale and commitment and notes that, even with the best leadership, pedagogy in a classroom is unlikely to occur without the commitment of the teachers. Spillane, Shirrell and Adhikari (2018) offer that higher performing teachers seek out advice to improve their performance. Darling-Hammond (2000) conceive well prepared and capable teachers are the best for students, whereas Rice (2003) hypothesises that teaching experience is one of the main indicators of teacher quality.

In her study of a large urban school district Dell'Angelo (2016), found that teachers with high expectations of their students also had the ability to mediate the negative effects of poverty on education. Earlier, Johnson (1998) had argued that it was imperative for teachers to make curriculum content relatable to the students. If the content was not relevant to the student, they were likely to feel disconnected. In addition, bridging classroom content to the students' lives helps them to prepare for when they leave school (He, Cooper & Tangredi, 2015), for example, meaningful field trips that provided learning opportunities outside of the classroom (White, 2012).

As school populations continue to become culturally diverse, it becomes critical for teachers to master and include culturally responsive pedagogies (Malo-Juvera, Correll & Cantrell, 2018). Teachers who understand the sociocultural contexts that influence the lives of students, are better able to see students' capacities (Castro, 2010). There is also evidence that if the teachers are trained with a similar socio-economic background to the students they ultimately teach, the teaching will be

more effective, and the teacher better prepared for problems they may encounter (Goldhaber, Krieg & Theobald, 2017).

It should be noted here that not all researchers agree that improving the quality of teachers will actually improve the outcomes and social mobility for underserved students. Hoskins and Barker (2019, p.243) take a different approach and offer that improving teaching and teacher quality across a country cannot remove performance differences. Students who achieve national average results or above, are as likely to benefit at least as much from better teaching or increased school effectiveness as their less academically successful peers. The normal distribution curve means that improving school performance is a zero-sum game - everyone moves up the chart thus the achievement gap is not narrowed. They continue that, the type of neighbourhood a pupil lives in is a more reliable predictor of academic performance than any other information held about that pupil. This view is contrary to the Department of Education (2010) who write that education is believed to have a transformative potential that trumps social background, disadvantage and injustice. Current data shows that the performance gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged has not closed. Hoskins and Barker (2019, p.249) argue that this is because a students' potential is constrained by the influence of their families and less by the quality of their education.

Johnson (2019), in her book *Where Teachers Thrive*, also argues that improving the quality, skills and commitment of individual teachers may not be the remedy to the rising attrition rates, as all too often, teachers work in a disjointed and dysfunctional organisation. Notwithstanding this, Robinson and Aronica (2019) reflect that there are many good quality teachers currently working in the education system who need to be supported. If their personal well-being is suffering, the students are unlikely to

benefit from those teacher's competencies, placing them at a significant disadvantage to those students who are being taught by well supported teachers. Across many professions in England the importance of well-being is now being openly debated. In the following section is a discussion of the importance of teacher well-being and the impact it can have on England's teacher retention challenge.

### **3.6 Well-being**

Over 50 years ago Sergiovanni (1967) investigated school staff well-being. Remarkably, his findings still appear pertinent to today: achievement, recognition and responsibility of teachers, alongside positive interpersonal relations with both students and colleagues were all factors which contributed to a teacher being satisfied in their teaching role and consequently their feelings of well-being. Hargreaves (2017, p.167) states that, 'engagement, identity and well-being are the new frontline of educational improvement' and the time to address those issues are now.

Researchers have defined a teacher's well-being as the state of a teachers' social-emotional state (Cook *et al.*, 2017) with the literature usually focusing around negativity – burnout and teacher turnover (Berkovich, 2018). In their latest report, Ofsted (2019) have reported that teachers do love their profession, they enjoy teaching and building relationships with pupils. However, they acknowledge that the well-being of these teachers is low. Teachers perceived that there is a lack of support, a lack of resources and increased student discipline issues. These all lead to higher sickness and absence and teachers leaving the profession early. Titheradge *et al.* (2019) argue that British primary school teachers experience high and sustained levels of psychological distress and call for an urgent need for intervention. They continue that effective support for

teachers' mental health is particularly important given the link between teachers and student well-being and academic achievement.

Researchers have documented the benefit of yoga (Butzer *et al.*, 2015); pet therapy (Young, 2012); transcendental meditation (Wisner, 2014); self-esteem conferences and mindfulness training (Maynard *et al.*, 2017), in reducing student's levels of stress. There has also been much discussion on the benefit of recess and outdoor learning for students (Louv, 2008). Unfortunately there is less research on the benefits for a teacher's own well-being, particularly with a focus on experienced primary school teachers (Ancona & Mendelson, 2014; Winzelberg & Luskin, 1999).

Teaching, and the demands (both contractual and self-assigned) placed on teachers, can illicit intense emotions (Somech, 2016). Such emotions may affect the wellbeing of the teacher or how students learn. In Frenzel *et al.* (2009) research, they showed that students learnt more if their teacher showed enjoyment and enthusiasm for the subject being taught and less if the teacher displayed negative emotions.

Rath and Harter (2010) agrees and states that an employee's wellbeing is critical to achieving an organization's goals and ultimately fulfilling its mission. If an employee's well-being is low they are more likely to have days off work, but also statistically they are more likely to have an increased chance of disease (Agrawal & Harter, 2011) and are more likely to be obese (Rath & Harter, 2010). An interesting statistic discovered in this research is that turnover cost per employee is 35% lower for employees with high well-being than those struggling as this is due to the fact that thriving employees have a lower turnover rate (Rath & Harter, 2010). Well-being is more than a fleeting sense of pleasure – it comes in part from finding one's talents, interests, and purpose (Robinson & Aronica, 2019) and not necessarily by being paid a fortune (Lyubomirsky, 2008). Kukla-Acevedo (2009) discovered that teachers in

schools with higher levels of teacher leadership may feel that they have more control over their practice, thus experiencing lower levels of stress, which may result in higher levels of satisfaction in their teaching role (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Riley (2017, p.134) sums it up when she states, 'School leaders are key. How they think, decide, act and reflect, and draw on their knowledge to create a road-map of possibilities is critical to the well-being of children and adults'. She goes on to describe how leaders can create a place of belonging by building 'trustful' schools where both teachers and students feel like they belong. Likewise, Bryson, Stokes and Wilkinson (2019a) state that leaders intent on improving employee wellbeing should focus their attention on job quality, as job quality was identified as a key determinant of worker wellbeing.

Mielke (2019) deliberates that teachers can increase their own well-being and should not always rely on school leadership. He states that the human brain is wired to 'avoid threats' and so the brain has evolved toward a negativity bias towards life's challenges by being conditioned to remember unpleasant experiences (Manns & Bass, 2016). He continues that having a negativity bias is no reason to give up looking for the positives, in fact, it is the very reason we should be proactively looking for the positives. If a person's focus is placed on the positives, new pathways are created in the brain, 'neurons that fire together, wire together' (Mielke, 2019, p.21) and positive highways are created. Focusing on the 'good' not only open a person up to see more 'good' but it can also help that person ride over smaller problems.

Mielke speculates that the choice of what we attend to – what enters our awareness – has a compounding effect on our well-being. Roeser *et al.* (2013) advance that mindfulness can reduce teacher stress and in a similar vein, Jennings *et al.* (2017) showed that teachers who received mindfulness training improved their emotional

regulation resulting in an increase in positive interactions with the students. An additional action that teachers can take to improve their well-being is by expressing gratitude. In Chan (2011) study, 63 school teachers participated in a count-your-blessings study. In the post study assessment, Chan noted increases in life satisfaction and sense of personal accomplishment, resulting in a reduction in burnout in the teachers studied.

The discourse in psychology distinguishes between 'feeling good' (hedonia) and 'feeling purposeful' (eudaimonia). Studies show that eudaimonia has a higher impact on long-term happiness and as a result well-being (Mielke, 2019). Many researchers accept that a teacher's main responsibility is to help their students, thus education is rooted in eudaimonia. Mielke (2019, p.8) contemplates that, increasing one's own well-being is not a selfish endeavour and should be pursued. 'We give our best when we are at our best'. In order for a teacher to be at their best, Titheradge *et al.* (2019) argue that teachers need effective support for their own mental health and with it their well-being.

Educational literature does acknowledge the correlation between a teacher's well-being and levels of trust within a school (Van Maele, Forsyth & Van Houtte, 2014). Berkovich (2018) argues that teachers who were situated in the 'highly trusting' profile group recorded the most positive well-being. With this knowledge it appears warranted to look at the educational literature surrounding the concept of teacher trust in relation to teacher turnover and retention.

### **3.7 Trust**

Johnson, Berg and Donaldson (2005) note that trust is not typically used as a lens to study teacher turnover. Yet, the link between trust, teacher satisfaction and sense of efficacy seem worthy of further investigation, leading Torres (2016, p.5) to state that

the ways in which leaders affect trust may be an underexplored contributor to high teacher turnover. Moye, Henkin and Egley (2005) suggest that trust is a fundamental element in a well-functioning organisation and could be seen as the cornerstone of a school's success. In their research on elementary teachers, those teachers who perceived that they were empowered in their teaching roles had higher levels of trust in their leaders. These higher levels of trust contributed to a positive working environment resulting in supportive relationships throughout the school. Expanding on their research Tschannen-Moran & Gareis (2017) argue that nurturing faculty trust in the leader is crucial for leaders aiming to promote student learning and academic achievement.

Goddard, Hoy and Hoy (2004) identified three characteristics of schools that made a positive difference for student achievement, controlling for socio-economic status, these were: collective efficacy, collective trust in parents and students, and academic emphasis of the school. Hoy's work has highlighted the importance of school trust: trust in the principal, in colleagues; and in the organization as a whole, holding the belief that the trusted party could be relied upon to act in the best interest of the faculty as a whole. Previously in Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (1999) research of urban elementary school teachers, they offered that when teachers trusted their leadership, they usually had trust in other stakeholders in the school. This was later confirmed in Tschannen-Moran's (2014) work where she highlighted the interconnectivity of trust across the various school groups and the correlation between them. Many use Hoy & Tschannen-Moran's (2003, p.185) definition for trust: 'a psychological state comprising the intention to accept emotional vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions and behaviours of others' (Hallinger, Liu & Piyaman, 2017).



Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) suggest that leaders who are leading schools effectively are those who are working hard at fostering and maintaining trust with their teachers and are consistently demonstrating competent decision making, in addition these principals are open and honest with their teachers. Likewise, Handford and Leithwood's (2013) results showed that the teacher's view of the leader's benevolence and consistency influences the level of trust teachers had in their administration. Additionally, trust could be earned by allowing the faculty to be involved in, and have influence over, school decision making. If a leader demonstrates care for all stakeholders involved in a school, and by not favouring one group over another, Tschannen-Moran (2014a) argues that this is another way to earn a teacher's trust. According to Lai *et al.* (2014), head teachers who are motivational and supportive to their teachers can earn trust and commitment from those teachers, additionally, Smith (2014) discovered teacher performance increases as teachers have increased trust in the leadership capabilities of their head teacher. Borhandden *et al.* (2018) adds that when trust is absent, it becomes challenging for teachers to have collective goals and sustain a school's effectiveness. Distrust can not only impact current decision making but can have long lasting effects, influencing future meaningful relationships (Walker, Kutsyuruba & Noonan, 2011). Walker *et al.*'s (2011) study also indicated that trust can be very fragile. In their research most principals felt responsible to restore broken relationships to ensure positive working relationships within the school environment.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) argue that when teacher trust is high in a school it makes a significant contribution to student learning. Conversely, other researchers have stated that trust doesn't have as much impact on student learning as collective teacher efficacy and teacher commitment but a principal can enhance trust by

fostering collaboration and goal internalisation in schools (Sun & Leithwood, 2015). By fostering collaboration amongst school stakeholders and setting collective school goals there is often a boost in the confidence and efficacy of teachers which often results in improve instruction in the classroom. This improved instruction then results in an improved student experience (Leithwood *et al.*, 2004). As trust deepens between school stakeholders, the influence of the leader expands and so with increased trust comes both influence and responsibility which the leader should be cognisant (Hoy & Smith, 2007). In high trust schools, students often report feeling safer and teachers are more willing to try new teaching strategies. This improved relationship between teachers and students results in a stronger sense of mutual obligation across all contexts. This association was evident even with rigorous control of student and community background variables (Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, 2007).

Evidence shows that high levels of trust can lead to the following; a healthier school culture, increased collaboration amongst staff, improved self and collective teacher efficacy, and continued professional development for staff (Tschannen-Moran, 2017). It can also increase parental involvement, improve both student and staff academic optimism and student identification with their school leading to increased academic performance (Mitchell, Kensler & Tschannen-Moran, 2018). Consequently, trust appears vital in effective schools and the school leader must not only focus on the management of the school but building relationships of trust with all stakeholders (Healey, 2009). A significant finding in educational research is the disparities in the perceptions of support given and received. As mentioned earlier, in Andrews, Gilbert and Martin's (2007) study, 90% of the interviewed school leaders reported that they were providing constructive, non-evaluative feedback, in contrast to the 34% of

teachers who felt they were receiving it. Hughes, Matt and O'Reilly (2015) also found a difference in perception of support given and received, concluding that this disparity in the views of support could potentially have a negative effect on teacher retention especially in hard-to-staff schools. These disparities may be one of the reasons that teachers feel unsupported in their roles and experience mistrust of their head teacher. Hughes, Matt and O'Reilly (2015, p.133) state that, 'It is critical for principals to understand the impact their support has on their teachers'.

Understanding and acknowledging the impact trust and support, or lack of, can have on a working relationship between teachers and their leader, is fundamental to how a school can be effective in retaining experienced teachers. Brown, Daly and Liou (2016) add that higher levels of trust within a school were associated with more frequent teacher collaboration, problem solving, shared decision making and complex information sharing. They argue that the ways in which leaders create and nurture the conditions that enable high quality ties to form, is key to teachers feeling supported and results in school improvement. In teaching, trust is often linked to feelings and emotions, and it is to this I now turn.

### **3.8 Experienced teachers emotions**

Over the last twenty years, there has been a renewed emphasis in educational literature on teaching as an emotional practice. Hargreaves (2000a, p.2) talks of teaching as having a set of specific emotional 'expectations, contours, and effects'. He sets out a conceptual framework for what he calls the emotional geographies of teaching. He states, 'emotions are at the heart of teaching...and one of the most neglected dimensions of educational change is the emotional one' (Hargreaves, 2005a, p.278). He argues that educational reform can bring a range of emotions to teachers' professional lives, which may include fear, anxiety and frustration. While

the emotions that teachers often experience are negative, they may also be positive, ambivalent, anticipatory or complacent.

The physical sensations of emotion and the events that stimulate them are closely related. Oatley, Keltner and Jenkins (2018) look at this relationship by describing emotion as usually caused by a person consciously (or unconsciously) evaluating an event as relevant to a concern, either positively or negatively. They state that 'emotions are at the centre of people's understanding of themselves and others in their relationships, rituals and public life' (2018, p. 27). Leaders are at the interface of emotions in schools, and the same may apply to experienced teachers. In Crawford's book *Getting to the Heart of Leadership* (2009) she argues that feelings are not just an individual response, but a key part of life in groups. She continues that the affective properties of relations form part of the emotional context of schools, and notes that it is the emotional context, that defines emotional meaning and part of the leader's role can be to define those meanings. Others have also contributed to the discourse surrounding emotions in education. In relation to educational organisations Beatty (2003, p.73) states:

'Emotional patterns and reasons behind our dealings with each other in organisations help us to picture the emotional spaces between and within people'.

Beatty and others have agreed that the culture of an organisation is created and sustained at least partly by the emotions of the participants and so teachers should learn to manage their own and others' emotions. With experience, teachers gain an awareness of their own emotions, and with this information, they learn how to manage diverse relationships across the school setting. Fineman (2000, p.1) describes organisations as 'emotional arenas' that both bond and divide their

members. He continues that emotions 'are deeply woven into the way roles are enacted and learned, power is exercised, trust is held, commitment formed and decisions made'. More recently, there has been a considerable progression in literature on the role emotion plays in an organisation, especially in the educational sector. For example: English as a Foreign Language teachers' emotions in regards to professional development (Karagianni & Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 2018); the role of emotions in foreign language learning at university level (Beseghi, 2018); the emotional involvement of teachers working with pupils who have been permanently, or are at risk of being, excluded from mainstream education (Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, 2018); emotional research in teacher education (Bellocchi, 2019), and emotional exhaustion experienced by teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

In Carlyle and Woods (2002) research they noted that many of the teachers who were working in schools with a lack of trust, or negative emotional climates, described themselves as stressed. These teachers attributed the cause of their stress to the leader's inability to handle difficult emotions. Labelling a teacher as 'emotional' was used to undermine the teachers and discount their individual emotion. Zembylas and Schutz (2009) identified that teacher's emotions are inextricably linked to the teacher's own well-being, and is often influenced by school relationships and educational reforms. Although the leadership literature has begun to explore the part emotions play, there is a gap in the role of emotions in relation to being an experienced teacher. Even in educational leadership research, James, Crawford and Oplatka (2018, p.617) recently stated that, 'the forms of affect – feelings, moods and emotions – have yet to be afforded the significance they deserve'.

### 3.9 Summary

From the previous two chapters it can be seen that there are many factors influencing how experienced primary school teachers are supported in their professional lives. This includes but is not limited to; relationship and school trust, understanding the career stage the teacher is currently in and the professional development opportunities available to the teacher, these are all important pieces of the larger educational jigsaw.

Views regarding what education actually is, what makes a quality teacher and how to address the challenge of teacher retention are much debated in the educational discourse (Biesta *et al.*, 2019). By examining the literature and bearing this in mind, the key concepts that relate to the research questions have been introduced and discussed. It becomes apparent that teacher turnover and attrition is a complex phenomenon. Whilst examining theoretical concepts the following key concepts emerge: the importance of quality school leadership, the impact work place conditions have on teacher turnover, the importance of career appropriate professional development to each individual teacher, and the impact government policies can have on teacher attrition. These all influence the likeliness of a teacher staying in the educational environment (Sims, 2017). The literature appears to suggest that greater emphasis should be placed on nurturing and retaining quality experienced teachers, instead of encouraging an audit environment with tick box activities and constantly reforming and narrowing the curriculum (Allen & Sims, 2018b). Primary school teachers are passionate individuals demonstrating a range of emotions, 'about their pupils, about their professional skills, about their colleagues and the structure of the school....about the actual or likely effect of educational policies upon their pupils and themselves' (Nias, 1996, p.293). The ongoing pressure

for students to achieve academically reinforces the need to focus research on experienced teachers and their needs and in doing so give teachers a career worth having.

In Allen and Sims (2018b, p.28) book 'The Teacher Gap' they concluded that to improve teacher retention in England, schools need quality leaders who provide appropriate and individualised support to their teachers. This can be in the form of opportunities for teachers to collaborate with colleagues, accessible appropriate professional development and suitable teaching assignments. The literature demonstrates that the retention of experienced teachers has many benefits, such as, increased school stability, a more effective teaching workforce and a reduction in administration costs associated with hiring and on-boarding staff. With limited research on experienced teachers and the support that they perceive that they need to thrive, especially when teaching in the urban context, it is my hope that this research will add to the educational discourse surrounding experienced teacher retention. In the next chapter, I outline the research methodology and methods considered best suited to address the research questions, which underpin this study.

## Chapter Four – Research Perspective, Methodology and Methods

*'A meeting to share  
Invigorating and safe  
Future learning starts'  
Barbara*

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will detail the research approach I took to investigate how experienced primary teachers could be supported in their professional lives. The literature review highlights the benefits experienced teachers bring to a student's academic experience and a school's stability. Retaining this group of educators, both in England and worldwide, appears to be growing challenge, therefore understanding this phenomenon is valuable to school leaders, educational policy makers and myself. My personal perspective is summarised by Biesta and William (2003, p.109). They offer that educational research is not only about finding better, more sophisticated, more efficient, or effective means for achieving educational ends, but that inquiry into these very aims, ends and purposes of education should be an *integral* part of educational research. In seeking to discover what supports teachers need and desire, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of teacher turnover and retention challenges facing the English educational system.

I will start this chapter by providing a summary of why the research questions need addressing. Next, I will explain the research methodology chosen and my rationale for choosing walking interviews over other more traditional approaches to interviews. Then, I will detail the approach taken for the pilot interviews, the structure of the



study and the selection of the participants. Finally, I will discuss how the data collected was analysed and steps taken to ensure a quality research project.

## **4.2 Background to the Research**

As discussed in chapter one, much research concludes that the core business of schools is to improve student learning, with two overriding goals for the education authorities being that school leaders allocate resources efficiently and improve student achievement (Choi, 2017). As seen from the previous literature review in chapters two and three, there is a large body of research on school leadership and the impact it has on a school and the respective student body (Bush & Glover, 2014; Coelli & Green, 2012; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Robinson, 2007; Sun & Leithwood, 2017). As a result, leadership can be widely accepted as having an impact on student learning (Dinham & Crowther, 2011). As teachers sit between the leadership and the student body, it can be inferred that the actions of the leader also have significant impact on the teacher as well as the students (Edgerson, Kritsonis & Herrington, 2006). How students experience school is mainly attributed to the teacher's interaction with students, Rocchi and Camiré (2018) postulate that teacher job satisfaction plays a huge role in student outcomes, and so the factors that influence it are important. If job satisfaction is an indicator of teacher turnover, research in this area is crucial.

In examining the challenges of teacher turnover and retention, much has been written on strategies aimed at supporting the newly qualified teacher (Cowley, 2009; Harju & Niemi, 2019; Kelchtermans, 2019). Factors such as school leadership (Thomas *et al.*, 2018; Walker & Kutsyuruba, 2019), the role of sustainable relationships to increase new teacher's resilience (Le Cornu, 2013), identity construction (Hong, Day & Greene, 2018), additional planning time (Cowley, 2009),

and mentoring (Alatas, 2019; Shanks, 2017), have all been considered. Guskey (2002) advocates for more research on strategies specifically designed for the experienced teacher. Birky, Headley, and Shelton (2006) agree and suggest that the perspective of teachers and teacher leaders are not well represented within the literature, and arguably not yet problematized. I believe that experienced teachers are one of the greatest assets of any school. Their 'craft knowledge' of teaching is invaluable to the success of their students and their own teaching efficacy. This experience cannot be taught at University and is only acquired after teaching in a classroom. Experienced teachers also have the potential to bring continuity to a student's educational journey, promote a positive school culture, build strong stakeholder relationships and mentor newly qualified teachers.

#### **4.3 Research Design and Conceptual Framework**

Hammersley (2014) refers to the task of formulating research questions, and then planning how to produce and analyse the data required to answer them as the research design. He states research design is also concerned with how this task can be conducted most effectively, whilst always considering appropriate ethical and practical constraints. Hammersley (2014) judges research design as a high priority in the early stages of any research project but adds that you should expect it to morph and adapt as the investigation continues. He reflects that formulating, clarifying, and perhaps even transforming research questions are all part of the process of research design. Brown (2018, p.71) states, 'a robust and well-planned research design is fundamental to a well-executed, ethically informed study.' She continues that research questions should be clear, practical and doable and only if a researcher immerses in, and becomes familiar with, the literature will they achieve their goal of providing useable data.

Adding depth to a research design Maxwell (2008) offers the importance of a conceptual framework, looking at the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs your research. Gale (2019), reflects that when engaged in doing educational research our research practices are deeply imbued with senses of 'selves', the ontological, epistemological and methodological dispositions of those involved in the inquiry. Often the methodology is where the researcher's assumptions come together to inform the study (Crawford, 2018a). My love of being outdoors and spending time chatting with friends on long walks, clearly influenced my choice of walking interviews and, in my opinion, there is no better way to spend your time. My background has influenced my research approach, however as can be seen from the following research approach, steps were taken to ensure that bias was minimised in the data collected.

#### **4.4 Research Approach**

According to Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2015, p.3), methodology refers to the way in which we approach problems and seek answers. This research is focussed around the following research question, 'How can experienced primary teachers in urban settings be supported in their professional lives?'

In order to understand why a particular phenomenon occurs I have considered it from an ontological perspective first; what are the teachers' perspectives on the issue under study? For example, what are teachers' perspectives on perceived high turnover rates in urban primary schools and what influences this phenomenon?

Sitting along-side is the epistemological view, how can light be shed onto the teachers' viewpoints, in other words find out 'what we know we know' (Agar, 2006b).

Research is designed to discover a deeper insight into the phenomenon, considering both experience and reasoning, so understanding the researcher's philosophical

approach and stance is important. Kinney (2018) agrees with Crawford (2018), when choosing our research methods to collect data, they reflect our values and what we do in research.

#### **4.4.1 My positioning within this research**

My research approach is influenced by my upbringing and alongside it my own epistemological and ontological beliefs, which are: knowledge is socially constructed by individuals and knowledge is gained through understanding the meaning of the experience. Growing up on an outdoor education centre, near the Scottish border, progressive educators constantly surrounded me, these teachers heavily influenced my career choices and outlook on life. I believe that a well-rounded education has the potential to improve society. I completed a PGCE and began my teaching career in inner city schools first in the UK then in the US. During my time as an urban primary school classroom teacher I worked closely with all kinds of teachers who had been in education for over five years, some engaged and passionate, some who appeared jaded and unsatisfied. I experienced first-hand leaders who were supportive and those who were not. I was curious why some teachers would stay in this profession and why others left. With a desire to become an assistant principal in the USA, I returned to University to complete my Master's in Leadership in Education. An in-depth understanding of the influence a leader has on an experienced teacher will inform my future practice.

Berg and Smith (1985) conclude that findings are powerfully influenced by the relationship between the researcher and the researched, and so, approaching this research through an interpretive lens concerned with seeking meaning and understanding of the participant's definition of their situation, unconscious bias may

appear in qualitative researchers work (Crawford, 2016). Thus, acceptance and acknowledgment of one's own subjectivity is critical during the data analysis process (Strand, 2000). As previously argued, context and phenomena cannot be separated - I have worked in urban schools and have been an experienced teacher and so my positioning within this research leads me to have insight into this study, which a different researcher may not have. My experience will allow me to recognise themes pertinent to experienced teachers.

However, Green, Skukauskaite and Baker (2012) argue that there is a need for researchers to bracket their own point of view, for setting aside the researcher's own perspective and expectations enables them to explore an insider's point of view. For Hycner (1985) this means entering the world of the individual who is being interviewed whilst suspending the researcher's meaning and interpretations, with the intention of the researcher understanding what the interviewee is saying rather than what the researcher expects the participant to say. Burns and Bursn (2000) advocate for researchers to adopt the stance of 'naïve observer', unlike Flick (2018) who states that researchers themselves are an important part of the research process. In the light of this, I would agree with Flick and state that my experiences as a teacher enable me to ask appropriate questions and engaged with the participants on a level that a naïve observer would not. I may not be classed as an 'insider-insider' as I am not currently an urban, primary school teacher but I have been one. Fayard and Van Maanen (2015) contemplate that the boundaries are unavoidably blurred and indistinct and to make hard boundaries is detrimental to the research.

Reed (2016) provides an additional view that the relationships between the researcher and participants are important to ensuring research impact. If you are unable to put yourself in the shoes of those who you are interviewing, it will be

impossible to understand what motivates, concerns and drives them. Again, during this thesis I truly believe that the experienced teacher was at the heart of this project. My motivation in completing this research was to understand the teaching lives of experienced teachers and the supports they need and desire to stay fulfilled in their professional lives. An additional benefit would be to be able to provide leaders with actions that they can utilise to support experienced teachers within their schools. As Bassey (1999, p.49) states, 'research feeds discourse, which aids practice and policy'.

#### **4.5 Qualitative Research**

Research tends to fall into three general categories, quantitative which is research based on numbers, qualitative which is research not using numbers, and a blend of them both, often referred to as mixed methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Thomas (2017, p.119) dislikes characterising them in this manner, stating 'quantitative and qualitative research are not in opposition to one another, rather they can complement each other' especially when used to validate findings. In a similar vein, Morgan (2018) argues that we must learn to tolerate the blurry boundaries between qualitative and quantitative research as he feels it is not possible to distinguish between them.

For the purpose of this study I selected a qualitative approach to this research as it is 'pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people' (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.2). Qualitative research allows researchers to find meaning about the issue from the perspective of their participants (Creswell *et al.*, 2007) capturing their 'voices' (Rabionet, 2011, p.563). To further justify this approach, Flick (2018) argues that when embarking on a qualitative research project you must first decide on something that is relevant and interesting to study – for example a problem or

process that is not adequately understood yet and one that is worth being analysed, described, compared or explained. Then you must decide which aspect of this problem should be the focus. The problem of teacher turnover is high in the UK, especially in urban primary schools, many factors may contribute to this for example this might be, large class sizes, increased assessment workload, government policies, unacceptable workplace conditions, or even a teacher just being ill-suited to a teaching role. I have chosen to focus on the supports experienced teachers say they need to stay engaged in their roles and employed in the educational environment.

A challenge that is present for many qualitative researchers can be conducting analysis or presenting findings in a way that sensitively captures the multiple levels of a research encounter. Riach (2009, p.356) comments that as most qualitative research is conducted as interviews, anywhere from 70-90%, which are audio recorded then transcribed, the richness of the interaction can be lost. This may lead to epistemological concerns over how to represent another person's 'world view'. Stand-alone qualitative research is sometimes criticized for a perceived lack of scientific rigour and has also received criticism because the data cannot be generalised (Mays & Pope, 1995), yet, this research is aimed at supporting a very specific group of teachers and so is pertinent to them.

Maxwell (2018) posits that the aim of qualitative research is to gain an understanding of real phenomena, set in a real context. Flick (2018, p.5) continues and identifies common features of qualitative research. He states that qualitative research tends to understand, describe, and sometimes explain social phenomena 'from the inside', situated in the real world, not set up in a specialized research setting such as a laboratory. In most qualitative research there is a desire to understand how the

participants construct the world around them - what and how they are doing and what is meaningful to them, all with the ultimate intention of making meaningful observations. Flick (2018) further contends that qualitative researchers should start with the idea that their methods, in this research walking interviews, are appropriate to what they study. Adaptions and new approaches can be developed along the way if needed, and that the major aim of collecting qualitative data is to provide material for an empirical analysis of a phenomenon that the study is about.

Qualitative methods continue to evolve, with new approaches possible due to technological breakthroughs which enable researchers to collect data and, in turn, present a truer reflection of the participants perspectives (Markle, West & Rich, 2011). Delamont (2016, p.1) declares that qualitative research is harder, more stressful and more time consuming than other types of research, due to the level of commitment to the research process that is required. Qualitative research is often where researchers engage in naturalistic inquiry, studying real - world settings inductively to generate rich descriptions and construct research studies (Patton, 2005). Schreier (2018) see qualitative research as holistic and as an in-depth approach, which typically limits itself to a few instances or participants. Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p.424) define it as 'an interpretive, naturalistic approach attempting to make sense of the meaning people bring.' My qualitative research project aimed to gather data in a real-world setting, in order to answer the question, 'how can experienced primary teachers in urban settings be supported in their professional lives?' Interviews were selected as the primary source of data collection to find meaning on this topic, from the perspective of the experienced teacher. Silverman (2010, p.189) suggests we live in an 'interview society' and for qualitative research,



doing an interview is the most natural thing in the world. Notwithstanding this, it is important for the method chosen to answer the research question posed.

#### **4.5.1 Interviewing**

Frequently described as ‘conversations with a purpose’ interviews enable an exchange between the researcher and participant to take place (Barbour, 2018). Neumann and Neumann (2018) state that the researcher’s goal in the field is that they have to create as much data as possible by encouraging the informant to talk about what the researcher is interested in. Face to face interviews allow the researcher to get to know the interviewee better and enhance the learning about an individual’s experiences and perspectives on an issue, whilst semi-structured interviews allows for the sequencing of questions to be fluid and responsive to the participant, follow-up questions or probes can then be formulated during the conversation to encourage depth or exploration of a topic (Roulston, 2018). Mann (2016) does warns that working with interviews produces a number of different challenges, from making the initial contact with interviewees and arranging interviews, to organising and securing ethical approval to work with human participants, and finally to the ability of the researcher to transcribe and analyse the interview.

Semi-structured interviews allowed for lines of inquiry to be followed during the interviews that would not be possible with a questionnaire approach. In this case, they allowed for an in-depth understanding of the needs of urban, experienced, primary school teachers to emerge. DiCicco - Bloom and Crabtree (2006, p.314) agree stating ‘the purpose of the qualitative research interview is to contribute to a body of knowledge that is conceptual and theoretical and is based on the meanings

that life experiences hold for the interviewees'. Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewee to delve deeply into the issue under review and are widely acknowledged as being an acceptable research method (DiCicco - Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Castrodale (2018, p.46) describes the traditional positivist approach to interviews as 'interviews that were more clinical, scientific, controlled, and objective'. In contrast, walking interviews often encounter less controlled conditions and are more dynamic than stationary interviews. Following is a discussion and justification on the selection of walking interviews.

#### **4.5.2 Walking Interviews**

*'Walking and talking  
Sharing views about my life  
Hopefully helping'  
John*

Moles (2008, p.4) states that 'Walking is a wonderful way of gathering data' and in response to social science's stereotypically sedentary approach to interviews, the interdisciplinary 'mobilities paradigm' has grown (Cook & Butz, 2018). Interviews are often recognised as the main tool for social science research methodology and with that mobile interviews have gained popularity amongst researchers (Veselkova, Vandyshev & Pryamikova, 2017). Merriman (2014, p.167) views this development as an 'inevitable emergence'.

When researching data collection methods, walking interviews resonated so strongly that I knew I had to investigate this approach. Having selected semi-structured interviews, it was incredibly important for me, as a researcher, to remove the

participant from their classroom and school environment, this could have easily been achieved by interviewing the participants at the University, at home or in a pub, such as in Jennifer Nias's research (Nias, 1989). However, I truly felt walking interviews would illicit richer quality data (see rich quality data discussion later on). Moreover, as the location was selected by the participant, walking interviews enabled the interview to be conducted in an outdoor location where the participant felt comfortable and safe. Walking or 'go-along' interviews are a form of in-depth qualitative interview method (Harris, 2016), outside of a conventional interview space—traditionally a quiet and often neutral location, free of noise, and distraction (Kinney, 2017).

Throughout history, walking has been described as central to the production of philosophical knowledge, as the mere act of walking provides access to rational and meaningful thought - 'the elements acting as both a form of cleansing and an elicitation device, blowing away the cobwebs of everyday concerns and prompting reflection on deeper truths' (Rhys-Taylor & Bates, 2017, p.11). Indigenous peoples have been walking as a way of knowing for centuries (Vannini & Vannini, 2017) and then during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries walking became fashionable in Western Europe as an elite's elective activity, with names given to different types of walkers from 'the Sunday shopper' to the 'hiker' (Kärrholm *et al.*, 2017). Bates and Rhys-Taylor (2017, p.4) suggest that, 'discovering the world on foot is also a way in which to reawaken the scholar's body and practice a more sensuous form of scholarship'.

In 2004, the Centre for Mobilities Research hosted the Alternative Mobility Futures conference, called for new research methods that would be 'on the move' (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Over a decade later *cemore* (the Centre for mobilities research)

continues to be at the forefront of this field claiming on their web site that '*mobilities research develops a deeper and broader understanding of contemporary challenges through social science as a transdisciplinary endeavour*' (cemore, 2018). Still, Merriman (2014) does offer a note of caution amongst researchers justifying mobile methods by an assumption that 'conventional' or 'traditional' methods have failed, he suggest that the power of 'mobile methods' is sometimes exaggerated at the expense of a broader understanding of actual events. Nevertheless, the justification of this method is not that traditional interviews have failed but walking interviews may produce richer data in this particular situation.

Walking methods have been used with studies on urban planning, looking at the need to reduce car traffic or efforts to improve health by increasing physical activity (Middleton, 2011), analysing pram strollers in Copenhagen (Jensen, 2018), discovering the rhythms of the urban environment (Tartia, 2018), exploring neighbourhoods with older people (Carroll, Jespersen & Troelsen, 2019), documenting the use of urban woodlands on the mental well-being of people with dementia (Cook, 2019) and they have been used in leisure research (Burns *et al.*, 2019).

Walking interviews have become the focus of ever-increasing research, with researchers using walking as a mode of inquiry to examine more than just urban landscapes, accessibility issues or the significance of place but 'vibrant, sensory, material, and transitory intensities beyond the logics of representation' (Springgay & Truman, 2017a, p.1). Pink *et al.* (2010, p.3) argues that walking is significant because 'we cannot but learn and come to know in new ways as we walk' emphasizing that moving can generate knowledge production. The anthropologists, Ingold and Vergunst (2008) offer three positive outcomes on walking with

interviewees: walking as an action establishes connectivity with the environment; the routes selected allows for a mobile and dynamic understanding of places; and finally walking with others creates a distinctive sociability. This final benefit of creating a sociability or rapport I believed would be most beneficial in collecting quality data. Miller and Krizan (2016) add a significant fourth reason, conjecturing that walking lifts your mood – even when participants were expecting the opposite.

While there is a history of researchers ‘walking alongside’ participants in ethnography research in order to observe, experience and make sense of everyday practices, or to enable them to understand a sense of place (Anderson, 2004; Clark & Emmel, 2010), they are mainly used by social scientists and geographers, and usually linked to the area under scrutiny. Evans and Jones (2011, p.849) described studies using this approach as varying from unstructured ‘rambles’ through the wilderness to highly structured tours visiting pre-determined places (see figure below).

**Figure 8: Walking Interviews (adapted from Evans and Jones, 2011)**

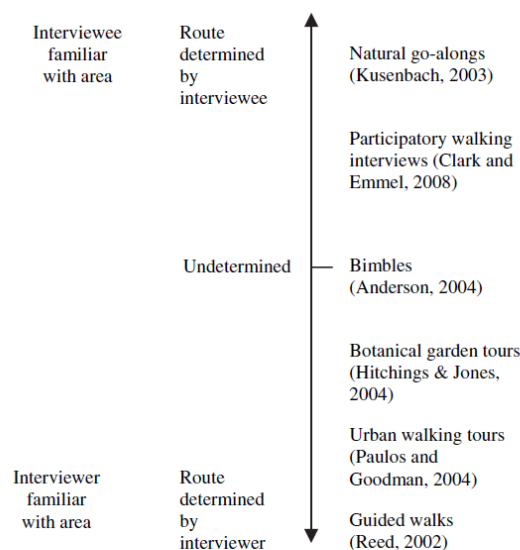


Fig. 1. Typology of walking interviews.

There is limited published work on the merits of the walking interview. Nevertheless Finlay and Bowman (2017) do consider five strengths of a mobile interview: the production of place-specific data; access to complex meanings of place; collaborative conversations with participants; ability to build rapport and adjust participant-researcher power dynamic; finally its ability to produce rich qualitative data. The last three are significant to this study.

Mackay, Nelson and Perkins (2018) agree that walking interviews have the potential to generate rich accounts of life experiences, as connections are made during the walk, they also add that the walking interviews tend to be an enjoyable experience. Anderson (2004, p.260) states this practice of talking whilst walking is useful as it produces not a conventional interrogative encounter, but a 'collage of collaboration'. Evans and Jones (2011) add that interviewees tended to talk more spontaneously. Conversely, Macpherson (2016) warns us that it is important for the researcher to be aware that a 'pleasurable walk' alongside the 'mood lifting' that Miller and Krizan (2016, p.775) mentioned may inject a certain positivity, or as I argue may release the individual from the institutional constraints, allowing them to open up. The increased social contact may lead to an enhanced sense of wellbeing and so the qualitative data collected may be skewed as the participants have the potential to give an upbeat account of their situation.

Building on the above typology walking interview diagram, Kinney (2017) focuses on several different walking interviews formats, from a researcher driven walk, where the route and location is decided by the researcher – to participant driven, where the participant is in control (Evans & Jones, 2011). She highlights the docent or guide method which is a participant-led walking interview through broad sites of interest, where the participant is regarded as the expert guide who escorts the researcher,

the novice, to and around specific areas in their lives that are significant to them (Chang, 2017).

Next, she discusses the 'go-along' approach where the researcher walks with the interviewee as they go about their daily routines, asking questions in situ (Kusenbach, 2003). Similar to the 'shadowing' technique used by organisational researchers (McDonald, 2005), 'go-alongs' can highlight the connection the participant has to the environment and study routines or un-noticed habits. This approach is good at obtaining contextualized perspectives of participants when they act as a navigational guide of the real or virtual space within which they live (Garcia *et al.*, 2012). The purpose of this format is to enable the researcher to discover attitudes and knowledge about a specific geographical area, aiming to glean an insight into the participant's attachment to a geographical region (Evans & Jones, 2011). Sundberg (2014, p.40) goes deeper with her walking practice and prefers the terminology 'walking-with'. Walking-with, she states, entails 'serious engagement with Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies'.

The final walking format Kinney describes does not use the participant as a tour guide, nor does the researcher plan a structured route because the route and the geographical area is not important or of a concern (Jones *et al.*, 2008). Sometimes referred to as 'bimbling' or the practice of going for a walk with no clear aim other than to blow off steam (Anderson, 2004), this type of walking interview has been used to explore topics that might make participants feel awkward or uncomfortable and is the approach adopted for this research. By removing the pressure of a face to face interview, the walking allows conversation to occur naturally around a topic, unnatural pauses that occur in a sedentary face to face can be replaced by natural occurrences, for example, when crossing the road. Furthermore, walking alongside a

participant reduces traditional power imbalances between the interviewer and interviewee (Anderson, 2004). Walking alongside and facing outwards, deemphasizes the contact between interviewer and interviewee disrupting the traditional interview positions (Brown & Durrheim, 2009). Walking together implies this is an inclusive process compared to the traditional sit-down interview and hence more of a partnership (Kinney, 2017). Further, Carpiano (2009) suggests that walking interviews are a useful way of engaging with those who have little experience of participating in research, as walking interviews help build trust between the research participant and the researcher. In addition, by allowing the participant to choose their own route there is the potential to increase the empowerment felt by the interviewees (Evans & Jones, 2011). This delegation of power enables the participant to benefit from some control over the interview e.g. the length of time they are prepared to walk and talk (Burns *et al.*, 2019).

Walking researchers, Springgay *et al.* (2018), identify four major themes in walking research: place, sensory inquiry, embodiment and rhythm. In fact, Springgay and Truman (2017b) regard place as a central concept in walking research. Palmgren (2018, p.372) agrees stating, 'walking is always connected with a place, it is never practised in a vacuum'. The importance of place is demonstrated in many mobile studies (Riley & Holton, 2016), from the Scottish Highlands, (Vannini & Vannini, 2017), to the city of Sydney (Wolifson, 2016), a shopping mall in Turku Finland (Palmgren, 2018), to a street in Aberdeen (Vergunst, 2010). In contrast, this methodological approach is intended to remove the participant from their place, in this situation the teacher's classroom and school. Unlike Thomas, Riley and Smith's (2018) work, where the place of the interviews was central to the narratives gleaned,



the location of the walking interview is not central or even significant, it is the removal of place that is. This last point is key to my data collection.

In today's climate, where school design encourages surveillance (Kulz, 2017), walking outside of the school may allow a certain freedom of speech. The use of CCTV in schools has expanded worldwide (Birnhack, Perry-Hazan & German Ben-Hayun, 2018), in the UK it is estimated that 85 to 90 per cent of schools have CCTV (Taylor, 2013). As a consequence the effects of being watched, during the interview, may have an impact on the quantity and quality of data participants are willing to share. This is a reasonable assumption as Perry-Hazan and Birnhack (2019) suggest that surveillance does impact teachers' daily lives and with it their working conditions.

Warnick (2007) provided an ethical analysis on the impacts of surveillance and concluded that CCTVs does undermine the development of trust within a school. The use of CCTV in public spaces, electronic registers and reports in schools, all lead to many people now regulating their own behaviour for fear of being watched.

Interviewing the teachers in a place of their choice, away from their school and classroom, has the intention of reducing that feeling of being observed.

There has been research on the impact surveillance has on primary school children and the ways the pupils perceive, normalise or resist school surveillance (Birnhack, Perry-Hazan & German Ben-Hayun, 2018; Taylor, 2013). Yet, there is little research on the effect it has on primary school teachers. Surveillance takes many guises, not just CCTV cameras but may be in the form of no-notice school inspections, observations conducted by school principals, or even student surveys (Perry-Hazan & Birnhack, 2019). Merely the chance of being seen by a leader, colleague, parent or

student whilst being interviewed may trigger what Page (2017a) refers to as 'risk anxiety'. Whilst it is (usually) not the intention to spy on teachers they do become objects of surveillance (Perry-Hazan & Birnhack, 2019).

Not all methods of research are appropriate for all studies and participants, issues such as accessibility, weather, equipment and recording must be considered (Carpiano, 2009). Anxious to warn researchers about the impact of weather, walking methodological literature often cites the weather as a challenge – rain, wind, heat, cold, snow, and ice, 'these factors are undoubtedly some of the biggest 'cons' to a method that is otherwise rich in 'pro's' (Carpiano, 2009, p.269). Garcia and colleagues agree and deem that the weather makes this research method 'vulnerable' and 'susceptible' to challenges (Garcia *et al.*, 2012, p.1400). Yet, as challenging as the weather can be, Evans and Jones (2011) found that the weather was no barrier, in fact their walking interviews tended to last longer than their sedentary interviews. Vannini and Vannini (2017) posits that weather is not a limitation of the functionality of the walk-along method. Weather is part and parcel of the walk-along method.

As walking interviews depend upon walking, the mere act of walking may exclude certain types of participants (Evans & Jones, 2011, p.849). For example, in Warren (2017) she critically reviewed the walking interview under the lens of ethnics, gender and moral dimensions by studying a group of Muslim women enrolled at a woman only college in Birmingham, U.K. She concluded that the appreciation of walking interviews would benefit from greater engagement with the interstices of faith, ethnicity and gender and that they should be recognised as a multi-layered and complex act, even amongst the able bodied. She further stresses how qualitative methods ought to be tailored sensitively in order to offer insights into the lives of

others, in particular, those who experience marginalisation from mainstream society. In a study by Green and Singleton (2007) safety was raised as a further concern of walking interviews. By allowing the participant to pick the location and time of the interview, as well as the route walked, only places that the interviewee felt comfortable were visited in this research.

Disability, illness or an injury may be another reason that some participants would be excluded from a walking interview (Evans & Jones, 2011). Kinney (2017) writes that the researcher should gauge the participants' capability and make adjustments accordingly, before and during the interview. This was certainly a consideration as all participants were willing to walk but some were unable to complete the entire interview walking. Following is a table of participants and a summary of their walking interview.

**Table 2: Walking interview notes**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Walking interview field notes</b>	<b>Walking interview challenges</b>
Carolyn	Long walking interview but during the interview was scared by some pigeons	Animals
Rebecca	Short walking interview as we only walked to a coffee shop due to having very sore hips at 9 months pregnant	Health
Millie	Long walking interview, walked further than needed and reminisced on places she used to visit	

John	Long walking interview, walked further than needed, did meet a parent during the interview	Being seen
Cathi	Long walking interview, sat at end and nearly got hit by golf ball	Unexpected accidents
Jenna	Long walking interview. Jenna brought her dogs so she was happy to walk further than needed	
Victoria	Short walking interview as we only walked to a coffee shop due to health reason	Health
Karen	Long walking interview. After the walk Karen admitted that she would rather have sat and had a cup of tea but was surprised that she had enjoyed it	
Carl	Short walking interview as we only walked to a coffee shop then sat on a bench under a tree due to it being the hottest day of the year	Weather
Donna	Long walking interview, walked further than needed, did see an old class that she had taught	Being seen
Barbara	Short walking interview, walked to a bench in a park, due to a broken toe	Health
Kate	Long walking interview, walked further than needed	

A practical difficulty in conducting walking interviews is capturing the voices of both the researcher and participants while both are on the move. This is especially relevant in high traffic, construction or crowded areas and equally important on windy days as the microphone has a tendency to pick up the background noise (Finlay & Bowman, 2017). Mackay, Nelson and Perkins (2018) suggest having multiple data capture strategies as one way to mitigate this problem such as fixing microphones to both interviewee and interviewer or wearing small body camera to capture the walk. Finally, Finlay and Bowman (2017, p.272) remind researchers that they should check batteries regularly and carry ample backup battery power to avoid the 'heart-breaking loss of data', which unfortunately was experienced during this research.

Vannini and Vannini (2017, p.13) conclude that walking methodology should not be seen as an 'interview on the go' but as an aesthetic and exploratory practice connecting with a human being with whom we choose to walk. Coupled with Solnit (2001, p.11) thoughts on walking interviews, 'while walking, the body and mind can work together.....the rhythm of walking generates a rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts'. I argue that walking interviews can offer a space for two people to spend time together sharing a deep and meaningful conversation.

Another advantage of walking whilst talking, and other mobile methods, may be that they provide the opportunity for new spaces to be discovered, especially if the walk is participant lead (Moles, 2008). By allowing the participant to dictate the route they can control the location that they feel comfortable in and they can also control the length of time the interview takes. Equally, a consideration for not choosing walking interviews is that during the interview the participant may be seen by someone they know. The event may be uneventful but could potentially place the participant in an

awkward situation (Kinney, 2018) for example bumping into a student's parent during the interview.

A weighty matter to consider in selecting walking interviews over other data collection methods was the teachers' available time. Allen and Sims (2018b, p.88) write, 'All teachers are busy people. So busy that it is almost impossible to get them to find time to respond to an online survey'. Therefore, asking experienced teachers to take two hours out of their already busy schedule played heavily on my conscious, and heightened my gratefulness towards the participants.

In summary, my love of walking and talking definitely guided me towards walking interviews, nonetheless it is a justifiable choice. The associated benefits of rapport building, the reduction of power imbalance between the interviewer and interviewee, the avoidance of surveillance and discovering Plymouth definitely outweighed the disadvantages of adverse weather, health issues, meeting acquaintances and the unwelcome advances of animals and golf balls!

#### **4.6 Sampling Technique**

Becker (2008, p.67) states that, 'sampling is a major problem for any kind of research,' he continues that 'we need the sample to persuade people that we know something about the whole class.' In agreement, Ishak, Bakar and Yazid (2014) argue that the primary purpose of sampling for a qualitative researcher is to collect specific cases, events, or actions that can clarify or deepen the researchers understanding about the phenomenon under study. In order to answer the research questions in this study, participants needed to be recruited and interviewed. Rapley (2014) strongly believes that the participant sampling technique is fundamental to the success of research. He proposes that it influences everything from the initial

questions asked about the phenomenon to the final presentation of the research. Its importance grows as qualitative researchers are generally working with relatively small numbers of participants, in this research 12 experienced primary school teachers, so he argues that the research participants should not be left to chance. Three types of sampling strategies are discussed in methodological literature: random, convenience, and purposive sampling.

Random sampling is typically used in a survey-type quantitative research and evidence suggests that random samples are superior to non-random ones. Schreier (2018) suggests that this superiority derives from its role in generating a representative sample. Denscombe (2014) suggest using a sampling frame to establish a clear random selection of experienced urban teachers, although this possibility was considered, this option was disregarded due to the cost of recruitment and time needed to administer this approach. In addition, Gobo (2004) does warn that a random sample does not always represent a group fairly and so researchers should be aware of this.

Convenience or ad hoc sampling is where participants are selected based on availability. This strategy is often criticised by researchers as it fails to produce a representative group of participants and doesn't take the goal of the study into account (Schreier, 2018). Robson (2011) refers to this as probably one of the most widely used and least satisfactory methods of sampling.

Finally, Robson (2011) offers purposive sampling as a way to select instances that are information rich as they are selected using the researcher's judgement, with a view to answering the research question. Purposive sampling is sometimes called homogeneous sampling, theoretical sampling, or sampling according to a qualitative

sampling guide. In this research, to ensure the participant's information would address the research questions, I selected purposive and criterion sampling (Coolican, 2013). The criteria selected for this study were that the teacher had to be working in an urban primary school for more than five years. It was very important to select teachers working in an urban environment, as context does matter. Given the cultural legacies of urban schools both here in the UK and the USA, context influences the teachers' experiences (Milner & Laughter, 2015). This may appear as a weakness of the study as it produces somewhat homogenous participants. However, this is precisely the group of teachers the research is designed to study.

The importance of sample size can be a contentious issue with some researchers arguing that it should not even be decided before the research starts but should adjust as the research unfolds (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015) or in some cases, sampling should only stop when including more cases does not contribute any new information about the concepts that have been developed (Bowen, 2008). Schreier (2018) writes that the extent of variation in the phenomenon under study and the research goal should be considered when deciding upon a suitable sample size. She recommends that the sample size should increase with the heterogeneity of the phenomenon and the breadth and generality of the conclusions aimed for. Schreier (2018) substantiated this view stating that because qualitative research has a holistic and in depth approach, a sample size may range from a single case study to a sample size of 20. Robson (2011) argues that the sample size is dependent on the research being undertaken and the quantity of data a single researcher can handle. So following generally accepted research guidelines in regard to qualitative research, 12 participants were selected (Baker, Edwards & Doidge, 2012).



In identifying potential research participants, I selected a range of urban primary schools, within a ten mile radius of Plymouth city centre. Having identified schools that fitted the specifications, I contacted them by telephone and letter inviting them to participate in the study. The letter was addressed to the head teacher as the gate keeper to the teachers. It needs to be noted here that by seeking the head teacher's approval the results of the study could be affected, as all the participants would be teachers whose head teacher had agreed to be involved in the research. Therefore, the head teachers' characteristics (e.g. confidence or openness) might have indirectly affected the nature of the data collected, and as a result teachers with low level of school trust or poor school culture may be under-represented.

In order to mitigate this influence I took the opportunity to recruit teachers in other ways, including word of mouth and presenting at a County SENCO meeting sometimes referred to as the snowball or network technique (Opie & Brown, 2019). It was important that the teachers fitted the criteria of having taught for more than five years in an urban primary school. It was equally important that the teachers chosen for the study were not all disgruntled with the education system and had already left, which is why the teachers chosen for the interviews still had to be employed in an urban primary school.

#### **4.7 The Pilot Study**

Robson (2011, p.185) defines a pilot study as a small scale version of the real thing, providing the researcher an opportunity to learn on the job. Many academics recommend the use of pilot studies to refine and develop research instruments, assess the degrees of observer bias, frame questions, collect background information and adapt research procedures (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2002; Sampson, 2004).

The interview questions, which had been directed and influenced by the literature review, were reviewed by two experienced researchers who provided input on the suitability of them and the questioning sequence. I edited several of the questions to encourage participation contribution and once satisfied that suitable data would be produced, pilot interviews were conducted to test run the proposed questionnaire and interview procedure. Feedback was sought and gaps were identified in the questions and refinements were made to the interview process and design to enable key emerging topics to be identified and significant supplementary themes to emerge. One of the hardest interviewing skills to master is remaining quiet while a participant is formulating a response. Barbour (2014b) notes that novice researchers can't tolerate silences and often rush in, using prompts too early, which compromises the data being collected.

On the initial time line for this project, I had the interviews taking place in September, October and November but the feedback from the pilot study was to start interviewing in the summer as experienced, urban teachers are at their busiest at the start of the school year and may be less willing to meet for an interview. As Bell, Wheeler and Phoenix (2017) highlighted, participants had to allow themselves to take an hour out of an otherwise busy day to go somewhere characterised by more relaxed temporal rhythms.

#### **4.8 Research Tools**

This section discusses the means of data collection used in this research. As semi structured interviews were the source of all data for this research, it was of the utmost importance to me that the data generated would answer the research questions. After the pilot study was fully completed and improvements made to the interview questions, teachers were emailed the research guidelines and criteria for

participation (see appendix 1&2), they were then invited to self-nominate to be interviewed.

Once a teacher had self-nominated to be a participant in the research, they also selected a pseudonym to protect their identity (Grinyer, 2009). We arranged a convenient time for the interview and a location at the teacher's place of choice. The interviews lasted on average 40 minutes to 1 and a half hours. Determining the place for conducting the interview was important as the teacher had to feel comfortable and safe (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), especially as they were being asked to participate in a walking interview (Castrodale, 2018). Not only the location but also the timing of the interview is important, as experienced, primary school teachers are incredibly busy and so in order to fit an interview in the researcher must be sensitive to time pressures (Riley & Holton, 2016). For example, in Mackay, Nelson and Perkin's (2018) study of rural tourism, tourist operators were unavailable for interview at the height of summer as they were too busy to accompany a researcher on a walking interview.

Barbour (2018) remarks that the form of the encounter, in this research a walking interview, may discourage certain potential participants from taking part and so by selecting this method of data collection some teachers may not volunteer to take part. This did not appear to be an issue as two teachers did volunteer who were unable to complete the full walking interview. I asked each teacher to read the consent form, and then gave an opportunity to the teacher to ask questions for clarification.

Next, the process, by which the data was generated, gathered, reduced, and recorded is clearly described. This included the systems used for keeping track of the data and emerging understandings.

- Consent was obtained to audio record the interview.
- Time was spent ensuring the participant fully understood the confidentiality nature of the research.
- The first few questions were to confirm that the participant fit the criteria established for this research and to collect demographic data. It also provided an opportunity to check the audio recorder was working and the participant was happy to continue.
- Subsequent questions were intended to solicit data from the participant regarding professional supports they received, or would like to receive from their head teacher, enabling rich qualitative data to be collected.
- After the interview had ended the participants were thanked.

During each interview, I took steps to ensure the comfort of the participant, checking in both verbally at the beginning of the interview and nonverbally throughout the walk. Carpiano (2009) argues that significant effort should be made to ensure the participant feels valued, respected and listened to. Finlay and Bowman (2017) argue that participants who have had little experience in being interviewed often looked for guidance on what is expected from them. None of the teachers had ever participated in walking research and so I provided reassurance. This involved some degree of co-construction between the researcher and participant (Bergeron, Paquette & Poullaouec-Gonidec, 2014) which required reciprocity, cooperation, respect and trust between the two parties (Castrodale, 2018).

Using NVIVO technology I uploaded the audio tapes to the secure Plymouth University server and then deleted them off the handheld recorder to ensure confidentiality. DiCicco - Bloom and Crabtree (2006) argue that recorded data is indisputable and so should be carefully guarded. I then transcribed and coded the interviews by assigning labels to significant information provided by the participants (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2013). Facione (1990) argues that critical thinking is an essential tool of inquiry, something that should be happening during the whole research process. Ennis (1985, p.152) describes critical thinking as 'reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do'. With this knowledge, throughout the whole research process, but especially during the data collection and findings analysis, there was a focus on thinking critically in both the questions asked and the interpretations made.

#### **4.9 Transcriptions**

Jenks (2018) describes a transcript as a record of social interaction or more importantly, a theoretical construct, as it reflects the researcher's unique interests and empirical goals. By transcribing an interview, researchers transform a social interaction into a permanent record of text which provides a transparent way of disseminating analytic observations and findings. Audio recordings are a major source of data in qualitative research and there is substantial literature about transcribing these recordings, including the very detailed transcripts used by some sociolinguists and the less detailed ones employed by other sorts of qualitative researcher, to matters of how much of the interview should be transcribed (Hammersley, 2010).

Hammersley (2010, p.20) warns that strict transcription of the words spoken does not guarantee the intended meaning of the words. Researchers have to *interpret* the

words and when doing so must be careful not to over-interpret what people say and their intentions. Jenks (2018) argues that the theories and practices that influence recording and transcription work are highly complex and inherently problematic. Many seminal studies (Hepburn & Bolden, 2017) use transcripts of social interaction and Jenks (2018) calls for the focus to be placed on how inextricably connected the process of the recording and transcribing is to the analytic process. Kennedy and Thornberg (2017) had previously suggested that researchers should consider this relationship between data collection and analysis, using either a linear-sequential approach, where the researcher first collects all the data and then start to analyse it, or in contrast, an iterative approach. DiCicco - Bloom and Crabtree (2006) argue that the ideal approach to qualitative data analysis is that the data collection occurs concurrently with analysis, enabling the researcher to generate an emerging understanding about the research and allowing insight into the sampling and research questions being posed.

The approach I selected for this research project was iterative as it allows for the researcher to move back and forth between data collection and analysis during the research process. By allowing this freedom I could change, adapt or add new data collection methods or questions to enhance the quality of the data collected and ensure that it addresses the initial research questions, following the principles outlined by Stake (1995). All interviews recorded for this research were transcribed by myself, not only to enable a critical eye over the whole process but by transcribing the interviews oneself, and not employing a transcription service, a distance was not created from the original data and I gained a better understanding of the data collected (Mann, 2016). Miles and Huberman (1994) defined this process as working towards a systematic process for examining, describing, summarising,

analysing/reconstructing the data to respond to the research questions. Or as Patton (2005) concludes, inductive analysis across the research which yields patterns and themes, the fruit of qualitative research.

Mann (2016) deems the production of a transcript as a significant step in the data analysis and Sabar (1990) highlights the importance that the transcripts from the interviews provide data which is of academic value, therefore, during the analysis of the data, I had the transcript and the audio recording side by side. Pomerantz and Fehr (1997) are advocates for side by side analysis as it is harder to isolate and study phenomena when only working with the audio recording and information can be lost if only working with the transcript. Arguably, when analysing data, it is important to remember that there are three versions of the meaning within the data: what the actual participant meant, what was recorded and finally the text that was transcribed. By analysing the data side by side, the findings should be the closest to the fullest and richest picture. MacLure (1993) highlights that sometimes what people say, may not be what they feel. She refers to participants seeking to represent their experiences as a coherent story that may not be the facts. Notwithstanding this, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) suggest listening to the entire interview and reading the transcription several times in order to provide a context for the emergence of meaning and themes and to gain a 'sense of the whole'. It was especially important to understand the walking interview as a whole, events that occurred during the walk, for example petting dogs or being scared by pigeons, could be heard in context alongside the spoken and recorded words.

#### **4.10 Qualitative Data Analysis**

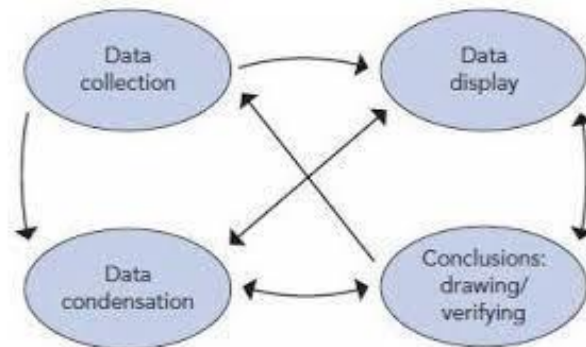
Qualitative data analysis is a complex multidimensional subject which Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p.2) deem that 'there is no single right way to analyse qualitative

data, it is essential to find ways of using the data to think with.' They remind researchers that there are a variety of qualitative data types, in fact, Saldana (2011) lists over 20, and hence there is a diversity of approaches which can be considered. It is therefore important for researchers to explore their data from a range of perspectives. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that transforming and interpreting qualitative data, in a rigorous and scholarly manner, which enables researchers to capture the complexities of the social world is the aim of data analysis.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p.145) present a practical approach to qualitative data analysis suggesting that researchers working with data should be 'organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others'. Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013) description of data analysis is not so linear. They describe it as three concurrent activities, starting with data condensation, leading to data display and finally drawing conclusions with verification. By selecting and focusing the data from the empirical materials, data can be 'condensed' into categories that sharpen and focus the data in a way that help conclusions to be verified. Display of this data can take many forms from extended text to graphs and matrices. They do warn researchers against using only extended text as it 'overloads a human's information-processing capabilities and preys on our tendencies to find simplifying patterns' (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2013, p.13). The whole process, as illustrated below, should be a continuous iterative enterprise.



**Figure 9: Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model**



Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994)

I transcribed the interviews using NVivo software promptly after the interviews had taken place and the data files were stored on a secured university network. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) warn that the reliance on computer assisted data analysis can cause the process of coding and analysis to be treated as synonymous. They are not against using computers as they see many benefits from the storage and retrieval of data, just not a computer's analysis ability. Considering this, once the transcription was completed, an initial read through allowed for the identification of analytic themes, I coded each interview to assist with the retrieval of textual data. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that many researchers stop there and although this is an important way to organize data and develop analytic ideas in their research, they themselves turn to narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008). They are not only interested in what people say and do but in how they express themselves. They concur with Silverman (2015, p.23) that, analysis is inseparable from writing up and from the process of theorising, stating that the process should be recurrent, pervasive feature of all qualitative research.

Robson (2011, p.167) argues that researchers should be well-trained and experienced investigators but understandably this cannot always be the situation.

Therefore researchers should have an open and enquiring mind, they should be good listeners, and they should also have a general sensitivity and responsiveness to contradictory evidence. With this in mind, I took steps to being organised and respectful in all communication with the teachers but also with the data captured from the interviews. By approaching the data professionally and with a critical independent mind set, alongside the knowledge that my prior experience as an experienced teacher may have bearing on my data analysis approach, I broke the findings down into themes. A thematic model approach to data analysis allows for patterns in the data to be presented. These patterns can be combined or placed in sub-themes to provide a comprehensive picture of the participant's collective experiences. Stemming from the research questions I noticed several themes emerged which can be supported by participants' statements, illustrating and verifying the emerging ideas. Each theme is addressed considering the prior knowledge gleaned from the literature review whilst acknowledging the interrelationship of issues. In addition to the thematic approach, the descriptive narrative model allows for detailed description of events, people and phenomena. I followed Braun and Clarke (2006) often cited step by step guide to thematic analysis. The first step was to become familiar with the data by listening to the audio recording. Then using Dragon voice software the verbal data was transcribed to text format. This was then followed by generating coded themes, before the data was written up for the thesis.

Silverman (2015) states the most popular approach to addressing participant's responses in interviews is by describing some as external reality (e.g. facts, events) or internal experiences (e.g. feelings, meanings). In order to ensure the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation given to the data, he suggests building in additional

devices, for example, summarising the content of the interview and gaining confirmation from the participant that this was indeed their opinions and feelings. I requested a haiku poem post interview. By confining the participant to 17 syllables I argue that the participant will pick the topic that resonated with them the most and that it might help identify important themes.

#### **4.11 Haiku**

Few poets would agree to an exact definition on what constitutes a haiku, however, Drifte and Jubb (2020) offers that the purpose of a haiku is to capture the moment and to share it; to try to get the reader to feel what you are feeling. All the participants in this study are primary school teachers and have most likely asked their own classes to write a haiku. In fact when I asked Kate if she would mind writing one, she immediately rolled her eyes and said, 'Oh my goodness this must be how my class must feel when I ask them to write one!'

Often referred to as the father of haiku, Bashó, said that 'haiku is a flash of insight. What is happening in this place, at this moment' (Wakan, 2019). By asking the participants to compose a haiku I was exploring if such a condensed format might allow the participants to express the singular most important aspect of their interview. An analysis of the poems can be found in chapter five.

#### **4.12 Rich Descriptive Data**

Methodological rich points are described in the literature as points that make salient the pressures and tensions between the practice of research and the changing scientific and social world (Hornberger, 2013). This sits in agreement with Agar (1996) who states that the rich points are the data that you should be focusing on. Sandel (2015) defines a rich point as some verbal or nonverbal expression of a

group or culture under study that, upon initial discovery, does not make sense to the researcher and requires translation for outsiders, for example, points during your practice that make you realise how complicated a phenomenon is. During the interviews I had with the experienced teachers, many facets of support were discussed and at first they appeared as independent points, I then realised how interconnected they actually were. I would offer that the following data provided many points that should be classified as 'rich' especially in regards to emotions that the participants experienced.

In Palmgren (2018) she noted a lack of discussion in mobile methodology on standing still in the middle of a walking interview. I hypothesise that during walking interviews a moment of stillness or a change in body position to enable eye contact to be made, may pre-empt a rich moment leading to rich data. Many qualitative researchers believe that rich descriptions of the social world are invaluable and provided that the research is conducted rigorously, the new knowledge should be quality knowledge which is robust and useful (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In order for the knowledge gained from this research to be valuable, it is important to consider the validity and reliability of the information.

#### **4.13 Validity and Reliability**

Gray (2013) writes that issues of research trustworthiness are of particular importance in qualitative research but especially in research where data generated is from a limited sample. Silverman (2019, p.89) states that, 'the two central concepts in the discussion of scientific research credibility are validity and reliability'.

Silverman uses Altheide and Johnson's (1994) definitions: validity represents the truthfulness of the findings, whereas reliability refers to the stability of the findings.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) had previously argued that if a piece of

research was invalid then it was worthless. They state that 'validity takes many forms but might be addressed through the honesty, depth, authenticity, richness, trustworthiness, dependability, credibility and scope of the data achieved and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher' (p. 246). Silverman (2019) adds that a researcher should strive for validity by basing their findings on critical investigation of all their data and not on a few well-chosen examples. The concept of reliability is also addressed by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.268) who state that 'reliability is essentially an umbrella term for dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents'. Moisander and Valtonen (2006) had previously suggested researchers could satisfy reliability criteria in qualitative work by making the research process transparent. By describing the research strategy and data analysis methods in a sufficiently detailed manner alongside making explicit the theoretical stance from which any interpretations are made, would then satisfy the credibility of the research. Silverman (2019) adds that in order to diminish the researchers' personal perspectives influencing the reporting of the data, all interviews should be recorded and then reported verbatim.

Of course, not all researchers agree on what constitutes valid and reliable research. Moisander and Valtonen (2006, p.26) conclude that ultimately, 'research is evaluated by the community of scholars who judge the interpretations that are produced'. Valid and reliable results appear to depend on a research project being of a high 'quality'.

#### **4.14 Quality Assurance**

The University of Plymouth recognises that good practice in research data management is integral to high quality research. By practicing open research, PhD students can demonstrate the value, rigour and integrity of their work (University of Plymouth, 2019). Neumann and Neumann (2015) state that the quality of data

produced by a research project is influenced by how well a researcher situates themselves in the field of study. They stress the importance of doing memory work both in the pre-field phase and during the project. They list the choice of research questions and how well the researcher knows her themes, as influences on the data quality. Data that answers the research questions that can be verified from field notes or transcripts, tends to lead to more trustworthy research findings. Barbour (2018) maintains that good quality data is not a matter of chance but a result of a skilled researcher who has a solid research design and the ability to successfully collect the data. She argues that many researchers have discussed the importance of 'quality' in qualitative research outputs, but few have focused on the quality of the data collected. She contends that this is only discussed if the research doesn't produce 'rich' data. Barbour (2018) argues that attention should be given to the researcher and their elicitation skills and that it is essential to take into account the purpose of the research. If the main research questions are always at the forefront of the researcher's mind, she argues that clarification can be encourage even while data is still being generated. By encouraging participants to contextualise their responses 'quality' data is more likely to be elicited. Further still, if research participants have enough scope to theorise, rich nuanced data is often the result. Ezzy (2010, p.163) describes good interviews as 'not dominated by either the voice of the interviewer or the agenda of the interviewee'.

Delamont (2016, p.4) argues that reflexivity lies at the heart of good qualitative research and that by recognizing human research always involves interactions and interpretations, then the researcher is her own very best data collection instrument. She adds that this is only the situation if the researcher's approach to her roles, actions, interactions, theoretical concepts, alongside her readings and writings are all

conducted in an honest, self-conscious way. Another method to ensure research validity is through clarifying researcher bias, for example, by acknowledging the subjective nature of my interest in experienced urban teachers and the existence of contact with other participants and colleagues in schools across Plymouth.

Markle, West and Rich (2011) argue that using audio technologies to collect and analyse data mitigates the loss of meaning and interpretation bias inherent in transcription. They advocate working directly with the original data, in this research recorded interviews, alongside the transcription to allow for greater accuracy and higher trustworthiness in the findings. By listening to the audio whilst reading the transcript, the role of context and inflection on speech are not lost, leading to increased authenticity of the research (Mehrabian, 1971). This is a clear methodological shift from traditional qualitative research which relied heavily on handwritten field notes. Nonetheless, field notes and reflections are still an important part of the process with the ability of adding depth to the research analysis (Gibbs, Friese & Mangabeira, 2002). The transcription process is often described as arduous and a chore as the cost-benefit ratio appears to be very poor (Agar, 1996; Loubere, 2017). Yet as previously noted, the benefits of transcribing one's own interviews ensures the researcher stays immersed in the data. Then by coding the actual data alongside the transcript, errors may be eliminated and misinterpretations avoided, as the researcher can accurately return to the original data during the process. I speculate that this is likely to improve the trustworthiness of qualitative data.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that by creating an audit trail and allowing peers to audit the researcher's analysis and findings, conclusions may also be justified. A challenge to using interviews, as the primary source of data, is that people sometimes represent themselves differently when being interviewed. Roulston

(2018) claims that no matter how skilled an interviewer or expert transcriber you are, if the participant is providing inaccurate data your results will be based upon this 'truth'. Jenks (2018) also highlights Labov's (1972) observer's paradox where a participant might talk or interact differently if they are fitted with a recording device. However, he suggests that if the researcher is cognisant of this, the benefits of recording a participant outweighs the negatives of not recording the interview. Holton (2019) puts the idea forward that digital technologies e.g. smart phones, have become a ubiquitous part of everyday walking practices. This familiarity with technology should also mitigate any deficits of a participant being recorded.

Emmel *et al.* (2007) argue that in order for the data and findings to truly reflect the participants' experience, it is of the utmost importance that a trust relationship be formed between the participant and the researcher. Boruch and Cecil (1979) argue that the researcher has a responsibility to reassure the participant regarding the confidentiality of the study. By using pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality, trust relationships are often reinforced.

DiCicco - Bloom and Crabtree (2006) maintain that establishing rapport is an essential component of an interview and that the interviewer must quickly develop a positive relationship to have a successful interview. King and Horrocks (2010) agree, listing rapport, or gaining the trust of the participant, as the key ingredient in successful qualitative interviewing. Stages of rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee have been described by Spradley (2003). He includes the following stages starting with apprehension from the participant stemming from the strangeness of the situation, leading to, exploration where the interviewee may become engaged in an in-depth description, and hopefully concluding with co-operation and full participation. My experience and knowledge of being a primary



school teacher provided me with the 'language and culture specific to the community of experience', helping me to build trust and a rapport with each participant (Mears, 2009, p.98). Alongside the added benefits of walking interviews, participants may be fast tracked through the stages of rapport building. As in Burn's (2019) research, simply by being together in a space, which the participant has chosen, contributed to an increase in the rapport between researcher and participant.

However, Duncombe and Jessop (2002) warn against 'doing rapport' and highlight the ethic of 'faking friendship' with the purpose of persuading interviewees to provide us with data for our research. This warning from Duncombe and Jessop leads us nicely into a discussion of qualitative research ethics.

#### **4.15 Ethics**

Hammersley and Traianou (2012) conclude that researchers hold sharply conflicting views on research ethics and the controversies these raise in relation to the research intention and consequences. In order to help guide us, as each researcher has a different perspective in regards to what they are responsible for and to whom they are responsible, Morrow (2008, p.51) offers that 'ethics' can be defined as a 'set of principles and rules of conduct'. She argues that ethics in research should refer to 'the application of a system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging another, to promote the good, to be respectful, and to be fair'.

The aim of educational research is to extend knowledge and understanding in all areas of educational activity. This includes making generalisations from research performed for the good of others, whilst considering the perspectives of learners, educators, policy makers and the general public. In fact, Hammersley and Traianou (2012) argue that pursuing valid answers, to worthwhile questions, should be a

researcher's primary obligation. Researchers are often responsible for ethics and the protection of those who volunteer to take part in the research (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018). With this knowledge, educational research students should receive training in research ethics (Universities, 2012) and Mesner (2016) highlights the need for all researchers to be ethically literate. The British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) publishes guidelines with five underpinning principles. Firstly, social science is fundamental to a democratic society and should be inclusive of different interests, values, funders, methods and perspectives. All social science should respect the privacy, autonomy, diversity, values and dignity of individuals, groups and communities. Research should be conducted with integrity and researchers should act with regard to their social responsibilities whilst conducting and disseminating the research. Finally, BERA believes that educational researchers should operate within an ethic of respect for any person, involved or touched by the research being undertaken. The aim of the research should always be to maximise the benefit, whilst avoiding harm to those participants.

#### **4.15.1 Avoiding Harm to Participants**

Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001) deem that every action, from how a researcher gains access to the participants to how the data collected is analysed must be considered as it has ethical implications. Mertens (2018) asserts that it is critically important that researchers conduct themselves in an ethical manner, demonstrating good character, especially during data collection as this usually involves working closely with participants. Ethical behaviour has been defined as being trustworthy and acting with wisdom, honesty and courage, also, 'one should never exploit people, but treat them as intrinsically valuable' (Kitchener & Kitchener,

2009, p.18). To encourage the researcher's responsibility to their participants, both BERA (2018) and Flick (2018) lists research ethics, informed consent and a review by the ethics committee as all important aspects of the research process – from the planning of the project through conduct to reporting. Roulston (2018) argues that a researcher must gain permission from the review board before conducting any interviews as there are strict regulations concerning research with human subjects.

In most research, ethical issues are present. However, Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001) conclude that by the application of appropriate ethical principles harm can be reduced or prevented, which should be the aim of every researcher. Acknowledging Carpiano's (2009) argument, that concepts of relationships and power between researchers and participants are rooted in qualitative research, the use of walking interviews may help negate this imbalance. However, Chouinard (2000) notes that it is important for the researcher to be aware of their own positionality and the privileges and ethical obligations associated with it. For example, I love to walk and have no health issues but that may not be the circumstances for each participant.

Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001) argue that researchers have the responsibility to anticipate the possible outcomes of an interview and to consider both positive and negative consequences. For example, in this study, the interview questions may trigger emotional memories of a time when a teacher was not supported in their professional lives. Yet, in defence of interviews, Smith (1999) describes the potential therapeutic benefits of participants sharing these emotional memories. Similarly in support of interviews, Hutchinson, Wilson and Wilson (1994) identified the benefits of qualitative interviews as catharsis.

DiCicco - Bloom and Crabtree (2006) argue that the researcher should consider four ethical issues when planning the interview process. Firstly, the researcher should reduce the risk of unanticipated harm. Using the previous example of emotional memories being triggered, an interviewer should be highly attentive to a participant's body language during the questioning. Secondly, the researcher should reduce the risk of exploitation of the participant, alongside acknowledging that their contributions leads to the success of the research, without them there would be no data collected. Next, the researcher should ensure that the interviewee is clear regarding the nature of the study by providing information sheets and an opportunity to seek clarification. Finally, the researcher should protect the interviewee's information by securing it appropriately, anonymising it and ensuring the information is protected from those whose interests conflict with the interviewee's. Crawford (2018a) has also highlighted the need for the researcher to consider privacy and confidentiality when making methodological decisions.

Clark and Emmel (2010) do raise an important ethical issue in relation to walking interviews that the participant may be seen in the company of a researcher. I felt that this only applied to the teachers recruited from the staff meeting, as all other participants signed up from word of mouth or from a general conference presentation, and no head teachers or colleagues attended, so few would know that I was a researcher. However, in Kinney's (2018, p.182) *Walking Interview Ethics*, she highlights the awkward situation of bumping into someone who knows the participant regardless of knowing that they are being interviewed. This did occur whilst walking with John. He told me afterwards that this was a parent of one of his students. I immediately felt incredibly guilty that John had been seen walking through Plymouth on a Friday afternoon 'chatting' instead of being at his own school teaching. He

reassured me that his head teacher wouldn't bat an eye lid if she knew he was being interviewed - so long as his lesson plans were in on Monday!

Kinney (2018) adds that the safety of both the participant and researcher must also be addressed, especially as the walking interviews were conducted in the public space. By allowing the participant to select the location and time of the interview, this risk was mitigated. However Burns *et al.* (2019) do warn that there should be guidelines or a protocol in place to ensure the safety of both the researcher and the participant before the interview, whilst still being cognisant of confidentiality. Safety strategies such as being equipped with a mobile phone, maintaining visibility to others, and notifying research colleagues of one's whereabouts, are all suggested in a frequently cited researcher safety protocol from Paterson, Gregory and Thorne (1999).

#### **4.15.2 Protection of Data**

DiCicco - Bloom and Crabtree (2006) argue that protecting the participant's information must be seriously considered whilst Crawford (2018a) writes that researchers have a duty to comply with the legal requirements in relation to the storage and use of personal data. Since May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) states citizens are entitled to know how and why their personal data is being stored. The GDPR (Council, 2018, p.1) defines personal data as 'any information relating to an identified or identifiable person'. Any data that could be attributed to a specific individual participant was omitted from the final report to avoid an individual being identified, for example, one participant used her school motto in the haiku. To avoid the school from being identified, this haiku was omitted.

Researchers must have the participants' explicit permission to share their personal information and ensure that the data shared is kept securely. In order to address this, all participants selected, were given a pseudonym and their transcribed interviews were kept on Plymouth University's secure network. With a steady growth in the digital data sharing movement, Mauthner (2012, p.157-173) writes that data sharing may be perceived as 'good science' and 'good research practice' as it increases transparency and allows other researchers to verify data. As researchers she argues that we have a responsibility for the methods we choose and subsequently use, and that we should not be lulled into a false sense of security over our ethical and moral responsibilities, just because we have completed ethical review forms and had them approved by review boards.

BERA (2018) argues that educational researchers should communicate their findings in clear straightforward language, ensuring that the practical significance of the research is presented whether it be positive or negative. Finally, BERA deems that researchers' have a responsibility to make their results public, for the benefit of all. In acknowledgment of this, the final report from this study, will be made available to all the participants and uploaded to the Plymouth University thesis repository PEARL.

#### **4.15.3 Other Ethical Implications**

During one of the walking interviews a participant took a tissue out of her pocket and unintentionally unplugged the microphone from the recorder, which resulted in only the first seven minutes of the interview being recorder. Immediately upon discovery I made copious field notes, retracing our walk in my mind and writing down everything I could remember. Losing this valuable data was sickening and I didn't have the heart to tell the participant at the time. Without considering ethics I immediately

asked for a second walk to get more details on several interesting topics that had arisen during the initial interview. I didn't consider the ethical implications of this or if I should then interview the other eleven teachers a second time. It was only when I was presenting my research to students on a Masters course, they challenged me asking if it was ethical to use the transcript from the second interview. In my mind I was taking mitigating action to not lose this valuable data. However, on reflection my original ethical approval had not provided for a second interview. At this point I sought advice from a professor. Should I use the transcription from the second interview or only use field notes or should I go ahead and request second walking interviews with the other eleven participants? My decision was swayed by the knowledge that these teachers are incredibly busy. When I had requested to meet them for a photo shoot to enter an 'Images of Research' competition, only two of the original twelve had time. I concluded that I would use the transcript from the second interview and I would not request a second interview with the other eleven participants.

#### **4.16 Summary**

Chapter 2 had previously established that a school leader's action could have the largest influence on an experienced teacher's professional life. Chapter 3 established that experience teachers are often viewed as more effective teachers than NQTs and often bring additional benefits to a school environment. This chapter detailed the research approach taken to investigate how experienced primary teachers could be supported in their professional lives. The research questions were the corner stones of the interviews. Nevertheless, by structuring the interviews around them there was space for participants and researcher to deviate and address other issues that arose. The walking interview method was presented in-depth,

taking all consideration into account, the benefits of walking over sedentary interviews was justified with the production of qualitative data.

Next, the discussion focused on the sampling and recruitment of the participants, justifying the criterion approach in recruiting urban teachers who had been in the classroom for more than five years. The chapter continued with the procedure followed, describing the pilot study and then the steps taken to generate and record data. Finally, the chapter concluded with a look at ways to analyse qualitative data and how to ensure that a quality research project includes adhering to ethical guidelines. As, Delamont (2016, p.2) tells us, just discovering things is not enough: the findings must be written up and eventually presented successful to an audience. The next chapter begins to look at the data in more depth.



## Chapter Five – Uncovering and Understanding the Data Collected

*'Anticipation*

*Memories, forgotten, back*

*Now focussed forward'*

*Carl*

### 5.1 Introduction

In order to answer the research questions, chapter five presents the findings from the twelve interviews undertaken with experienced primary school teachers currently working in an urban environment. Presented is a summary of the statistical characteristic of the participants; name, years teaching, current role, and their relationship with their head teacher or senior leadership team. The data from the interviews is then organised around emerging themes and participants' extracts illustrate the themes. Following is a reminder of the research questions and a list of the participants.

### 5.2 Research Questions and List of Participants

**Main Research Question:** How can experienced primary teachers in urban settings be supported in their professional lives?

**Sub Research Questions:**

- What does the current literature say about this?
- What kinds of support do teacher's value?
- What can more senior staff do to support teachers in their professional lives?
- What can be learnt from the teachers themselves?

**Table 3: List of Participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Years Teaching</b>	<b>Current role</b>	<b>Relationship with SLT</b>
Carolyn	5	Classroom teacher with SLT responsibilities	Good
Rebecca	5	FT teacher, leaving for maternity, returning part time	Poor
Millie	6	Classroom teacher with SLT responsibilities	Good
John	9	0.8 classroom teacher	Good
Cathi	10	0.8 classroom teacher	Good
Jenna	10	Classroom teacher with SLT responsibilities	Good
Victoria	18	Full time but working part time due to her health	Poor
Karen	20+	Part time teacher responsible for all PPA in the school	Poor
Carl	20+	Full time PPA teacher with a research responsibility	Good
Donna	20+	Full time SENCO with SLT responsibilities	Good
Barbara	20+	Part time classroom teacher	Good
Kate	20+	Classroom teacher with SLT responsibilities	Good

At this stage of the thesis, it is important to see how the data gathered will help answer the main research question, in addition, what insights can be gained from

this particular context. The data analysis should provide insights into supports that teachers value, how leaders can support teachers in their professional lives and shed light on possible solutions to England's teacher challenge.

### **5.3 Analysing the data**

Hammersley (2010, p.21) reminds us that it is important to consider how 'extracts' from the transcribed data is presented in a thesis. An awareness of the audience and the purpose of the thesis should be considered, with a concerted effort made to ensure that the evidence is presented clearly to that audience. It is important that the data collected and analysed leads to a deeper understanding of experienced primary school teachers working in an urban context.

Once the interviews had been conducted and the voice recordings transcribed, each participant's data was analysed by reading the transcripts and identifying multiple themes. During the initial read through many topics were identified and assigned labels. On subsequent reads the themes were then prioritised for relevance to the research questions. By using Nvivo technology, codes were attributed to appropriate text, highlighting and organising the emerging themes. These themes were then clustered together and the data exported to a word document in order to evaluate the breadth and depth of the qualitative research.

Following is an extract from one of the transcribed interviews. In the right hand column are an initial list of themes that have been identified during the analysis.

**Table 4: An example of the data analysis**

Line	Transcript	Theme
51	I just think it is a waste of time, the things I do I would do anyway, it just seems onerous that we have to justify ourselves all the time beyond the classroom	Work load, accountability, professionalism, trust
63	a little threat over me and from that point onwards I was very guarded and I'm still guarded with him, I keep my distance, it is a strange relationship	Trust and relationships
72	(I had to) raise the standard of ICT in the school and I had to do training every term, introduce new things - it was a time when computer suites were just coming into schools so it was a really really difficult time, it was really hard and he applied so much pressure	Work load, curriculum knowledge and relationships
97	it's good to talk and that is the thing about teaching you are very isolated because once you get into that classroom and shut the door, unless you have support	Supports
146	I'm frustrated at the profession. Parents see teachers as extra-curricular child care providers. So, you get paid for the hours you do, but so many teachers will do a club after school and it is an expectation - an expectation with children and the parents that teachers will provide their time free of charge, whereas if you were to ask a doctor or a solicitor to do that, what would the fee be? – So I get really frustrated, I just think to myself, you should not have that expectation of us	Profession, work load, and relationships
168	every opportunity there has been to employ new staff you know for certain that it is going to be someone who is cheap, so they don't necessarily go for the best candidate they go for the best candidate of the cheap candidates	Experienced teacher fears
216	I was fearful that I would lose my job because they have lost TAs and I know I am expendable they don't have to employ a teacher as expensive. I could be up to £17,000 more than a NQT, doing the same role.	
203	because I was getting married and he asked me to move year groups and I said I will gladly move into 5/6 next year but not this year, I just need to get married and my parents are moving down, I was helping renovate their house - all my personal needs, there was no balance there, and they wanted me to team lead as well, I need to stay in my year group, it was 'no we want you in there' it was a complete lack of consideration for me over what they thought I could provide.	Work life balance, class assignment, experienced teacher and relationships

## 5.4 Key Themes

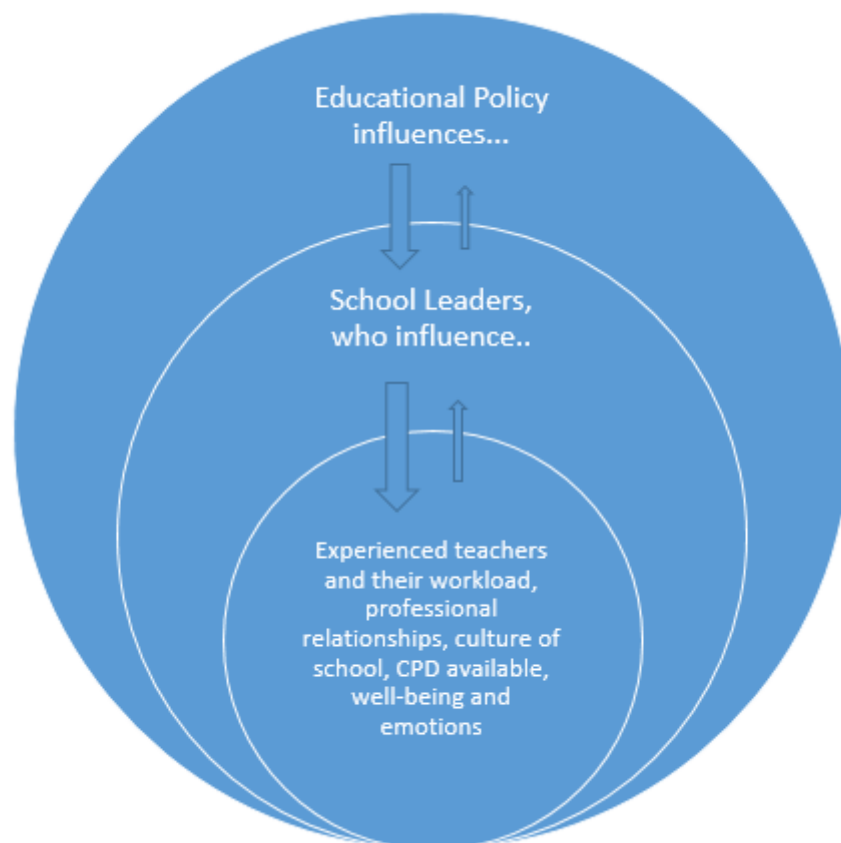
Concerned with identifying key features of the participants' responses that occurred during the walking interviews, the analysis of the data started on the surface during the initial transcribing process before drilling down on subsequent readings of the transcriptions. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) state that the move from coding to interpretation is a *crucial* one. Silverman (2015) also argues that because qualitative analysis uses words and not numbers, researchers have to show how the elements have been identified. He argues that coding your data according to a theoretical scheme should only be the first stage of analysis. Next lateral thinking should be applied to examine how the elements selected are linked together. He continues, that by steadily narrowing the focus you achieve better data analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to this as data reduction, the process of selecting and focusing 'raw data' and deciding which data chunks will be focused upon. For example, Victoria's head teacher locking the office door or having favourite teachers can sit under the theme of trust. Following is a list of themes that emerged from the raw data;

- the significant impact **leadership** has on an experienced teacher's professional experience both positively and negatively,
- the importance of appropriate, career specific, **professional development** for experienced teachers,
- the importance of a supportive **culture**, including the relationships you have with your colleagues and SLT,
- the issue of **trust** in schools and the perceived work load burden,
- the impact of government **policy** and Ofsted,

- the additional responsibilities and weight of being the **experienced teacher**,

Professional supports for experienced teachers can take many forms and what is noteworthy is how highly interlinked they are. The following figure represents this interrelationship. Well-being, workload, colleague relationships, professional development and emotions are all themes that emerged during the walking interviews; they all sit within the experienced teacher's professional life. Without exception, the school leader influenced every theme, yet ultimately, educational policy guides a leader's decision-making process.

**Figure 10: Interrelationship of themes**



For example, to satisfy Ofsted, a leader requires that all teachers keep detailed assessment records, resulting in an increased workload for the teacher.

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Actions leaders may take...</b>	<b>Teacher might experience...</b>
Ofsted	Introduce additional assessment records or new tracking software	Increased workload levels Professional Development on software not the teacher's choice Frustration at box ticking exercises Less time to prepare and teach lesson content Reduced well-being
SATS	Assign specific teacher to year 6	Frustration for teacher Narrowing of curriculum taught Professional development only available in Maths and English not the teacher's choice Reduced well-being
Budget cut	Hire only NQTs or remove all teaching assistants	Fear of job security Increased workload Reduced well-being

These interrelated themes are now presented in detail under separate headings starting with leadership, professional development, culture, colleagues, trust, accountability, workload, the teaching profession and teacher well-being. This section will end with emotions associated with being an experienced teacher.

### 5.4.1 Leadership

The data collected in this qualitative research study demonstrates that the head teacher of a school exercises a great deal of power and influence over their teachers in their school. This influence can take many forms, from the distribution of teaching assignments to the allocation of plan, prepare and assess time (PPA) to most importantly how the school culture evolves (Day, Gu & Sammons, 2016).

All twelve participants acknowledge that leadership influences their professional experience, especially in relation to supports they are receiving or not receiving. Research such as Levin and Bradley (2019) and Riley (2017) shows that leadership can impact a teachers' ability to do their job effectively and has a powerful influence on a teacher's overall well-being. The decisions that leaders make often dictates whether a teacher feels supported or not. A leader's actions, how they think, act and reflect, can maintain a positive school climate, motivate school staff, enhance teachers' practice and create a place where both staff and students have a sense of belonging. With a high degree of certainty, it can be said that leaders play a major role in retaining experienced teachers.

All but one participant had experience of working for several different head teachers during their own careers. These experiences enabled the participants to compare and contrast leadership styles and pinpoint occasions when they felt support or not. Participants talked about many styles of leadership from Carl's description of his first head teacher, which appears to fit an authoritarian style:

*'the first head teacher I had, he was very military, like a sergeant major.... he literally opened the door and threw me in and said, you know, they [the students] will teach you how to teach lad off you go! (Carl: 34-39)*



to Barbara's description of her best head teacher who leads from his heart:

*'[he] was at the school entrance every morning, greeting each teacher, not judging but assessing – does a teacher need an extra teaching assistant today or their playground duty covered?' (Barbara: 72-73)*

And John when he describes his current head as an inspirational leader:

*'she is very savvy and knows what to do, so I think all the members of staff, even though they work hard, know that she is working harder...it makes a big difference when your leader is leading by example (John: 127-129). He continues 'she is very fair..and has high expectations for both staff and children.'* (John: 346-348)

Barbara also talked about the benefits of working for head teachers who had different leadership styles:

*'I have worked with many head teachers or for many head teachers depending on what their style is and I have been able to take the best bits and the worst bits and make my own decision which I think has made me very reflective teacher.'* (Barbara: 21-24)

Several participants discussed the importance of the head teacher style which encouraged an open door policy. Cathi stated that:

*'our senior leaders are very open, I know that if I ever needed anything in any way shape or form I could just knock on the door.'* (Cathi: 72-73)

In contrast, Victoria talks about the effect that her head teacher's closed door policy, with the use of 'do not disturb' sign along with the recent instalment of locks on his door have made her and her colleagues feel like he doesn't trust them:

*'that is because we all can't be trusted since GDPR he might have something sensitive on his desk, that people shouldn't see. And I said you don't trust your own staff, interesting. But that is the sort of atmosphere he creates and the sort of thing he does.'* (Victoria: 220)

Research shows that a leader's style will often influence how a leader handles a situation in a school. Their reactions and actions can produce completely different outcomes and feelings for those teachers involved.

Presented below is an example of how a leader's actions can influence experienced teachers. All leaders and senior leadership teams are expected to complete classroom observations, following are two different approaches to how classroom observations can impact a teacher. It can be seen from these extracts that the leaders decision on how to implement classroom observations can make a teacher feel supported or not.

Two participants work at the same school and their description of classroom observations were consistent with each other:

*'...we have something called a phase review, so we replaced teacher observation and so now it is a phase, the whole early years, the whole leadership team will come down for one day, a term, and spend the whole day with you. Observing, but it doesn't feel threatening like a one hour observation would, because it's very casual they are just there with the children (and) are joining in and then they give you a list of targets and they are your targets to work on for the next term and that has been really positive this year.'* (Carolyn: 132-137)

*'the senior management team come and spend time, a day, three times a year, and they immerse themselves, so it is very strong and very powerful.'* (Carl: 145-146)

In contrast, Rebecca's leadership team have recently made the decision to increase the number of observations per year, from three hourly visits to six half hourly visits. She described observations as '*threatening*' and '*I don't think they are supportive in any way shape or form*' (Rebecca: 40-41). Not only has the number of visits increased but also the window of time for a potential visit is ambiguous, causing

additional stress as expressed here again when Rebecca describes a lesson observation aimed at differentiation:

*'but they [SLT] might come in the plenary of the lesson, when yes, you can differentiate by questioning but really you have not just witnessed the whole of my lesson in which you told me to differentiate. So, I really made sure (to go) above and beyond that my lesson is like that, or questioning and then they come in the main bit, well you missed my input, where I smashed the questioning section and you [SLT] weren't there.'* (Rebecca: 59-63)

From the following statement it can be seen that even though Rebecca is doing well in her observations, she still sees them as a threat and unsupportive:

*'I think most people when they get observed, even if it was glowing ' that was really great lesson' there is always the threat of if it isn't a great lesson what happens? I have seen lots of colleagues go on support plans and kind of be dismissed. It is always there, like at the minute these observations are going well, while I'm liked, and that is good, but it is quite threatening, I feel.'* (Rebecca: 49-52)

Carl has also had experience of observations being negative but this time from the role of being a new head teacher in a school that needed improvement:

*'I tended to steer away for observations because the teachers panicked, they were petrified of being watched because that was how they had been ruled and conquered and divided by and controlled by the head that had gone and left prior to me. So I did something completely different, I got them to observe themselves and I gave them a standard form and I would do one a year. I would do the official business as well but they knew very well that was not taken seriously what I wanted to know was they thought about their own teaching. And I tell you something, they were more honest and they told me stuff that I would never have seen, had I been in the classroom observing.'* (Carl: 96-103)

This data shows that classroom observations can be seen as a support, or a threat, to teachers merely by the way the leader of a school decides to initiate them. Carl and Carolyn referred to classroom observations as a positive, supporting day working with the senior leadership team, with the aim of helping them grow in their

own professional practice. On the other hand, Rebecca's leadership team used classroom observations as an opportunity to keep their teachers on their toes. Staff were unsure when they were going to be observed and what they would be assessed on. This uncertainty created a feeling of mistrust and a stressful experience for many of the teachers within her school.

For many participants a supportive head teacher was one that knew them on a personal level and did not ask them to do anything that made them feel like they were harming either their relationships with other colleagues or their students. This reflects the research by Santoro (2018) who documented the stress teachers experienced when they cause students distress by following school policies and procedures which might compromise their own professional ethics.

Victoria felt supported by one head teacher who often filtered some of the government initiatives:

*'The government pushes out directives every five minutes, you all have to do this you all have to do that. For example you all have to do the literacy hour, and our head teacher looked at it and said we are not doing the literacy hour, that is not proven in research we know that what we do works for our children. So we didn't do it, and we stuck to what we knew worked. The deep marking, he said we are not doing that, our children don't read the feedback, we don't need different coloured pens, and we are not doing that. It has proven that it is not going to make a huge difference it's just someone's idea that it might. And he was just really reasonable about these things and that's what made a lovely place to work.'* (Victoria: 83-89)

Another example of supportive behaviour was Carl's experience of positive relationship building with one of his head teacher:

*'he always defended the staff, they could not be wrong with parents they could not be wrong with the other staff. If there was a problem he would sort it and it was nobody else's business and you knew that was far as it went.'* (Carl: 65-68)

Barbara agrees with Carl in what creates a good relationship between teachers and their head teachers:

*'I think it is, being there for staff and knowing them so recognising if they have walked in that morning if they don't feel themselves...'(Barbara: 55-56)*

Donna was the most positive participant regarding support that she had received during her teaching career. Starting in her newly qualified teaching year:

*'[the school's] NQT package was massive, I don't know if it has changed, but I know the package that NQT's get now isn't anywhere as good as I had, I was really really fortunate and I think because I had that amazing support, not just from the school I was in, from the local authority I had the best possible start. And also there were two others in the school the same time, so I had the best possible start I think because I had others around me who are going through [the] same thing.... I had a mentoring programme as well, so it wasn't just the external support, this was support within the school and that was really key. (Donna: 46-56)*

Donna attributes her success in education to this supportive environment and so has initiated a peer mentoring scheme in her current school. An extended extract from the transcript illustrates this:

*'I'm one of the few people who you will interview who has an amazing deputy head and head teacher above me, who really get it, they get my workload, because mine is a new post they devised it and taken two people's jobs, because of financial restraints and made them into one. So they realise the enormity of it. They have allowed me or given me a free range to do the things in the way I want within my vision' (Donna: 124-129).*

*'...just as an example, on Friday I had an absolutely horrific child protection issue and both of them were out, so I had to manage it all by myself, both of them phoned over the weekend to check how I was and thank me for dealing with it in the way that I had, but separately, neither of them knew the other had phoned, I just think that general check-in and then they came in the office yesterday just to do another check- which is brilliant' (Donna: 143-148)*

*'I get loads of support from both of them. I know how fortunate I am, because I know that lots of people in my role are constantly fighting against leadership... because of the relationship I have with them I'm confident enough to say actually, come on, I need a bit more help.' (Donna: 158-161)*

In contrast Kate talks about a time when she felt unsupported by her head teacher:

*'I can think of one time when a child in my class was ill, he looked really ill, his face was very pale and so I gave it a couple of hours and then phoned up his mum asking for her to come and pick him up. She came to the school and I went downstairs with the child and she went absolutely ballistic, said there was nothing wrong with him and I was wasting her time. She basically squared up to me and I thought this one is going to hit me and I could see in the office the head teacher was watching but didn't do anything and it was only when the educational welfare officer happened to come in, he got in between her and me and ushered her out and I felt then, had he not come I was literally there on my own. Speaking to the administrator about it afterwards she was just disgusted with the head teacher because she said she was actually crouching down in the office pretending to get something out of a tray, she was listening to it all but did nothing and I found that really difficult, I just felt completely unsupported in that instant.'* (Kate: 234-244)

This incident undoubtedly has had a negative impact on Kate for her to remember it so clearly 15 years later. The negative impact was not only felt by Kate but also her colleagues. Her administrator and the educational welfare officer both had to intervene and support Kate as her head teacher did not. This one incident created a long term barrier between Kate and her head teacher.

An additional area of concern is the quality of leaders that participants were experiencing. Many stated that their head teacher did not have the capacity or skills to adequately support them. A third of the participants in this study had an extremely poor relationship with their head teacher, and the other participants alluded to the fact that their head teacher did not have the time or capacity to fully support their individual needs.

When asking Jenna what she would like from an ideal head teacher she sums it up in the following:

*'I guess, you feel unfair saying it, because you know that person doesn't have the capacity to do it in their daily job, but ideally any head teacher to have the time to think about what different staff members need...'* (Jenna: 199-201).

However, there is hope, John who left teaching once only returned because his current head teacher twisted his arm and showed him a school culture that he could engage with. He truly feels that she is one of the best head teachers around. He states that he is thoroughly enjoying himself because the head teacher has seen his skills and he has been given roles that he is really happy with, especially around his love of outdoor learning. He feels that she is looking out for him and not just the school. He says she sees his strengths and supports his development, by allowing him to work four days in the classroom and have half a day planning, preparation and assessment alongside an additional half day to work on his masters, he stays engaged and excited about the work. He might appear a little cynical when he does say that:

*'she doesn't want you to burnout because if you burnout now she will have to get another member of staff!' (John: 137-138).*

The only other person who said that they really love all aspects of their work is Karen who works part time in a role covering PPA for other classroom teachers;

*'speaking to other teachers who are classroom based teacher - I am happy in my job - I'm happy - but they are not - nobody - none of them - every time I speak to them the fulltime classroom teachers are not happy and I have to be very careful not to be overly joyful in my role' (Karen: 235-238).*

Experienced teachers really needed leaders to demonstrate good leadership qualities and competencies. They wanted their leaders to be honest, to demonstrate passion and commitment to the school and the students, to be a good communicator and accountable for their actions. They also wanted their leaders to defend them in front of parents and appreciate that they have their own lives outside of school and sometimes their home life will impact upon their professional life.

This research suggests that experienced primary school teachers are supported in their professional lives in countless different ways. The two main categories are support from the school leader or leadership team and support from school colleagues. Support from the leader was by far the most significant as it covered many topics. The leader influences whether a teacher receives appropriate professional development, which class they were assigned, what curriculum they were to follow, whereas colleague support was less formal and took the form of being there and understanding the teacher's frustrations.

Barbara sums it up when she says: '*Ultimately, it is all about feeling valued and supported!*' (Barbara: 75)

These data clearly reflects the current research in leadership education. Leaders have a huge influence over experienced teachers' professional lives and whether they feel supported or not. Leaders are all individuals, hence they have different leadership styles and competencies. Many head teachers straddle two or more 'labels' depending on the day/the situation/ and the teacher who the interaction is with. Different styles result in leaders approaching situations within a school environment uniquely, often with unexpected consequences on whether a teacher feels supported or not. What can be seen clearly in these extracts is that experienced teachers want to be valued, respected and supported in their professional lives by their leaders and the leadership team. These supports can take many forms, for example access to appropriate professional development.

#### **5.4.2 Professional Development**

Van Driel, *et al* (2012) define professional development as the procedures and activities designed to consolidate teacher professional knowledge, skills, and



attitudes in order to further improve student learning. This can take many forms including observing other teachers, mentoring, conferences, courses and workshops. However, for professional development to have a positive impact it must be high quality, relevant to the needs of that individual teacher, and there must be pedagogical support both in the short and long term. Throughout the interviews it became apparent that each teacher's experience of professional development was unique, even if they taught in the same school. Many of the participants alluded to the fact that professional development could be seen as a perk. Much depended on a teacher's relationship with the school's leadership team and their role in the school on whether they would get any career professional development (CPD). Karen summed it by:

*'it depends on who you speak to and it also depends on the strength of your character, for example, if I wanted it, I would probably get it, but if you are a younger colleague, who maybe is not so confident, it may pass you by.'*  
(Karen: 135-137)

Carolyn also agreed with Karen that professional development is given to the people who ask, she says she has been lucky and has been given every CPD that she has ever asked for but has noticed that not everyone receives the same deal.

Carolyn describes how she struggled as a newly qualified teacher and it is only because of the support from her head teacher and the additional structures he put in place, that she is now an outstanding teacher. This support framework was specifically for Carolyn and was a long term commitment, two essential components of successful professional development.

During Carl's interview he talked about the changes in professional development he has experienced over the years:

*'time has moved on, the structure has become formalised and now we have an immense system of CPD, it is quite rigorous [in our school] – we work on projects that will make a difference, in terms of pupil outcomes and unique to us....it's about fostering a passion to find out more about what you are doing and how you can make it better.'* (Carl: 142-144)

Cathi, who works at the same school as Carl, finds this internalised CDP as a cheap alternative and would rather have the opportunity to get out of her school and observe others teaching:

*'what I think makes a difference is seeing really good quality teachers teaching in a school that is similar to yours.'* (Cathi: 250-252)

Millie agrees stating that: *'my best CPD is going to observe other teachers, it's like oh my goodness there are some amazing teachers in my school'*. Due to budgetary restrictions, she also has had very little outside training, with the exception of a mandatory training course based around safeguarding.

Kate also mentioned the only CPD she received was because her school's SATs results in English were poor and so as a year 6 teacher she was encouraged to attend an external training course. The school did pay for the course but only because they asked her to attend. She mentioned that they wouldn't have paid if it had been a course of her choice.

Barbara was another teacher who linked professional development to feeling supported by her school:

*'Another way [to feel supported] is just putting professional opportunity your way when they listen to whether you want to do X, Y, Z, and letting you be part of the school and part of the schools development.'* (Barbara: 35-36)

Donna's school is very proactive as they consider the teachers as individuals in conjunction with the school's needs. Her school has embraced an approach called Thrive. By purchasing professional development through their multi-academy trust (MAT) they received a reduced rate and have been able to train seven of their team. By embedding this approach into their school ethos all the teachers, children and stakeholders are educated on the Thrive approach. Donna's senior leadership team are constantly asking:

*'is it a course that you need to go on or do you need some supervision? Is it more supervision you need or do you need to go on shadow another colleague from another school?' (Donna: 363-365)*

Donna talks about the positive knock on effect this approach has on the majority of teachers. As teachers are constantly promoting health and well-being with their students, their own stress and anxiety becomes more manageable, she concludes that the Thrive approach builds resilience throughout the whole staff.

In contrast, Rebecca talks about the frustration at the lack of her training opportunities:

*'so in the five years I have been teaching, we have changed the curriculum every year, we have changed the maths scheme every year, we have changed the assessment scheme twice and the training on that has been half an hour... this is it, this is what you doing, do it...a rough input of, this is how it should work - off you go and do it. And they were big changes.'* (Rebecca: 187-196)

These continuous changes leave her vulnerable to new curriculum content and stressed at having to spend additional time learning new computer software. Her ability to 'master' a scheme is hampered by the lack of continuity and available time. She experiences frustration at the lack of continuity and that any time available for CPD has to be spent on learning mandatory new schemes not on a topic of her

interest, which reflects Ashdown (2002) when she argued that compulsory professional development has a huge negative impact on teachers.

John also talks about the continuous change in the curriculum and the additional work load that creates. One solution John has turned to, as he was not receiving relevant professional development in his school, was to reach out to his learning community, especially on-line forums. John has also voluntarily reduced his number of hours in teaching to enable him to finish a masters course in education enabling him to stay engaged in education. His head teacher has been very supportive of this decision.

In summary, quality and relevant professional development are essential for experienced teachers to thrive. Some whole school professional development is necessary but evidence shows that experience teachers' needs are different to newly qualified teachers and so professional development should reflect this. This support may take the form of continued mentoring with quality teachers working in similar contexts, appropriate courses and courses of personal interest, alongside sustained input with opportunities to experiment and reflect on newly gained competencies. Teachers who are receiving these opportunities appear to be doing so because leaders are making these choices and providing the opportunities to teachers and in doing so influencing the culture of their school.

### **5.4.3 Culture**

When participants were asked to describe their school, every participant's experience was different and often elicited passionate responses. The themes of culture and colleagues featured often in the interviews. Rebecca's school appears to be the most extreme. Her school recently received a poor Ofsted report which stated

that the school needed improvement. The report highlighted the leadership and not the teaching quality. In response, the senior leadership team froze everyone's salaries. Rebecca in her 5<sup>th</sup> year of teaching is earning a salary as if she was a third year teacher. When I asked her to describe her culture she said the following:

*'a lovely staff and colleagues and teachers that only ever do their best and a senior leadership team full of hubris - that's the culture of my school (239-240)*

She continues that the senior leadership team has no respect within the school

*'one is a secondary school English teacher, who has seen the need for change and isn't bringing it, one is just lazy and dictates and doesn't do, and one wasn't teaching last year - took a year off as teaching and learning lead and that kind of made them worse.'* (Rebecca: 251-253)

Victoria is another interesting participant regarding the theme of culture. She has worked in the same school under the last two head teachers and she talks about the change in culture from one head teacher to the next. Her first head teacher:

*'he was just really reasonable about these things and that's what made it a lovely place to work. Everyone had a work life balance, his philosophy was what you couldn't do between 8 and 5, you weren't going to do it' (Victoria: 88-89), she continues, 'unless he was convinced that policies would benefit staff and children then it wouldn't happen.....it was about creating really well rounded nice human beings, who could read and write as well.'* (Victoria: 117-118)

In contrast when the new head teacher took over:

*'he didn't have the experience, and he didn't have the knowledge, so he couldn't draw on anything, so anything that came from anywhere, he was just pushing onto the staff. You got to do this, you've got to do this.'* (Victoria: 128-130)

After a visit by an ex-HMI:

*'[he] went around the room and named and shamed each teacher.... I was so so upset because for me the whole school had been built on relationships and it was the relationship between the children and the staff and the relationships between the staff and the leadership and that day he destroyed that. I was so upset I can't even put into words how angry I was.'* (Victoria: 192-195)

Victoria's experience highlights the difference a head teacher can make to the culture of a school. The staff and children have remained the same the only change is the leader. At the other end of the continuum Carl offers:

*'Where I am, there is a fabulous culture, the teachers really look out for one another, they are out to help one another regardless.'* (Carl: 165-166)

Carolyn and Cathi are both at the same school as Carl:

*'it is very collaborative... it very much is that there is no 'I' in team and that genuinely isn't, we just work so well together - collaboratively...'* (Carolyn 182-187)

She attributes this culture to her head teacher:

*'first he was acting head and now he is head teacher and people say it's just happened since he arrived.'* (Carolyn 182-187)

*'I think our head teacher gives his everything to that school and I think he constantly strives to make improvements and to challenge those beliefs about what people think. And I think that is definitely one of the things about (our school) that we don't settle for second best we are constantly trying to get better and make those improvements for the children.'* (Cathi 62-65)

John is in agreement with both Carolyn and Cathi that it is the head teacher who creates a school culture:

*'the head teacher creates it, because it is a busy place to work it is very intense and she is quite intense and I often think this when I see the children and they can be quite enthusiastic I think that's because the head teacher is a whirlwind for she will be doing things endlessly to try and improve and make sure that it is moving in the right direction for sometimes when I reflect upon she is the one that creates the atmosphere and you can definitely tell that - so I think it does come from the top on this occasion.'* (John: 167-170)

Millie highlights the influence of working in a city school can have on a culture of a school:

*'I think in inner-city schools, there is a bit more of a fighting spirit from the teachers and feeling like if you don't sort it out then nothing is going to*

*happen. So you better just get on with it. Otherwise it would just go to nothing.'* (Millie: 69-71)

Kate also talked about the culture related to working in a city school:

*'because the children are very tough and they come from extremely deprived backgrounds, comradery within [school name] was brilliant - there was so much black humour there, you just had such a laugh about things, which you probably shouldn't be laughing about, but you know what I mean. The children would come in and tell us these horrendous stories, obviously you would then have to deal with that responsibly, but then we would all talk about things and laugh about things. Here's a good example my colleague next door, she was an amazing teacher so brilliant, very old school but she was a great support, she would come into my room and say oh my god they are driving me insane do something woman. And then I would do the same to her so that was always really good, that's supportive comradery.'* (Kate: 69-78)

Jenna offers that this might not be unique to city schools:

*'I don't even know if it is rural rural/suburban thing that an area that has less immediate pressures social pressures I think that's what it is, maybe I don't know if it is because you deal with very immediate things in your day, that maybe some of those other things that other schools spend more time on, whether it be paperwork or planning, if you are dealing with a crisis then you naturally draw together as a team to deal with it. I guess it's helping another human being out, isn't it? It's like the situation will make you pull together, you're not gonna leave anyone standing there with the parents shouting, you're probably going to pitch in and help or diffuse it or whatever it might be, and so maybe when it comes to other things maybe that has a carryover because you are used to working in that way. Yeah because the whole culture is then one of support and let's deal with this together, as opposed to, because schools are busy places, if you don't have that you are dealing with just planning maybe do that more in isolation.'* (Jenna: 9-19)

A school culture is created by the stakeholders involved in that school. What can be seen from the above extracts is that head teachers and the senior leadership team heavily influence that school culture positively or negatively. Consequently, the impact that culture has on all teachers, but especially experienced teachers who have worked under various leaders, can then be seen as supportive or not.

#### 5.4.4 Colleagues

*'Refreshing to talk  
About my teaching career  
Offloading my woes!'  
Karen*

All twelve participants mentioned the importance of colleagues when asked about supports they do receive. This clearly reflects Hargreaves (2001) work where colleagues play a significant role in how teachers experience their work and workplace conditions. This source of support was also evident in Perryman and Calvert's (2019) research where when asked what was enjoyable about their jobs, participants mentioned colleagues. Colleagues provided support in numerous ways. Some provided support by being a shoulder to lean on or someone who could provide advice on a child. Some worked as a team, or planned classes together, others provided mentoring opportunities. Colleagues also understood the context participants were working in and had shared experiences enabling teachers to feel supported when discussing particular situations or individual children. The importance of this can be seen in the following statements from the participants which all demonstrate the benefit of supportive colleagues.



**Table 5: Comments regarding colleagues**

<p>Cathi (40-42)</p>	<p><i>'It comes from the staff you work alongside – it is those relationships that you build with your colleagues that keep me where I am'</i></p>
<p>Karen (95-96)</p>	<p><i>'My colleagues (are so supportive), people who I worked with as a class teacher'</i></p>
<p>Carl (39-40)</p>	<p><i>'Older teachers, I learnt an awful lot in a short space of time from their wisdom – they were quite happy to share'</i></p>
<p>Jenna (17-18)</p>	<p><i>'The culture is one of support and let's deal with this together'</i></p>
<p>Rebecca (30-31)</p>	<p><i>'Colleagues, yes colleagues, older colleagues [are so supportive]'</i></p>
<p>Barbara (78-79)</p>	<p><i>'Strong relationships - when you know when to pat on the back, step aside or apologise'</i></p>
<p>Carolyn (46-48)</p>	<p><i>'She would be there and check-in, offer a hug, we would mark together or plan together'</i></p>
<p>John (158-159)</p>	<p><i>'The members of staff get on very well and you get a more abstract support where you feel you can talk to people'</i></p>

Donna, Jenna and Victoria all mentioned that it extends further than just your teacher colleagues, especially in high-need schools where there are more supportive adults involved in the school:

*'with the behaviour support team it's a multidisciplinary team, social workers plus we had teachers and support workers and an educational psychologist and it was a model that social workers brought and it works.'* (Donna: 104-106)

Victoria also found support through,

*'MAST is a multi-agency support team we paid 10 1/2 grand a year and it is there for the children so I can access family support art therapist and drama therapists, but the director of that is a really lovely lady and I happen to teach both of her children years ago, and when she knew I was ill, she offered me supervision, counsellor and someone to talk to.'* (Victoria: 349-353)

The importance of colleagues and how they can help a teacher feel supported in their professional lives can be seen from the above extracts. This reflects and confirms the research done by Tatar (2009) with his main research finding clearly demonstrated the important role fulfilled by teacher colleagues. Colleagues were cited as the best accepted support in mitigating teacher burnout and improving self-efficacy. This might be attributed to the fact that they face similar daily problems, they can empathise with and understand the peculiarities and challenges of the teaching profession, unlike others who are not working with children on a daily basis.

As stated earlier, what did emerge from the data was how highly interconnected all the emerging themes were. Following, we look at the participant's extracts on trust.

#### **5.4.5 Trust**

Some researchers view trust between teachers and principal as the cornerstone of school success (Tarter & Hoy, 1988) and from the above literature review trust does

appear high on the priority of many teachers. The importance of trust between the participants, colleagues and their leaders is clearly reflected in the data gathered. Barbara described her best teaching experience as one working for a head teacher who had high professional trust:

*'he [the current head teacher] has a high level of professional trust. The teachers have the freedom, and confidence, to assess, reflect and adapt...not just sticking to a lesson plan' (Barbara: 107-112)*

Both Karen and John gave examples of trust as their head teachers allowing them to take their PPA time off campus.

*'Where I am based each teacher is allowed that time off and off site and is fully trusted to do what you see fit' (Karen: 26-27)*

*...we came to an agreement that I would work for four days and then I would have the Friday off with my PPA till 12 o'clock and the Friday afternoon would be mine to come and study and work through my modules...she knows that the planning is always gonna be online and the books are always marked. If she knew I was out being interviewed for my maters she wouldn't bat an eyelid but she would expect me to make sure that my math planning was done' (John: 105-112)*

Donna equated trust with good relationships and talked about the open communication channels she had with the SLT.

*'because she [head teacher] already knew my skill set and had a good relationship and a trusting relationship, I was able to hit the ground running and not have to tread on eggshells (Donna: 137-139)*

Kate agreed with Donna, talking about having someone at work that you can talk to who understands the challenges of the school but knowing that what you say is said in confidence:

'where you can talk to someone, someone who understands how schools work and the difficulties and challenges with the children and the parents' (Kate:150-152)

In Jenna's situation, it was the 'let's deal with this together' attitude which meant she could trust her colleagues to look out for her, alongside her best head teacher who trusted her to do her job:

*'if you are dealing with a crisis then you naturally draw together as a team to deal with it. I guess it's helping another human being out, isn't it? It's like the situation will make you pull together, you're not gonna leave anyone standing there with the parents shouting, you're probably going to pitch in and help or diffuse it or whatever it might be, and so maybe when it comes to other things maybe that has a carryover because you are used to working in that way. Yeah because the whole culture is then one of support and let's deal with this together'. (Jenna: 12-18)*

Carolyn on the other hand talked about how she is conscientious about demonstrating trust in her role on the senior leadership team by being a good listening and solving problems at ground level and not having to escalate them to the head teacher.

*'trust is very important, I think as a phase leader is important that your colleagues trust you, within confidence, regardless of being in the SLT. So my team could come to me any concerns and I'm not going to take that straight to the head teacher or straight to the SLT team. If it is something that we can fix ourselves.'* (Carolyn: 216-218)

Carl touched on the ability of a teacher to take risks in the classroom if they feel trusted. He felt that most teachers are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and if the school has a culture of trust, teachers have the confidence to seek help and support from colleagues.

*'if we trust teachers to know what their strengths and weaknesses are, with help and support, we have a system in place, they are more willing to take risks' (Carl: 128-129)*

Cathi discussed trust twice during the walking interview. Once in relation to government policy as she felt assessment and high stakes testing was harming the children and her ability to teach. She wanted the government to trust the teachers to know the kids and know what is best for them.

*'I would love for them [the government] to get rid of standardised assessment tests, I would love it! And just to say, you know what, this is where the teacher assessment is, this is what the teacher thinks this is where the children are working yes they can do this and on a really great day they can get everything. You know what kids are not robots either are they? Some days they [the children] just have bad days.'* (Cathi: 154-157)

The second time was in relation to a promise made to her by her head teacher.

During her annual review he assured her that if she moved into year six she would have support from a colleague. This was hugely important to her as she was reluctant to shoulder the responsibility of SATs by herself and felt she had been let down the year before when she was team teaching.

*'My husband and I said we will give it till Christmas and as long as [the head teacher] keeps his promises that he has made to me...he has promised that [a colleague] will be working alongside me because last year she was called towards the year six so much I was left and she wasn't in PPA she wasn't there with us, she wasn't making decisions with us.'* (Cathi: 186-192)

Jenna was the only participant that talked about trust between a school and the children's parents. Over her years of teaching she felt that parents in urban schools largely trusted the teachers to just get on with it, in contrast to suburban or private schools where the parents might take a more active and vocal role in the education of their children. Now she feels that many parents no longer trust schools, and by

association the teachers to be acting in the best interest of their children. This lack of trust manifested itself in parents complaining more.

*'even down to [the student's] behaviour, if their behaviour is bad, it's your fault. It wouldn't be to do with the fact if there was anything going on at home or did they eat this morning? It would be down to your classroom management, it would be about extrinsic motivation as opposed to what that child comes to school with and how they are feeling that day.'* (Jenna: 256-259)

Victoria demonstrated her experience of trust, or rather the lack of it, with her current head, by stating that he trusted no one, she gave the example of his closed office door and recently installed locks.

*'So we have also been locked out of the main office. Which is an absolute joke. Because if you have an emergency you need someone's phone number. Well if you haven't got the code to the office you can't go in and get it!'* (Victoria: 226-228)

She continued that he often broke trust with teachers by humiliating them in front of their colleagues during staff meetings. She attributed some of his inability to trust on inexperience, so she was hopeful that this would improve with time and experience.

Millie also experienced a breach of trust after one of her lesson observations. The duty head teacher who had completed the lesson observation, changed her agreed rating from 'good' to 'needs improvement', without consulting Millie and explaining why. This change made Millie feel unsupported. Not only did she now have a 'needs improvement' on her official lesson observation but she also had no idea why or opportunity to defend her position.

*'So I think that openness and clarity is so important because teaching is very personal and you do take it quite personally when you feel like you are not doing that well. So from that I give very prompt and nice feedback. I try and be*

*'it is nothing to do with you just next time why don't you try doing this, and this, and this?' ...I think that is so important to give the chance to redeem yourself and learn from that and not just leave it as, that requires improvement.'* (Millie: 155-161)

It is clear from the transcript that this act had a long term impact on her feelings towards this colleague.

Rebecca is another teacher who has had a massive breakdown in trust between the teachers of the school and the senior leadership team. As previously described in the section on culture, Rebecca's SLT has frozen the teacher's salaries and doubled the lesson observations each teacher is receiving. Rebecca feels undervalued, disrespected and disheartened. When asked what she would like in an ideal school, she says she would like:

*'Genuine appreciation, and just trust and a level of we've been trained for this you can trust us for what we doing. Don't throw silly things into the mix, like a learning intention for each display. I think that is missing, hugely missing yeah, there is no trust. Those three things, pay, appreciation and trust.'* (Rebecca: 365-368)

For Karen her trust relationship broke down with her current head teacher when he asked her to report back on her colleagues:

*'he had a meeting with each member of staff and he asked me what I thought of my colleagues...who was good and bad, basically.'* (Karen: 56-57)

By asking Karen to be disloyal to her colleagues and then to hear from her head teacher that her colleagues had been talking about her was a huge disappointment to her, resulting in Karen trusting and socialising less with her colleagues. As this was her initial encounter with her new head teacher it has influenced her opinion about his ability to lead and colours all her interactions with him. This reflects the work by Walker, Kutsyuruba & Noonan, (2011) who concluded that distrust can not

only effect current decision making but can have long lasting effects, influencing future meaningful relationships.

These participant extracts show trust can easily be broken and may take many years to mend, in fact it may never be mended if the perpetrator does not take responsibility for rebuilding the trust relationship. Many agree that teaching is a demanding job and it has already been seen how valuable supportive colleagues are to the well-being of teachers. When teachers feel like there is no trust in their school it makes them feel vulnerable, unsupported and therefore increases the likelihood that they will change schools or leave the education profession altogether.

#### **5.4.6 Accountability and Policy Pressures**

When discussing additional pressures that teacher encounter in their professional lives, many participants discussed accountability and policy implications. Each teacher's exposure to the pressure of policy implication was entirely different depending on how the head teacher and leadership team handled the dissemination throughout the school.

John's experience was mostly positive. He talked about how the senior leadership team and governors were on top of all the government initiatives and that it was then forwarded to the staff to read. He felt they were good at keeping up-to-date and it was your own professional obligation to read them. He did articulate some frustration with the continuous changing of curriculum and the additional workload that created; *'it's forever changing the curriculum in general'* (John: 468). He also alluded to the fact that he felt the government are always saying one thing but then asking teachers to do something different;



*'...a lot of things happened with benchmarking - where year six need to perform to. The government was saying goal posts haven't been moved but when you are there in front of 20 or 30 children you know that the goalposts have moved because the last six years aren't the same as that year, and when you are trying to teach year sixes grammar that they have never seen before in their lives you're thinking this is such an uphill battle. (John: 74-79)*

Carl on the other hand was more frustrated by the number of curriculum changes and the narrowing of the curriculum that he had experienced over his 20 years in education. He talked about the feeling that all governments push down new agendas that each school then had to deal with irrespective of the school situation and student body. He states:

*'Our country is famous for creative, extraordinarily creative realms, in dance and music, in maths and writing and painting, who is going to light the fires if we systematise what our teachers can teach?' (Carl: 364-366)*

Carolyn's experience of curriculum change caused her to doubt her own teaching ability:

*'Scary isn't it when you don't know, you have so much responsibility and so much change this year with early years.' (Carolyn: 103-104)*

*'I would almost stop changing certain things because there's so much change. Thinking about the government reports there is talk about a new baseline for reception classes, or a new early learning goal. I've just got in there and just done my first year and I finally know I'm doing and it's going to be changed again and it's the same with the national curriculum everything is constantly, constantly being changed. A great example is I did a four year degree, left really confident, the year I graduated was the year the new curriculum came out. I learnt everything to do with the literacy strategy, the numeracy strategy, I get to my first school placement and none of that is used anymore. It's all archived with old curriculum. It's insane!' (Carolyn: 244-251)*

When Ofsted was mentioned during the walking interviews, 100% of the responses were negative, not one teacher brightened at the word.

Carl summed it up with:

*'I have seen during an Ofsted inspection, better teachers than me, one woman who was my mentor, went to pieces and had a breakdown - when you could bet your mortgage on her...how can that be getting the best out of a teacher?' (Carl: 124-127)*

When Donna was asked to describe her experience of Ofsted she said:

*'[it's] not a good one.....nobody likes the O word, it brings that fear of God into everybody!' (Donna: 244-248)*

She continued that the directors of the trust were all based outside of Plymouth and were themselves Ofsted inspectors. They would come down to Plymouth to train the teachers on what to expect from an inspection. She describes this experience as '*horrible*' and that the director pushed her on topics that she didn't feel comfortable with and eventually made her betray a colleague by forcing her to name a colleague who she didn't think was a quality teacher. Being put in a situation where she felt she was forced to comply with an inspector made her feel incredibly guilty, vulnerable and unsupported.

Kate has been teaching for over 20 years and during those years has been through Ofsted five times, each time being a completely different experience. During her career she has only thought twice that teaching is not the profession for her. The first time was when her head teacher did not support her in front of a parent and the second was on the last Ofsted. Kate's head teacher was away when the school received the call and being on the senior leadership team meant she had to take the call. Dealing with school issues that arose that weekend meant that she didn't have time to prepare herself for her own classroom responsibilities resulting in her first lesson not going well:

*'I was just beside myself, I cried when I got home for hours...it really really knocked my self-confidence for a long time. So then they came to see me*

*teach a second time and then they wanted to watch one more person teach one more lesson. God only knows why. So I had to do that as well and that one was fine so two out of three. But I was so mortified by the fact that the first one had gone so badly I haven't, even now, it still upsets me because when you been teaching for that long and I know that I do a good job, for someone to come in and say no that's not good enough is quite soul destroying really. I shouldn't be so sensitive but it still bothers me', she continues, 'these days what they do, they don't come and watch teaching any more they just come in and talk to the head teacher which strikes fear into me because I just think what if he's not well that day and it all falls on me again?' (Kate: 185-196)*

Kate has been teaching for over twenty years, yet it is during the last Ofsted inspection she truly considered leaving the profession. The English accountability system had squashed any joy left in her day to day teaching role.

Victoria's story highlights how devastating receiving a poor Ofsted can be:

*'in 2015 the head teacher in a neighbouring school had a really bad Ofsted and he then committed suicide on the back of his Ofsted.'* (Victoria: 39-40)

The negative impact this event had on the teachers of Victoria's school but also the neighbouring one was measurable. The head teacher from Victoria's school was asked to then form a multi academy trust, resulting in Victoria's school losing their head teacher and having to find a replacement which caused a great deal of uncertainty. With no time to grieve for a lost colleague, the staff felt unsupported, alongside a sudden change in leadership, which resulted in the culture of the school shifting dramatically, Victoria reflected that both schools suffered dramatically.

John's experience of an Ofsted inspection is less intense but still had a massive impact on teachers' morale across the school:

*'at the time it [the Ofsted inspection] went very well. I was considered an outstanding teacher from the Ofsted inspector when they used to grade teachers individually. So from my personal point of view I felt I did what I could have done in order to represent the school. They were once outstanding but a*

*grade took them down to good which was a real shame because I think it felt like a lovely place to be and it felt like children got a lot from it and the staff worked very hard.'* (John: 354-360)

John later talked about the pressure his current head teacher placed on the teachers:

*'[the head teacher] doesn't take a foot off the pedal she knows where we should be and just because we haven't had Ofsted in how many years doesn't mean we're not still working at the top of our game ... She knows that they could turn up at any time and she knows that we're going to be prepared',* (John: 363-367).

When asked if this adds pressure to his teaching role he replies:

*'yes, such pressure, especially when you see the number of teachers are gradually dropping and the population is rising we're going to have a class of 60 next year!'* (John: 374-375)

Throughout his interview, John refers back to the fact that he wasn't going to stay in teaching because of this pressure. However, his current head teacher is very supportive and encourages him to bring his passion of outdoor learning to the school. She further supports him by working the timetable to ensure that he gets Friday morning PPA time beside his Friday afternoon off in order for him to complete his masters.

As mentioned in the literature review, an audit culture and the associated accountability pressure are major factors in teacher turnover. (Perryman and Calvert, 2019). The additional work student assessment, exam preparation, marking, reviews and inspections create for a teacher are often referred to as 'box-ticking' or 'tick box' exercises.

Karen mentioned the additional work that an audit culture places on the school:

*'it doesn't seem purposeful because no one will ever look at it - no one will look at that piece of paper - even when we do get inspected.'* (Karen: 52-53)

Karen sums this up as a tick box exercises:

*'you have a meeting with them and discuss it then they will write a report, saying what you said you would do and what you have done and then that goes in a file somewhere to tick that box.'* (Karen: 47-49)

When we discussed professional development, Karen was not necessarily picking the best CPD for her:

*'firstly, I was interested and second it would tick a box for me so it was two fold.'* (Karen 138-139)

And finally, when discussing a colleague:

*'because she is doing it reluctantly and it is a forced situation - squeezed into a lunch time which is a valuable time but a lot will do lunch, after school or before school and that is ticking a box and I don't think it is fair.'* (Karen 159-161)

Other participants also discussed the concept of many activities being 'tick box' activities and therefore meaningless to the children or their own personal growth.

Carl referred to tick box exercises when discussing classroom observations:

*'I worked with one member of staff who was perhaps the best, best teacher I have ever come across and I remember on three occasions during lesson observations, formal ones for her, and at the end where it says further steps I just put none because that person knew very well where to go. She knew if she wanted my advice she would ask. She was a far better teacher than I was, and what was the sense of having a next step for the sake of it to tick a box. It has always felt nonsense to me.'* (Carl: 129-133)

Carl also referred to tick box exercises when discussing accountability and lack of trust:

*'The powers of B don't trust anybody. It has to fit in a box. It has to be ticked, and it has to be double-checked.'* (Carl: 269)

Finally, Carl's most passionate reference to ticking boxes was when he talked about quality teachers:

*'the government chucks down [policies], the school has to deal, some might deal with it better than others. Teachers shouldn't have to be doing this, they should just be coming in and showing off what they know well, doing what they do best, but so often I see teachers worrying about stuff that they shouldn't have to worry about. At the end of the day if it ticks a box, which formulates a score and score has to be X and the targets are cranked up, and next year it has to be Y, you know, it is distracting away from you know.'* (Carl: 282-287)

Cathi also discussed the frustration of exercises being completed because they ticked a box not because they were creative or because you had a personal passion about that topic:

*'So I think it saps some of that love and a creativity out of it, we're not going to choose things because we really really want to do it we are going to do it because, yes it's good, but we are going to make sure that it does this and this and ticks that box.'* (Cathi: 465-468)

Barbara summed it up by stating that:

*'head teachers should not be asking teachers to tick boxes, or conform to a box, as the teacher had the potential to lose their love of teaching.'* (Barbara: 81)

Rebecca articulated her frustration with her senior leadership team when they insisted on strict assessment criteria:

*'[the children have] been in key stage 1 having the time of their life, and they've been in in key stage 2 for two months, and now they're being told whether they can get the year six outcome! It's awful....assessment is nasty, and it's not the be-all and end-all of the child...they just look at the children, you're bad for my data, yeah but that's not what it is about, they are six years old and have come to school because they want to enjoy life, and they want to make friends, and that's what it should be based on, not whether they can spot the frontal adverbial in a sentence and punctuate it correctly.'* (Rebecca: 290-298)

The research highlights increased accountability. The impact that has on individual teachers often depends upon a school's leadership team and the relationship they have with that teacher, as teachers in the same school often experience similar

events differently. Some leaders see their roles as filters and barriers to protect their teachers, whereas others pass all responsibility on to the shoulders of their teaching staff. How leaders and leadership teams disseminate the requirements had a huge impact on a teacher's work-load and subsequently the well-being of those teachers.

#### **5.4.7 Work-Load and Time**

Hargreaves (1994, p.95) regards time as the 'fundamental dimension through which teachers' work is constructed and interpreted', he continues that often it constrains teachers' ability to achieve personal goals. As a response to rising expectations in the education system, reduced budgets, larger classes and increased assessment with a great demand for accountability, teachers are under enormous pressure. Teachers who feel that they do not have enough time to meet the needs of the students are less likely to leave (Johnson, Kraft & Papay, 2012). Time and workload was a big issue with all the participants.

- *'Surely ten hours a day is enough?'* (Millie: 208)
- *'Let's be realistic no one gets a lunch'* (Victoria: 260)
- *'Paperwork is just huge [no time] to do it'* (Donna: 152)
- *'Long hours, with no family balance'* (Barbara: 97)
- *'When the workload gets too much, my marking goes right out of the window'* (Millie: 131)
- *'Everyone has a 1000 things to do... because I was capable, my workload increased'* (Karen: 102, 201)

Throughout the interviews, well-being appeared strongly linked to time. The teachers talked about the lack of time they had to teach but mainly the impact the other time-consuming activities such as planning, marking, alongside additional demands

placed on their time outside of the 'normal' working day, which may include meetings, report writing, parent's evenings, Christmas fairs, sports teams or a school residential had on their lives. Often their own worst enemy teachers will take on additional tasks. Bunting (2011) refers to this as teachers being 'willing slaves' - frequently willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to get the job done. Many participants talked about wanting to have the time to enjoy teaching, the reason they entered this profession. They wanted to spend time with students solving problems and seeing children grasp new concepts. However, they felt under huge pressure to test and assess children for year 6 SATS. This shift in balance between actual teaching the children and administering tests is reflected in the following section on teaching and the profession.

#### **5.4.8 Teaching and the Profession**

There is extensive literature on the 'deprofessionalisation' of teaching (Hargreaves, 2000b) Teachers feel that their professional skills are redundant, and that their judgement is not trusted (Gunter, 1997). Repeatedly, participants talked about what teaching and the teaching profession means to them. Carrillo and Flores (2018) state that, 'issues concerning veteran teachers' identities are key to understanding why they remain in the profession and are able to sustain their motivation and commitment over time.

Carl's definition of a good teacher: '*someone who is going to ignite passion in the children for learning*' to Barbara's definition of a successful school: '*a mosaic of teachers at all career stages, [who are] having professional conversations where you feel safe to ask for help*' (Barbara: 118-119). Alongside, Cathi's statement:



*'I think you have to be a certain type of person to be a teacher. I have seen people come into it and it's clearly not for them, however much they wanted it to be... you definitely have to have perseverance and resilience to be a teacher.'* (Cathi: 517-522)

This shows that teacher identity and variables that impact that identity are significant.

There appears to be a huge frustration at the perceived devalued of teaching. Karen compared teaching to other professions such as medical or legal:

*'I'm frustrated at the profession. Parents see teachers as extra-curricular child care providers. So, you get paid for the hours you do, but so many teachers will do a club after school and it is an expectation - with children and the parents, that teachers will provide their time free of charge - whereas if you were to ask a doctor or a solicitor what would the fee be? - So I get really frustrated, I just think to myself, you should not have that expectation of us.'* (Karen: 146-150)

Jenna thinks some of the problem stems from work boundaries being blurred. Most teaching contracts have a specified teaching commitment but then add a 'reasonable' amount of planning and preparation, which is at the head teacher's discretion. This ambiguous wording is open to abuse. Jenna feels that lessons can be learnt from other industries where time is allocated to work assignments (for example computer software and graphic design). She describe professions such as nursing, where once you have walked out of the building you no longer have work responsibility and you don't take tasks home. Jenna also expressed frustration at being expected to work for free by running a club or attending a school social.

Barbara's frustration at the profession was the change in attitude over the years that she has been teaching. At the start of her career, she had the freedom to assess, reflect and adapt a lesson in progress. She feels this freedom has been stripped away due to the strict expectation that a lesson plan should be followed word for word.

When Victoria was asked if she would like to add anything at the end of the interview she said:

*'I think that it is really sad that they [leaders/policy makers] are literally driving people out of the profession with their expectations of what we should be doing' (Victoria: 420-421)*

From these extracts it can be seen that there is a disparity between how the teacher see themselves and what they are able to achieve within the school and professional boundaries. This friction appears to have a consequence on a teacher's well-being.

#### **5.4.9 Well-Being**

Donna openly admitted that she would not be in teaching if she still had to work fulltime as a classroom based teacher. In agreement, Karen states:

*'I would never want to be full-time teacher again...a full-time based classroom teacher is a really really tough job and I don't think people realise how tough it is' (Karen: 222-224)*

Every participant's story highlighted different aspects of well-being. Teacher well-being is of significant importance, teachers who score high on a life satisfaction scale, are over 40 percent more likely to perform well in the classroom than their less satisfied colleagues (Ripley, 2010). All 12 teachers sat somewhere on the well-being continuum, some like Karen, Carolyn, and Millie were happy and enjoying work, others such as Rebecca and Victoria were experiencing poor, sometimes hostile work environments. Rebecca was only staying at her current school because of family logistics and Victoria had become so ill that she was on long term, part-time sick leave.

Barbara touched on the strength it takes to change a situation you are unhappy with:

*'I have always been the sort of person where if something doesn't feel right I have either tried to change it or I have left - maybe that says I have a lot of courage because I feel the people who stay in the same school in the same job who are completely dissatisfied and yet they continue and I think that is a shame because it doesn't have to be that way.'* (Barbara: 27-30)

Cathi summed it up with:

*'I think the current climate is very negative, isn't it? I think a lot of people have this interpretation that the current climate is hard. You have these Facebook groups and everyone is complaining... I think trying for the work life balance is the only thing that can keep you sane, I still think, however much people whinge and complain about teaching, they are getting six weeks off, and getting six weeks of paid, to be a mum, to do my other jobs. So I think that does balance some time off is so important. I think appreciating that as well and understanding that. My husband is not working in teaching, (he) makes me realise that, yes, he works really hard, he doesn't get six weeks of every year, for all the negatives there are positives and I think you have to focus on the positives. Because otherwise you would get bogged down with everything' she continues 'But that's with every job? I think that's helped by working not just as a teacher, I think life experience makes a big difference (I have worked) a 7-7 job that pays way less than this and there are lots of jobs out there that actually really hard.'* (Cathi: 391-397, 509-511)

The news is not all bad. From Cathi's interview she talks about having worked in other employment for longer hours, for less money. She appreciated how hard her husband works all year without the benefit of summer holidays with the children.

Schools are acutely aware that their teachers are under great pressures and some have taken action. Karen's school sent out a staff survey to solicit ideas on how to improve teacher wellbeing and now every term they have a social catch up where the staff come together over tea and cakes. Initially Karen found the forced environment made her uncomfortable, however, she appreciated what the school is trying to accomplish. Donna's school approach is significantly more structured. Her school follows a model copied from social work, which she experienced when working as an advisory teacher for a behaviour support team. Utilizing educational psychologists to benefit not only the students, but also the staff, with a huge focus on

mental health and well-being in the classroom for the children, there is a positive knock-on effect for the staff. Alongside this, Donna also organises termly training on stress and anxiety management to help build resilience across the school.

Often a teacher would mention that it was great to have someone to talk to and down load about a certain situation or child, but fear that their words would soon become school gossip stopped them. They also feared that talking of particular children would be crossing a GDPR line (General Data Protection Regulation) and so were uncertain of what they could or could not talk about. This fear actually impacted their well-being as it added an additional layer of stress to their day.

From the literature review it can be seen that teacher well-being has been written about for many years (Sergiovanni, 1967). Teaching and the associated demands can heavily influence the well-being of a teacher, with accountability and work-load having a significant impact. One theme which emerged from the participants' interviews was the additional work-load and stress of being assigned a teaching group outside of your expertise.

#### **5.4.10 Teaching Assignments**

The impact of teachers being assigned classes for which they have little training in, is referred to, in America, as out-of-field teaching (Ingersoll, 2019). This phenomenon can change a successful quality teacher into one who is struggling, and as a result may negatively impact student achievement. Out-of-field teaching has been widely studied within the secondary school environment but there is little research on the impact on experienced primary teachers being assigned classes or subjects they have not trained for or do not wish to teach.

During this research over half of the participants discussed class assignment and how it impacted them negatively, with year six, and the associated assessments, creating the most stress and anxiety. Karen was asked to move to year six the year she was getting married and renovating her home, she spoke with her head teacher asking him not to place her there, she offered that she would move the following year. Unfortunately he insisted saying that she was the best person for that role:

*'I have taught in every year group so I know what happens in each year group...year six influences what kind of person you are going to employ - you need a far more diligent and knowledgeable person for year six than you do for year one. Some year one colleagues will not go in the junior school because they are fearful of the curriculum standard and the workload, the workload does go up. When I was interviewed for a staff survey I said that year five and six teachers need more time or money.'* (Karen: 192-196)

John was also asked to teach year six and found it incredibly stressful, he looks back on that time and thinks:

*'goodness me that was hard work!...it was a challenging school and we all knew that and a lot of things that happened with benchmarking where year six need to perform to and the government was saying that goal posts haven't been moved but when you are there in front of 20 or 30 children, you know the goal posts have been moved because the last year six aren't the same as this year, when you are trying to teach year six grammar that they have never seen before in their lives, you're thinking this is such an uphill battle, I don't know how we can get there in this short space of time.'* (John: 73-79)

Like John, Jenna also mentioned the additional stress that teaching in year six brings with it. Another reason she mentioned that she doesn't like teaching in year six is because she feels it is a 'little dull' because all you are doing is assessing the children with no space in the curriculum for fun activities. When she moved to her most recent job she did so on the agreement that she would not have to teach year six.

Cathi didn't want to teach in year six and was told that was her only option if she wanted to stay teaching part time. Her partner teacher was the key phase lead and due to demands placed on her time, she was spending more and more time in year six. When asked why she didn't want to move to year six, Cathi said:

*'Just because it is year six, and it is SATs, the pressure, it is all about exam results and it is you have got to get those children to get it, haven't you? It is so much pressure...(you are losing) fun, joy, creative curriculum. We try and keep as much as we can but invariably it goes. We have already planned a reading and maths paper in our first week back of year six. Base line assessments and then it just continuous assessment and dare I say teaching to the test, because it is. It is so frustrating, it is all or nothing, it is so much emphasis put on year six and SAT results for the entire country'. 'I feel bad for them, there's so much pressure on the children to do well because we impart that pressure as well'. 'I am dreading being in year six because of all of this stress and pressure.'* (Cathi: 143-151, 159-161, 175)

In addition to being moved to a year six against her wishes, Cathi has also been given the responsibility of overseeing the meal time assistants. Her job share partner was the PE coordinator and part of the school vision was to get fundamental skills practised during the children's lunchtime. Even though Cathi had no training or experience in this area it became her responsibility to provide professional development and guidance to the meal time assistants. Cathi received no support or monetary compensation and as a result experiences frustration with this role that she has been given:

*'The meal time assistants (MTAs) I was given, I wasn't asked, the role of being the line manager for the MTA's, which has been very tricky. Very, very tricky....unfortunately the MTA's are not given the skills, or they are not the right people in the first place.'* (Cathi: 312-313)

On the flip side, Kate was the only participant who indicated that she liked teaching in year six. However because she has senior leadership team responsibilities she is

in the classroom three and a half days, yet she is still fully responsible for the school's SATs results.

*'I quite like teaching year six because I know what I have to teach them. I know what they need to do in order to get where they need to get to. And so I like it. But at the same time you think how many more years can I keep doing this for? Because it is quite physically tiring.'* (Kate 304-306)

Kate added that because she was on the SLT there was additional pressure for the year six to perform well in the SATs.

*'I also think, I don't mean to salt my colleagues, but the content of what has to be taught in year six a lot of teachers don't know, their subject knowledge isn't good enough. So it would mean a lot of teachers would feel, 'I don't know how to do that in maths' or 'I don't know that grammar' so it would require them to be proactive in learning all of this stuff and then confident to teach it. Because it is really quite challenging.*

*I would sit there last year and I would be teaching the children various different verb tenses and teaching them about subjunctive form and I would say go home and see if your parents know this. The kids would come back and say 'I asked my mum about the past perfect verb tense and she did know what I was talking about' and I stand there sometimes thinking, 'why am I teaching this to these children?' So I think some teachers are a bit intimidated by the year six curriculum.'* (Kate: 306-315)

From this data set, experienced teachers are encountering additional pressure to teach in year six. This request to teach in this year group may be because they are experienced and so, in theory, the head teachers feel they should be able to handle the extra pressure of assessments and have the curriculum knowledge needed to teach to the test.

More significantly than moving year group, is a teacher being asked to move to a different key stage. Two teachers talked about the impact of having to do this.

Carolyn was asked to teach in key stage 1 having trained in key stage 2;

*'...early years is a big jump for me. I went from year two to year three to year four, then one! Key stage 1 lead then early years. My first year in early years is very different from key stage 2'. (Carolyn: 65-66)*

Rebecca was trained in key stage 1 and asked to move to key stage 2.

*'I am early years, key stage 1 trained, and that's where I want to be. Year three is all right but I trained to work with the younger ones and I'd like to work in reception.'* (Rebecca: 92-95)

The stress of having to learn a whole new curriculum on top of their everyday responsibilities was substantial and resulted in both teachers taking more work home in the evenings.

Finally, less significant, but still stress inducing, Jenna was asked to lead the math curriculum when her expertise is in English.

*'When I led maths it was to support a newly qualified teacher, it all comes from staff dynamics who is there to do that role at that point, what happened by default is that the person deemed to have the most experience, even if it's not your subject area.'* (Jenna: 36-39)

These request placed on teachers are often because it is best for the school and not necessarily best for the teacher. These decisions clearly influence a teacher's personal well-being and often elicit negative emotions which can be seen in the following section.

#### **5.4.11 Emotions Associated with being an Experienced Teacher**

Many of the participants spoke about being the experienced teacher and the additional responsibilities and pressure that they feel because of that. Barbara highlighted some of her experiences over the last 20 years:

*'Death of a student, death of staff member, a colleague imprisoned, violent students, students involved in the most horrendous home lives makes the hairs stand up on my arms.'* (Barbara: 40-42)



Karen talked about her fear that she would lose her job because the school had already lost all the teaching assistants due to budget cuts:

*'every opportunity there has been to employ new staff, you know for certain that it is going to be someone who is cheap, so they don't necessarily go for the best candidate they go for the best candidate of the cheap candidates so you will find that is the case because of the funding.'* (Karen: 168-171)

Barbara agrees with Karen saying:

*'Experienced teachers sometimes feel trapped because they can't move sideways and because they are expensive – new job openings are usually looking for a deal – cheaper NQTs – so you might have to go on the SLT – experienced teachers have nowhere to go or might be seen as not achieving if they just stay in the classroom.'* (Barbara: 86-89)

Cathi, John, Rebecca and Jenna's negative experience of being the experienced teacher stems from the additional work load and roles that they were expected to naturally assume, but didn't want, and were not being financially compensated for. Cathi was asked to oversee the meal time assistants, John was asked to take on senior leadership team responsibilities when a colleague left and both Jenna and Rebecca were doing planning for themselves and a colleague who didn't have the time/desire to do their own planning. As mentioned 20% of teachers feel tense about their job most or all of the time - compared to 13% in similar professions (Worth & van den Brande, 2019). This was reflected in Cathi's question, *'why can't I be an experienced teacher doing what I'm doing?'* Carl and John both talked about this pressure to be more than 'just' a classroom teacher which reflects Harris and Townsend (2007) research. They argued that a large number of teachers, at different career stages, *do not* aspire to leadership but do see themselves as leaders:

*'because I don't want to go into a leadership role myself, at this time I've probably been teaching long enough that people are wondering why he*

*should be going up to assistant headship, but I'm thinking I just don't want to.'*  
(John: 91-93)

John also describes being asked to take on a student teacher as a 'daunting' experience:

*'because they might not like my style, they might think I'm not doing such a great job.'* (John: 392-393)

Davies and Heyward (2019, p.376) state that in practice the opposite is usually occurring. The inherent power imbalance in the relationship between a student teacher and the teacher results in the student teacher feeling compelled to conform. This often results in a tension between adhering to the teacher's practice and following personal pedagogical beliefs. The biggest drawback for John in accepting a student teacher into his classroom, beyond the additional paper work, was his concern that the children were receiving poor instruction:

*'you know where these children need to be next year and you are seeing them stagnate. Seeing lessons that you think are not quite up to scratch, that becomes a bit tougher because then you have to talk to them (the student) about that and how they can develop, I know you do that anyway but, it can be a bit tiring.'* (John: 405-408)

Fear, frustration and resentment were all negative feelings that the teachers expressed when asked about their role as an experienced member of the teaching staff. Fear of losing their role because they are more expensive than a newly qualified teacher. Frustration at the number of curriculum and assessment changes they have had to deal with over their career, and, resentment towards the additional workload assigned to them, either in the form of mentoring student teachers, or leadership roles they are allocated. All of these feelings are experienced because

they have had several years of classroom teaching practice. What is of great interest is the contrast in the range of emotions exposed in the analysis of the haiku poems.

#### **5.4.12 Analysis of the Haiku**

The desired outcome of the haiku was to provide a snapshot on topics that the participant focused on after the interview. By limiting the participants to 17 syllables, I was hoping that the most pertinent topics would be written about. When reading the haiku as a group there was an overwhelming sense of optimism, words such as together, stronger, helping, and learning all featured. I believe that this is a true indicator of experienced teacher's overarching feelings, they have survived in teaching because they see value in making a difference and that self-efficacy motivates them. This sits in agreement with the recent Ofsted report (2019) that found that teachers genuinely enjoy teaching and building relationships with their students. What is noteworthy is the disparity between the emotions they discussed in section 5.5.11 and the words they selected for the haiku poems. Emotions such as fear, resentment and frustrations appeared in the transcripts, compared to words such as together, stronger, helping, and learning all featured in the haiku poems. Surprisingly, the interview process and walking interviews themselves appeared in the haiku poems, topics that were not anticipated.

#### **5.5 Summary**

Chapter 5 presents the findings from the twelve walking interviews undertaken with experienced primary school teachers currently working in an urban environment. The initial literature review justified investigating experienced teachers based on the three following reasons: there is a large amount of research on NQTs and strategies to support them, experienced teachers tend to be more effective due to 'craft

knowledge', and losing an experienced teacher increases the negative impact on both the school stability and student outcomes. This chapter analysed the data collected, then identified and discussed key themes that emerged from the analysis. In this research study, all twelve participants described leader's actions that made them feel both supported and unsupported. Section 5.5.1 reflects Hallinger's (2011) findings that the leader's practices influence teacher outcomes. Figure 10 demonstrates how these key themes are interconnected, highlighting the significant role leaders play in experienced teachers' professional lives. In the following chapter, I bring together a discussion of the above themes and the significance of the data uncovered.

## Chapter Six - Back to the Research Questions

*'Practice makes perfect  
We will never stop learning  
Together we can'  
Carolyn*

### 6.1 Reflection

Chapter five provided collective narratives regarding the participants' working understandings of being experienced classroom teachers. Analysis of the above narratives have provided rich descriptions, which have been condensed and summarised into eleven key themes. In the light of this analysis, leadership influences every single theme. This reflects the work of Sutchter, Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas (2019) and Allen and Sims (2018) who suggest that leaders have the biggest influence on teachers in their professional lives. This influence ranges from the professional development a teacher receives, the teaching assignments allocated to a teacher, the culture of the school, trust levels within the organisation, and the workload individual teachers' experience. This research study adds that an experienced teacher will respond differently and experience different emotions to these influences because they have experience in the classroom. Leadership is the linchpin in terms of whether a teacher's school experience is positive or otherwise. If a teacher's experience is positive there is more likelihood that the teacher will remain in the classroom. It has been shown that a stable teaching work force benefits not only the teacher but also the student body.

There is a great deal of research about why teachers leave the teaching profession e.g. working conditions including workload and support from leaders or colleagues (Allen & Sims, 2018b; Behrstock-Sherratt, 2016). Yet England still faces a shortfall of effective primary school teachers, especially in certain geographical regions. This knowledge guided me to interview experienced teachers who had stayed in the teaching profession and who intended to return to teaching the following term.

The initial purpose of this research was to investigate what professional support experienced teachers were receiving, and supports that they wished to receive from their head teacher or leadership team. This thesis sought to answer the overarching question, '*How are experienced primary teachers, in urban settings, influenced by their head teacher in their professional lives?*' Before turning to an overall conclusion in the next chapter, this chapter will consider the sub questions briefly before refocusing on the overall question.

## **6.2 What Kinds of Support do Teacher's Value?**

Each teacher's own value system reflected the supports that they wanted, needed, or valued. Not one of the participants mentioned more money for themselves, though they did reflect that the educational system as a whole needed investing in. The supports they did discuss (though some of them expressed guilt at even wanting them because they knew that their leaders may not be able to provide them), were very practical. They wanted leaders who listened, understood their frustration and supported them with appropriate actions. John gives an example of leaving a school after only one year because:

*'I found the leadership at [school's name] very difficult, I didn't feel like there was that communication. I didn't feel like you have the links and that strong bond with other teachers' (John: 45-46)*

Espinoza *et al.* (2018) argue that leaders play a central role attracting, supporting and retaining talented teachers. John's extract demonstrates that to be the case, leaders do have a major influence on whether a teacher feels support and stays in teaching. In his situation, it influenced the whole culture of the school, which resulted in John leaving the teaching profession.

The participants in this research valued a work life balance and Boyd *et al.* (2011) argue supportive working conditions have a quantifiable impact on the retention of teachers. Statements such as, '*Surely ten hours a day is enough?*' (Millie: 208), '*Let's be realistic no one gets a lunch*' (Victoria: 260), '*Paperwork is just huge [no time] to do it*' (Donna: 152) and '*Long hours, with no family balance*' (Barbara: 97) indicate a frustration at achieving a realistic balance. Johnson, Kraft and Papay (2012) argue that teachers who feel that they do not have enough time to meet the needs of the students are more likely to leave. In agreement, Santoro (2018) adds that as teachers take on more tasks they feel less prepared to meet the needs of their students, this feeling of failure has been cited as a reason for teacher attrition.

Other kinds of supports teachers valued were time to plan and work with colleagues, alongside being given the opportunity to work with and observe successful teaching in similar contexts to the school within which they worked. This reflects Hargreaves (2001) and Perryman and Calvert's (2019) research where colleagues play a significant role in how teachers experience their work and workplace conditions.

Donna, Carolyn and Cathi all highlighted the benefit of having the opportunity to work side by side with colleagues:

*[benefits of] colleague working together so it's not working with people that you working with every day, in terms of your team, but it is across teams so you don't get put in a silo. So you can sometimes shine a light on different things so that someone you're working particularly close to wouldn't*

*necessarily be able to see so that's how it's working at the moment' (Donna: 81-85)*

*Carolyn adds: 'my partner teacher was incredible...so I was lucky enough to have extra support' (Carolyn: 29-30)*

*Cathi also highlights the importance of working together: 'we plan everything together – it works out really well' (Cathi: 29-30)*

Kraft and Papay (2014) add that the experience acquired while working with colleagues is fundamental in sustaining growth in a teacher's own capabilities. In Allen and Sims' (2018) research, they concluded that having opportunities to collaborate with colleagues was one of the most valuable supports that teachers cited for staying in a school. This literature illuminates the participants' data. Carolyn saw her partner teacher as a support and she felt 'lucky' to have such a good working relationship. Whilst Cathi noted that planning everything together benefited the whole year group, *'it is those relationships that you build with your colleagues that keep me where I am' (Cathi: 41-42)*. In agreement, when Rebecca was asked what was her greatest support, she summed it up as, *'Colleagues, yes colleagues!'* (Rebecca: 30-31).

Finally, all teachers wanted recognition for good work and a school culture in which they felt accepted and respected. As John states:

*'there was good support.. [the school] felt almost as if everyone was in this together, it didn't feel like a massive hierarchy. You did know the head was in charge and that felt good' (John: 27-28)*

John's current head teacher recognises his passion for outdoor learning and his strengths in geography and history, she provides opportunity for him to teach using outdoor learning, he continues;

*I am thoroughly enjoying [teaching] because the head teacher can see my skills and I have been given roles that I'm really happy with (John: 60-61)*



This clearly reflects Johnson and Birkeland (2003) research where they suggest the feeling of being successful and having your work recognised is a central consideration in a teachers' decision to stay in their school.

### **6.3 What can Senior Staff do to Support Teachers in their Professional Lives?**

Section 2.5 of the literature review established that it is not a leader's style of leadership that is important but the actions they take which makes a teacher feel supported or not. Table 1 summarises educational literature that lists actions a leader can strive for, to be deemed effective in the school context. In Podolsky *et al.*, (2016) research, teachers cited leader support as one of the most influential factors in their decision to stay or leave a school and all the teachers in this research wanted to work in an environment where they felt safe, respected, and valued which clearly reflects the educational discourse around teacher retention. Smith (2016) argues that leaders who are genuinely committed to the well-being of their staff have the greatest effect on the positive culture in their schools and with that a reduction in attrition rates. Maxwell *et al.*, (2017) maintain the benefits of a positive school culture have been widely acknowledged in educational research. This can be seen in Barbara's extract:

*[if the leader is] quite supportive, that makes a huge difference when you are treated like a person (Barbara: 34-35)*

What emerged from this research is the interrelationships of the themes (see figure 10). In order to answer the question, 'What can senior staff do to support staff in their professional lives?' it is important to understand that effective leader support is complicated, hard to define and perceived differently for each teacher. For example,

by providing professional development to a teacher it may appear supportive to that teacher but may be interpreted as favouritism by another. Karen provided an example of this;

*'it depends on who you speak to and it also depends on the strength of your character, for example, if I wanted it, I would probably get it, but if you are a younger colleague, who maybe is not so confident, it may pass you by.'*  
(Karen: 135-137)

In Allen and Sims's (2018) research, they argue that the 'audit culture' and ineffective training our experienced teachers are receiving has demotivated and hampered teachers' own professional development. Government policy often caused anxiety for participants.

*'Scary isn't it when you don't know, you have so much responsibility and so much change this year with early years.'* (Carolyn: 103-104)

*'The powers of B don't trust anybody. It has to fit in a box. It has to be ticked, and it has to be double-checked.'* (Carl: 269)

Crawford (2007) highlights the leaders' role in helping teachers cope with their negative emotions especially when it comes to policy. If leaders can act as a filter between the government and teacher, several participants saw this as supportive.

*'the government chucks down [policies], the school has to deal, some might deal with it better than others. Teachers shouldn't have to be doing this, they should just be coming in and showing off what they know well, doing what they do best, but so often I see teachers worrying about stuff that they shouldn't have to worry about.'* (Carl: 282-285)

In Santoro's (2018) research, she offers that teacher demoralisation is rooted in frustration from ongoing value conflicts with pedagogical policies, reform mandate, and school practices. By asking teachers to deep mark/have literacy hour/place learning objectives on all display boards/be subjected to classroom observations on

a whim/do excessive student assessment/teach to the test, teachers experience frustration and resentment to a profession that they had initially viewed as a long term career choice. It appears that leaders need to evaluate the need to follow the law but also protect their teachers. Victoria's head teacher appeared to reach that balance. For example;

*'The deep marking, he said we are not doing that, our children don't read the feedback, we don't need different coloured pens, and we are not doing that. It has proven that it is not going to make a huge difference it is just someone's idea that it might. And he was just really reasonable about these things and that's what made a lovely place to work' (Victoria: 83-89)*

Other supports that teachers deemed of value were if senior staff looked for opportunities to provide collaborative teaching, planning and marking. This clearly replicates established research. Bubb and Earley (2007) list creating a culture of collaboration; Harris (2008) describes it as promoting positive activities and interactions across people; Shatzer et al., (2014) highlight the need to foster an environment which engages the whole school community; Allen and Sims (2018b) argue leaders should provide opportunities for teachers to learn from collaborative or mentoring arrangements and Hargreaves (2019) offers that effective school leaders should encourage, engage and empower teachers in the collaborative quest of running the school. In the following extract, Cathi demonstrates how important it was for her to work in a collaborative environment.

*'My husband and I said we will give it till Christmas and as long as [the head teacher] keeps his promises that he has made to me...he has promised that [a colleague] will be working alongside me because last year she was called towards the year six so much I was left and she wasn't in PPA she wasn't there with us, she wasn't making decisions with us.'* (Cathi: 186-192)

She was prepared to leave the school if her head teacher did not provide time for them to work and make decisions together.

In this research, senior staff were seen as supportive if they practiced their listening to understand skills instead of listening to respond skills. Sims (2017) describes that as attending to a conversation in an intentional, active manner that communicates to the speaker responsiveness and compassion. This point was significant to Cathi who stated:

*'in an ideal world! A head teacher that listens with an open mind and doesn't come with their own preconceived notions' (Cathi: 83-84)*

This is similar to Berkovich and Eyal's (2018) results where they concluded that a leaders' ability to listen empathically had a positive correlation on teachers' emotions.

Allen and Sims (2018b) present an additional positive action to support and retain teachers. They advise that leaders need to provide teachers with stable and appropriate teaching assignments. Ingersoll (2019) argues that by assigning a teacher a class that they have not trained in can change a successful quality teacher into one who is struggling. Karen, John, Jenna, Cathi, Carolyn and Rebecca all had negative experiences of being moved year group or in Carolyn and Rebecca's case a whole key stage. Participants of this research wanted leaders to respect an individual's desire to teach in a particular year group, placing value on what was best for the teacher and not always what was best for the school.

Research participants also wanted the senior staff to provide opportunities for teachers to develop professionally, providing appropriate career professional development in a timely manner. Much has been written about professional development and what constitutes effective CPD (see section 3.3). In fact, Bell (2019) argues that providing opportunities for teachers to develop professionally

should be a core task of leadership. Barbara linked professional development to feeling supported by her school:

*'Another way [to feel supported] is just putting professional opportunity your way when they listen to whether you want to do X, Y, Z, and letting you be part of the school and part of the schools development.'* (Barbara: 35-36)

Allen and Sims (2018a) present coaching as a means to help experienced teachers move up their own learning curve. Carolyn experienced this in her professional life:

*'I got to observe outstanding teachers and they came to observe me, so that was supportive'* (Carolyn: 64-65)

Allen and Sims (2018b) also argue that leaders can support teachers in their professional lives by analysing the quality of the school's working environment and targeting improvements. If leaders standardise certain routines, such as discipline, it reduces the number of decisions teachers have to make each day, which then enables the teachers to focus on developing and practicing new skills. Feeling trusted also enabled the teachers to focus on developing and practicing new skills. Tschannen-Moran & Gareis (2017) argue that nurturing faculty trust in the leader is crucial and is articulated in Barbara's following comment;

*'he [the current head teacher] has a high level of professional trust. The teachers have the freedom, and confidence, to assess, reflect and adapt...not just sticking to a lesson plan'* (Barbara: 107-112)

Experienced teachers wanted senior management to demonstrating competent decision making and reassure them of their job security. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) suggest that leaders who are leading schools effectively are those who are working hard at fostering and maintaining trust with their teachers and are

consistently demonstrating competent decision-making. Additionally, these principals are open and honest with their teachers. Karen argued that experienced teachers are more expensive than newly qualified staff so she had a feeling of job uncertainty. She wanted her leaders to reassure her that they were making competent decisions with both the finances of the school and her career.

*'you know that [the leaders] are going to hire the best of the cheap candidates' (Karen:170-171)*

Finally, experienced teachers also wanted recognition that they often undertook additional roles because they were experienced. Allen and Sims (2018) argue that teacher shortages often mean that leaders give teachers too much responsibility too early. This was John's experience;

*'because I don't want to go into a leadership role myself, at this time I've probably been teaching long enough that people are wondering why he should be going up to assistant headship, but I'm thinking I just don't want to.'* (John: 91-93)

A consideration here could be to provide time of in lieu to a teacher who had worked outside of their normal schedule. Carolyn offers this has a huge support:

*'in order for some of my children to achieve their SATS they needed the booster classes. So I then did a booster club on Saturday morning but then [the head teacher], really lovely, offers time off in lieu' (Carolyn: 354-357)*

Most of these actions have a financial implication on the school budget which is why many of these supports are not provided to experienced teachers. Still, with careful management of finances and some creativity there may be more opportunities available to leadership teams.

#### 6.4 What can be learnt from the Teachers Themselves?

One notable feature of the research data was that all of the teachers concerned with this project showed that they were serious about improving the lives of their students, and clearly the teachers cared a great deal about the children they worked with. They all had a strong sense of loyalty towards the children and experienced emotions because they were asking the students to do things which went against their own pedagogy beliefs. Santoro described this conflict in her 2018 work. Teachers experience ethical concerns as their values conflicts with pedagogical policies. These concerns may lead to teacher demoralisation and in some cases teachers leaving their profession completely.

Cathi highlighted this:

*Some days they [the children] just have bad days. And those bad days were on a SATs day. I feel bad for them. I feel bad for them, there's so much pressure on the children as well, to do well, because we impart that pressure as well' (Cathi; 157-160)*

What is of note, is that their loyalty did not always stretch to the schools within which they worked, especially if they perceived their leaders or leadership team to be unsupportive. As mentioned in Perryman and Calvert's (2019) study there is a discourse of disappointment that hangs over English teaching, driving those who might have a significant contribution to make, away from the profession. As previously noted, not one of the 12 participants anticipate returning to the classroom fulltime in the following September. Each teacher had found a way to stay in education but not 100% classroom based. Karen who covers PPA for other classroom teachers;

*'speaking to other teachers who are classroom based teacher - I am happy in my job - I'm happy - but they are not - nobody - none of them - every time I*

*... speak to them the fulltime classroom teachers are not happy and I have to be very careful not to be overly joyful in my role' (Karen: 235-238).*

This reflects Allen and Sims (2018) research where they argue that it is critical that teaching needs to be enjoyable. If it is not, school will be unable to attract or retain the staff they need to run a successful school.

Many of the teachers discussed their desire to feel safe and as a result supported in their roles within their schools. This manifested itself in several ways. The most striking was when leaders supported teachers in front of parents, especially if the parents were acting aggressively or hostile. This act of unity appears incredibly important to teachers. Tschannen-Moran & Gareis (2017) argue that nurturing faculty and school trust is crucial for leaders. Both Carl and Kate highlighted this:

*'he [the head teacher] always defended the staff, they could not be wrong with the parents (Carl: 65-66)*

*'The parents complain about everything and again you feel supported if a parent comes in and complains and then you are supported by [your leader] (Kate: 91-93)*

Many of the experienced teachers interviewed wanted opportunities outside of their classroom responsibilities. For some, that didn't mean leadership responsibilities but the opportunity to engage with the children outside of the strict curriculum, for example by engaging in outdoor learning activities. This was hugely important to John. His head teacher is incredible supportive in embracing his love of the outdoors:

*'the head teacher is very good, in the education system at the minute where you could argue it is very narrow you need to have your children writing, reading and doing their grammar ... she doesn't want that. She wants to remain creative and actually engages children a little bit more in education and gives them a wider range and that is where these afternoons are*



*good....the school has got lovely grounds... I will come up with creative ways to try and improve topics... so it could be sound mapping, which works great with music. They go out and find a space and they sit down and listen and maybe they write or draw the bigger noise and then draw smaller sizes and come up with a map' (John: 241-251)*

When listening to John's interviews you can clearly hear in his voice how important this aspect of his job is. He says it is these moments that keep him in teaching.

During the walking interviews, I did not ask participants directly why they teach or why they have stayed in teaching, my focus was about supports they were receiving or not receiving. Nias (1999, p.67) suggests most primary school teachers are 'fond of children', and unsolicited all the participants talked about the reason they stayed in teaching was because it was all about the children and doing the 'right thing' for them. Roofe (2018, p.459) refers to this as 'The urban teacher's moral purpose'. The teachers' commitment to meeting the needs of students regardless of their circumstances and a teacher's desire to make a positive difference in the lives of his/her students. Mielke (2019) argues that, one of the underlying threads of purpose is doing things that benefit others. This is demonstrated in the following extracts from this study. I have listed all the participants as I think this demonstrates the weight of this topic.

- *'I love being with children and I feel that it was my vocation. I love the kids, it's my downfall, I'll work harder for them and do things that I shouldn't be doing because of them and on top of what I would have to do to please the authorities, instead of what we know what really matters.'* (Karen: 8, 246-248)
- *'For me the biggest progress is if children come to school happy and thriving. That's my win.'* (Donna: 297-298)
- *'We all want the best for the children and that's why we are there because you wouldn't go through this and still be there if it wasn't for the children.'* (Rebecca: 241-243)

- *'It was about creating really, well-rounded nice human beings, who could read and write as well.'* (Victoria: 117)
- *'You have produced children who do enjoy coming to school.'* (Cathi: 416)
- *'I love the kids, they are hard work (pause) they are not hard work. They have needs, they have a lot of needs and they are unpredictable. In many cases severe needs. So that means, it's not easy, you have to be organised and you have to be flexible and you have to be able to know how to respond, but you learn that.'* (Carl: 172-175)
- *'I love teaching.'* (Carolyn: 366)
- *'(I had) a kid in my class, who had severe behavioural needs, his dad is in prison, his mom was homeless... I just tried to give him lots of love....I love teaching. (Millie: 201) You're just trying to do what's best for the children.'* (Millie: 74)
- *'The children loved coming to school they saw us as their safe haven because they didn't get it at home' (Kate: 85-85) 'we say to ourselves is it going to benefit the children?'* (Kate: 260-261)
- *'You are in position to make a difference for the good of the children (Jenna: 153-154) a huge amount of good will (is given) and as a teacher you want the children to have the experience so you will put these things on because you feel bad if they don't have these experiences.'* (Jenna: 301-303)
- *'I take out children and we navigate around the moors - so I do a junior 10 tors club which helps them navigate, helps them cook for themselves, helps them erect tents and so on, map reading and then in the summer we go out and do a 10 tors event, which I love it's a really good one. But that takes a lot of effort and you don't get paid extra for it, more of the love of it, so that is brilliant to see them succeed in that way that is a real positive of the job, an enjoyable bit for sure.'* (John: 229-234)

Adamson and Darling-Hammond (2012) presume that high salaries are important for recruiting and retaining qualified teachers. Yet, from the above comments, it appears that teachers do not go into teaching for the money or the holidays, they teach for the children.

## **6.5 What can be learnt from the Data Collection Methods used**

'Walking is a wonderful way of gathering data' states Moles (2008 p.4). I would add that walking interviews are not only a wonderful way of gathering data but they also gather valid and reliable data, which in turn, can contribute to new knowledge in the educational field. Chapter 4 presented the design and conceptual framework used to answer the research questions in this qualitative study. Research ethics and quality assurance was addressed and a justification of walking interviews presented.

Alongside the interviews, a haiku poem was requested from the participants. This idea came from attending a research seminar where a researcher had asked woman in prison to write a poem about their experiences. The results were incredibly moving and insightful: leading the researcher to argue that this data was more valid than the data she had collected during her face-to-face interviews.

The idea of asking my participants to write a haiku seemed novel and not too time consuming for the teachers. I was already asking the participants to take time out of their day to walk and because of the pilot study, I was interviewing in the summer, as time would be limited in September. Drifte and Jubb (2020) offers that the purpose of a haiku is to capture the moment and to share it; to try to get the reader to feel what you are feeling. As noted a haiku poem is often used in a primary school class, I myself have used them for topics such as the start of Spring or to describe a Viking invasion. When I reflected on why I asked the participants to write a poem, I realised it was less about collecting data, I wanted a reason to contact them post-walk. I wanted to acknowledge how valuable their contribution to society was and part of me felt if I did all this during the interview it would be recorded and could be seen as my own personal bias – so having a reason to contact them post interview seemed like a

good idea. However, what justifies the inclusion of the haiku poems, in this thesis, is the data that was collected.

On comparison, walking interviews are in the moment with speech and movement unlimited. Participants could walk for as long as they liked and coupled with semi-structured interview questions participants talked about a wide range of topics. Yet, a haiku poem was penned post walk, with no topic guidance, with a limited number of syllables and most likely was written sitting down, stationary.

I argue that the un-limitedness of the walking interviews gave the teachers the space and permission to vent all their frustrations but when they were restricted and bound to guidelines for the poems, they found the purpose in their roles.

<b>Walking interviews</b>	<b>Haiku poem</b>
In the moment	Time to think
Moving	Still
Unlimited words	Limited to 17 syllables
Semi-structured questions	No topic guidance

When comparing the two forms, the walking interviews often had a backward perspective whilst several of the haiku poems felt forward looking. For example in John's haiku, he uses the words 'hopefully helping'. This clearly reflects Perryman and Calvert's (2019) study, they argue that one of the main reasons for becoming a teacher is to make a difference. Then in comparison, in his walking interview John

describes his frustration at the government moving goal posts (John: 75), being expected to take on leadership roles that he does not want (John: 91), or having to have a student teacher in his class just because he is experienced (John: 392).

Barbara is another good example of her forward-looking haiku, she writes 'future learning starts'. Whilst in her walking interviews she reflects on her frustration of head teachers asking their teachers to tick boxes (Barbara: 81), her frustration of experienced teachers feeling trapped because they cannot move sideways and because they are expensive (Barbara: 86-88), alongside the resentment she feels working long hours with no work life balance (Barbara: 97).

My favourite haiku is Jenna's (see section 7.7). Her haiku captures the entire research project for me - in just 17 syllables. We met at the end of the summer holidays, she had brought her dogs on the walking interview and we walked much further than any of the other participants. She showed me short cuts through the city and cafés I did not know existed. We talked about teaching, the love of teaching and the frustrations of teaching. We talked about urban verses rural schools and experienced teachers verses newly qualified. We talked about the supports that she feels all teachers should have but in reality the unlikeliness of them getting them. Jenna represents the 1000's of teachers who turn up every September to make a difference in a student's life. She is the experienced teacher who has gained craft knowledge over her career, who has worked more hours than she is contracted to do, and she is one of the teachers who will never return full time to the classroom because it is just too hard.

## 6.6 Summary

It is clear from this research study that leaders influence all aspects of a teacher's professional experience (see figure 10). Having looked in-depth at the data, the findings suggest that experienced primary school teachers value many different professional supports, from supportive colleagues to appropriate professional development; a leader's actions play a pivotal role in how these teachers experience and perceive these supports. Section 5.5.5 clearly demonstrates that trust between all school stakeholders including other teachers and staff, the parents and governors, but particularly the leader or leadership team of the school, is of the utmost importance. A lack of trust increases the likelihood that a teacher will leave the school, either to move to another school or potentially the teaching profession entirely. An open door trusting relationship between teachers and their leaders appears paramount for the well-being of experienced teachers.

Additionally, experienced teachers appear to face additional emotions because they are experienced teachers, for example, fear, frustration and resentment. Some teachers are exposed to higher levels of responsibility they do not wish for, whilst others find the additional assessment and audit culture frustrating. An unforeseen discovery was the fear factor associated with being the experienced teacher. Fearing that, because you are more expensive to employ, you might be the first to lose your job, due to budget shortfalls. They expressed frustration at some of the roles assigned to them because they have experience, for example being a student mentor, or leading a key curriculum, or having to pick up classes mid-year if another teacher leaves or even something as simple as having to explain school routines or where the stationery cupboard is to new staff. As seen, 69% of teachers enter the teaching profession 'to make a difference' (Perryman & Calvert, 2019). These

additional demands on their time take them away from their primary role of teaching and were often not compensated for or even acknowledged. Having said that, the participants were in general very optimistic about their roles and their future. Their frustrations were, more often than not, ones that were outside of their own leader's remit and therefore could only be addressed at an educational policy level.

## **Chapter Seven - Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **7.1 Introduction - Drawing Together the Threads**

In this final chapter, I revisit my research journey. In the introduction to this thesis, I outlined the current challenge England is facing in the recruitment and retention of quality primary school teachers. As previously mentioned, this shortfall may be mitigated if experienced teachers stayed in the teaching profession. If experienced teachers did stay in the profession, there is evidence that not only schools, students and society would benefit as a whole but the individual teacher who stayed would also benefit. If teachers can stay engaged and fulfilled, schools save money in the reduction of teacher turnover, but in addition, students have the potential of experiencing an enhanced school experience with additional short and long-term benefits. Teachers are not only key in equipping students with knowledge, but also in equipping students with how to use that knowledge, work collaboratively and take responsibility for their actions. In my opinion, there is no profession more important than teaching – all our future nurses, scientists, horticulturist, environmentalist and educators are dependent on teachers right now. Life opportunities for today's students, especially for those with additional needs, are created daily.

In order to justify my research outcomes, I have sought to represent, as accurately and as explicitly as possible, the stated views of my interviewees through extensive quotations. In this thesis, I have demonstrated that experienced teachers are one of the most important elements of a school. They have a huge impact on a student's school experience as their 'craft knowledge' and experience in the classroom tends to make them more effective. Teachers who are more effective produce positive outcomes for their students and, more often than not, for themselves. I have



highlighted that leaders strongly influence, both positively and negatively, the school experience and the wellbeing of these teachers, and clearly demonstrated that perceived supports are highly interconnected. By investigating and understanding how experienced primary teachers can be supported in their professional lives, my desire was to shine a light on this important group of educators with the hope of producing new insights. With the intention that these insights lead to concrete actions that leaders, leadership teams and policy makers can take in order for experienced teachers to feel supported in their professional lives.

In order to explore the main research question I conducted a study with experienced teachers, consisting of twelve walking interviews, which were audio recorded, transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. By exploring the concepts of leadership, trust, and culture alongside the notion of being an experienced teacher, several themes emerged. Key emerging themes were then selected and discussed in the light of the literature review presented in chapter two and three.

My results suggest that the teacher's own school leader or leadership team has the largest influence on the supports that an experienced teacher receives, has access to, or perceives as being available to them. Each teacher has a different perspective on their understanding of this even if they are working in the same school as another teacher. This reflects my ontology of multiple realities that are socially constructed by each individual. Having awareness of this is significant, each participant wants or needs different supports during their professional life, and therefore there is not one easy fix to England's teacher retention challenge.

Regarding school leaders it can be seen that they impact many facets of the school life and with it the teacher's lived experience. Their actions and interactions establish

the culture of the school and as a result the working environment. As previously stated, the leaders' own leadership style seems less significant than previously thought in educational research; it appears that the leaders' actions are what is important. These actions take many forms and can include, but not limited to; empathic listening; communicating a school vision; establishing a robust school discipline policy; focusing on a teacher's professional practice and providing opportunity for professional development alongside building strong stakeholder relationships.

A significant finding, which is in line with the current educational discourse, is the importance of appropriate, continuous, professional development. From an experienced teacher's perspective their own teaching education may have been a traditional, front loaded, four year university degree or a one year intensive PGCE. Evidence from this study suggests that what they are actually doing in the classroom now bares little reflection on the curriculum and assessment requirements they had previously studied. This continuous curriculum change and new policy regulations limits the resources available for the teachers to pursue topics of their own interest, often resulting in a feeling of being unsupported in their own professional career as they have no choice in the professional development offered to them. Several participants discussed their desire to have the opportunity to work with other quality teachers in similar contexts to them and many participants voiced their disappointment with what they actually received, for example, half an hour on a new assessment computer program or an afternoon on covering mandatory health and safety and GDPR issues.

I'm in agreement with Allen and Sims (2018b) who call for teachers' professional development to reflect that of the medical profession, moving away from the front

loaded input to a more gradual and supported involvement. If experienced teachers are provided with opportunities for appropriate training, such as deliberate practice where the teachers set their own tasks, alongside collaboration and constructive feedback, benefits such as teaching longevity, improved overall well-being and thriving professionals may be seen.

No two teachers are alike - each teacher is experiencing their professional journey through their own lens of experience and personal knowledge, so professional development needs to reflect this. Evidence shows that teachers at different stages of their careers prioritise different aspects of their working role from classroom management to pedagogy. By enabling teachers to have a voice in the professional development content, to be actively involved, to have opportunity for collaboration and quality support in form of feedback and mentoring, a teacher's own self efficacy increases, teaching quality improves and with it there is great potential for the students' experience to be enhanced.

At first glance, the importance of a leader articulating a school vision, or establishing a strong school discipline policy does not necessarily appear to be a support to experienced teachers. Nonetheless, when drilling down, what these actions permit is to allow the teacher to focus on pedagogy and not on student behaviour. If a teacher is in a setting where they can teach the students, and not in an unpredictable or unstable environment, they have the opportunity to develop their own pedagogy and focus on student learning. Teaching in a stable environment also provides the teacher with the opportunity to engage in the more creative aspects of a teaching role. This often results in an increase in their own self efficacy, which is well documented as an antidote to teacher attrition.

Research has also shown, and this was reflected in my findings, that if a leader practices empathic listening it has a positive effect on a teacher's emotions with an added bonus of increasing a teacher's overall well-being. The teacher feels valued, respected and supported in their role if they are actively listened to. It may not be within the leader's capabilities to change the circumstances but the act of listening creates a feeling of trust and understanding between them.

My results also suggested that teachers felt supported when their leaders disseminate government policies in a thoughtful and managed approach, carefully balancing the requirement to act legally and the need to avoid unnecessary tick box exercises. Experienced teachers did not feel supported if they were asked to complete tasks that appeared meaningless to them as there was no benefit to their students, for example, increasing classroom observations and not providing constructive and supportive feedback; requiring teachers to mark in three different colour pens when there is no research to justify the benefit to the student; or insisting on learning objectives being placed on all display boards the night before a parent's evening. If leaders did not act as a filter from outside pressures, teachers felt vulnerable and as a result unsupported.

The results also highlighted that teachers felt unsupported when they were asked to complete tasks that challenged their pedagogy or jeopardised their relationships with colleagues or students. For example, if a teacher was asked to enter a student for a high stakes test when that student struggles with test anxiety, or they were asked to report back on the quality of a colleague's teaching ability, these requests often resulted in unrepairable damage to their trust levels within the school.

From the research it does appear that leaders and senior staff play a substantial role in the work-load a teacher experiences, whether contractual or self assigned by the teacher themselves. The decisions that the leader, or leadership team, make regarding the class that the teacher is assigned; the number of students in that class; the abilities of those students; the assessment and marking expectation placed upon the teachers; the provision of plan, prepare and assessment (PPA) time; alongside obligations outside of the classroom such as clubs; playground coverage; student teachers and parent's evening, all of these activities impact the work-load a teacher bears. From the analysis, many participants mentioned that, they were better teachers because they were experienced but because they were experienced their workload increased, so they often felt punished for being capable. For example they may be given a student teacher to mentor, or paired with a weak/lazy teacher, or given a class with students who had greater needs or even assigned a year six class because of the SATs. This additional work load was rarely balanced with additional pay or recognition and sometimes resulted in a feeling of resentment towards other members of staff.

An unanticipated support that several of the experienced teachers wanted from their leaders was reassurance of their job security. Experienced teachers tend to be more expensive than newly qualified teachers and so during cut backs some feared that they would be replaced. In summary, my research suggests that experienced teachers feel supported if they are listened to, treated fairly, respected to do their job and trusted to make decisions that are best for their students.

Emerging from the data collected from the twelve walking interviews it becomes apparent that teacher's colleagues provide a huge emotional support network for experienced teachers. We know from the literature this thesis has examined that

teaching can be a stressful occupation, and one coping strategy that teachers may employ is turning for help, either to school counsellors or to a teacher colleague. The idea of having someone who you could talk to, in confidence, was very important. Therefore, the second major source of support for experienced teachers are the teacher's own colleagues. Sharing an experience and understanding the context in which they work is hugely important to feeling supported in the workplace. All the participants interviewed discussed the significance of colleague relationships, not just with fellow teachers but other adults working in the school from teaching assistants to educational psychologists. It is these relationships that teachers build with their colleagues that often keeps them in a school, or conversely, if colleague relationships aren't strong it is contributing factor to why teachers leave a school. Colleague support may take the form of a simple check in, pat on the back, or actively taking time to mark or plan together. Colleague relationships come under the broader heading of school culture. Some participants talked about their school having a culture of support and an attitude of let's deal with this together, whereas the teachers who felt unsupported described their culture as unwelcoming and in some situations obstructive.

## **7.2 My Research Journey**

My perspective was initially influenced by my upbringing, then shaped my own personal teaching experience. Raised on an adventure centre and surrounded by progressive educators I believed you learnt everything by 'doing'. I watched young people 'struggle' with problem solving and grow in their own independent thinking outside of formal education. I began work as a city primary school teacher, just as the national curriculum was being established. I observed both students and

teachers responding to education in unique ways. I then moved to America and had the opportunity to teach across a variety of school models.

Outside of education, I have also benefited from past life experiences of intensive project management, handling large data sets alongside embracing the importance of civic duty. This project has confirmed the virtue of being well-organised and systematic in my approach to data collecting and recoding. However, once walking interviews were selected for the data collection, my own development and transformation as a researcher took place.

One of the unforeseen benefits of selecting walking interviews was my discovery of Plymouth and subsequently a more positive view of the city. By asking the participants to select their location and decide on the route, I experienced many new areas of Plymouth that I had not visited before. All the participants chose places they liked to visit and it made a significant impact on me. I discovered small immaculately kept parks, short cuts through the city, and cafes that I had no idea existed. All these locations made me view Plymouth through their eyes, and why they lived and worked here. Echoing the experience of Moles (2008) where walking whilst talking allowed new spaces to be discovered during the interview, during my research, I truly discovered Plymouth and this research enabled me to connect to a city with which I had no previous attachment with. As Riley (2013 p.28) states, 'we bring to our experience of place our own history and culture. Our day-to-day encounters with others can make us feel that there is a place for us...'. This research has enabled me to connect to Plymouth on a level that at first did not appear possible.

Most importantly, through this development, the significance of primary school teachers and the impact they have on our future generations never wavered.

Unfortunately, this is where one of my biggest frustrations lie, as in the last five decades relatively little has changed as reported by Kirby and Grissmer (1993). Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo (2009), offer that schools retain their teachers when they have strong collaborative relationships among teachers, parents, and administrators and where the learning climate for students is safe and non-disruptive, regardless of the backgrounds of their students. Teachers are often creative, conscientious individuals who were not attracted to teaching because of the paperwork and bureaucracy. Our educational policies are frustrating and demoralising some of our best teachers, as Carl highlighted earlier:

*'[during Ofsted] one woman, who was my mentor, went to pieces and had a breakdown. When you could bet your mortgage on her' (125-129).*

This leads me to argue that any new knowledge on actions that leaders and policy makers can do to improve the school culture, not just locally but also nationally, has the potential in reducing teacher turnover.

Both Townsend (2014) and Biesta *et al.* (2019) highlight a recurring theme in educational research, which is, research should contribute to the improvement in educational practice and produce useful knowledge. So, on the level of my practice, it can be seen from the analysis that leaders play a major role in providing support for experienced teachers in their professional lives. Literally every action a leader makes within the school context has the potential to impact the teachers within that school and therefore can be seen as supportive or not. This is the most valuable finding in the research for my own personal practice.



### 7.3 Limitations of this Study

As the analysis in this study, was based on insights drawn from a sample of experienced primary school teachers working in urban environments, the findings are most relevant to this group of teachers. Schreier (2018) suggests that in qualitative research the extent we can generalise is linked closely to the population studied. Ritchie *et al.* (2014) refers to this as empirical generalisation. Bassey's (1999, p.46) concept of 'fuzzy generalisation' might be useful here. Bassey offers this as a qualified generalisation, carrying the idea of possibility but no certainty. He suggests that reports of findings should include some level of uncertainty. For example using 'it is possible that', 'it may be', 'it is likely to be' when writing up the thesis. In other words, my research has measured uncertainty, but does give a picture of experienced teachers working in urban environments. It is acknowledged that this research is small-scale and care should be taken when generalising from this size of sample, but valuable points have been raised. Thomas (2017) argues that limited participants can provide a good understanding of the subject of a study, but it is acknowledged that its capacity for the application of the findings to other contexts may be limited.

In this research, there is possibility but no surety, that all urban inner-city experienced primary school teachers in Plymouth experience similar support, lack of support and emotions in their professional lives. This may be extended to all of England's urban schools, especially as the academies programme is specific to England and England takes a slightly different approach to accountability and policy developments in relation to the rest of the UK (Jerrim & Shure, 2016). Yet, the results would be less valid for urban inner-city experienced teachers in America, other European countries or indeed other parts of the UK.

Guba and Lincoln (1981, p.62) remind us that 'it is virtually impossible to imagine any kind of human behaviour that is not heavily mediated by context'. Which leads the discussion onto transferability. I argue that some of the findings from this study may be transferrable, for example, experienced teachers in urban to rural schools in England. They do indeed teach different demographics of students, however, they teach the same curriculum and are held to the same assessment criteria. This means they may experience the same frustrations as other experienced teachers, such as increased administration responsibility, inappropriate professional development or limited career opportunities. Another limitation of this study might be that it is not wholly transferable to secondary school teachers, but some sections, such as the emotions experienced teacher experience, may be. Lastly, the study is based on a sample composed primarily of women, only two of the twelve participants were men, though this ratio does reflect most English primary education systems (OECD, 2013).

On reflection, I believe that my decision in not conducting a second interview with the twelve participants was justified. Although, if I were to conduct similar research I would definitely ask the participants to comment on their own transcripts. I had not considered a second interview until one participant's recording didn't work and I asked her to take a second walking interview to expand on issues raised in the first interview. I do argue, that as all the interviews were audio recorded, then transcribed, alongside field notes taken promptly after the interviews, there is a strong possibility that they reflect the participant's meaning. Hammersley (2010, p.20) does warn against engaging in 'speculative ascriptions of intentions' as words spoken by the participants may not be what they were intending to communicate. So caution was taken to not make assumptions in relation to the participants' meanings.

The biggest influence in not asking the participants for a second interview was the question of teachers' time and the fact I had not started the research with the intention to do two interviews, however, this something I would consider for future research.

If I were to conduct this research again I would change two things. Firstly, I would ask all the participants to read their own transcripts and comment on their understanding of the text and if it is a true reflection of their feelings and opinions. Only one participant did request to read his transcript but provided no further comment.

Secondly, I would actively recruit more teachers who were fulltime teachers in the classroom, not teachers who are on the senior leadership team or working part-time. Of the twelve participants I interviewed not one teacher was currently 100% in the classroom and not one of them intended to ever return to fulltime classroom teaching. Maybe this is a reflection of the current teaching climate, which experienced teachers can only stay in the profession if they are no longer full time in the classroom.

The haiku was novel and interesting but did not serve the purpose of ensuring that the data was reliable and valid. It could be argued that a haiku poem is not substantial enough to ensure participants' meaning or what was important to them, but it certainly made them focus on a thought or feeling. What the haiku did highlight was the overall optimism of experienced teachers, which was not apparent in the walking interviews transcriptions.

As already stated by DiCicco - Bloom and Crabtree (2006) the purpose of the qualitative research interview is to contribute to a body of knowledge that is

conceptual and theoretical and is based on the meanings that life experiences hold for the interviewees. By selecting walking interviews as my methods that purpose did not change. Walking is not for everyone and I potentially turned people away from agreeing to participate in an interview due to the walking element. In my defence, a broken toe, a heat wave, being nine months pregnant, or having poor health just meant we sat down earlier and continued the interview side by side, either on a park bench or at a café table.

In this final section, I conclude the project. I outline the contribution this research has made to an understanding of how experienced primary teachers in urban settings can be supported in their professional lives plus further avenues for research.

#### **7.4 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical foundations of this study were based in leadership theory. Theory is about seeing links, generalising, and abstracting ideas from data, followed by offering explanations and having insights. The literature on teacher turnover has established that there is a problem in retaining experienced primary school teachers in England. Further investigation demonstrates that leaders have a significant influence on teacher retention and finally that there are actions that leaders can take to ameliorate the current teacher challenge.

In the first part of this thesis I established the context for this research, urban primary schools in England. It was important for me to situate the research in this context as I have had personal experience of working in various schools but it always felt like city schools experienced more challenges. Within this context there is evidence that students commonly experience higher teacher turnover and higher teacher turnover

is widely accepted as having a negative impact on a student's school experience.

The aim of this research was to discover what supports experienced teachers require from their leaders and leadership teams in their professional lives.

This research sits in agreement with Coldwell (2017) that experienced teachers do have different needs to teachers at different career stages. Yet it is equally important to recognise that everyone involved within a school community; including experienced teachers, NQT's, teaching assistants, meal time assistants and the leaders themselves, all need supports, it is just that the shape of those supports are different.

School leaders do have a huge influence on experienced teachers, both positively and negatively. I have found Santoro (2018, p.3) research particularly helpful in thinking through why teachers do stay or leave the teaching profession. Her insight into the teacher retention crisis provided me with a helpful framework as she offers demoralisation as diagnosis of experienced teacher dissatisfaction. She proposes that teacher demoralisation is rooted in despair out of ongoing value conflicts with pedagogical policies, reform mandate, and school practices.

In summary, the data collected for this thesis suggest that research on experienced teachers is a weighty matter that touches on the political framework within which teachers work and is influenced by many factors, both internally and externally of the school environment. All twelve experienced teachers I interviewed had found a way to stay in the teaching environment. As mentioned previously, not one of them would return to a fulltime classroom teaching role in September 2019. Several of the teachers had opted to work part-time, one was leaving primary school teaching to

work only as a supply teacher, whilst others had chosen to take on leadership responsibilities so they weren't full time in the classroom.

## **7.5 Contribution to Knowledge**

This qualitative study contributes to research on how experienced primary school teachers can be supported in their professional lives. Currently England is facing a teacher recruitment and retention challenge. If experienced teachers can be supported in their professional lives, this challenge may be mitigated. Running through this thesis are two key understandings. Firstly, experienced teachers tend to be more effective than newly qualified teachers, and therefore produce better outcomes for both the school and the teacher themselves. Secondly, school leader's actions significantly influence a teacher's professional life.

The main finding from this research study is that school-working conditions is hugely influential to whether a teacher feels supported or not. These supports can be in the form of appropriate professional development, trusting relationships, the culture of the school or the teaching assignments leaders assign to primary school teachers. Ultimately, every support provided, is a consequence of the leader's decisions and actions. In order for an experienced primary school teacher to thrive in the classroom, leader support is fundamental.

A key finding from the participant's interviews was regarding the emotions associated with being an experienced primary school teacher, including but not limited to, frustration, fear and resentment. Some teachers are experiencing these additional emotions merely because they are the experienced teacher. Frustration at the number of school changes they encounter over their careers or fear at being

more expensive than a newly qualified teacher and so may be the next to be laid off due to budget shortfalls. Alongside, resentment at being the experienced teacher and always have to mentor the new teachers, take on the harder classes and assume management responsibilities on top of their classroom responsibilities. This is incredibly important, as there is literature on teachers and the emotions of teaching but less on experienced teacher's emotions. It is important that future research investigate how widespread such feelings are among experienced teachers.

Another contribution to knowledge sits within the method chosen for this research study. Within qualitative research, interviews are the classic form of data collection. Interviews felt the perfect fit for this research project although it was crucial for me to remove the participants from their schools. As noted in chapter four, walking interviews have been used successfully in several research fields, particularly in geography when related to the significance of place. My research highlights the significance of 'removal of place' a concept that appears not to have been researched in educational literature or in wider fields. I argue that experienced teachers are more likely to share honest and insightful data if they are interviewed in a place they feel safe in, away from their classroom, their school and own colleagues. Surveillance need not be overt to impact a sense of being watched, the old adage 'walls have ears' could well influence the participant information they are willing to share and how they view the confidentiality of the research project. Further, walking side by side has the potential to enhance the rapport between interviewer and interviewee with a possible benefit of increased endorphin production. When selecting a method for this project I wanted to ensure that the participant was considered in this choice. I knew I would enjoy walking interviews but I needed to

ensure that the interviewee would also be comfortable with the choice and that the data collected would answer the research questions. All, except one of the approached participants easily agreed to walking interviews. Karen jokingly suggested we just drank a cup of tea and chatted but after the walking interview she said she was surprised at how much she had enjoyed the experience. In the next section I examine three avenues for research that have been raised but not pursued within this thesis.

## **7.6 Further Avenues for Research**

Spillane (2015, p.290) states that, 'if research is to be useful and usable for policymakers and practitioners it had to speak more directly to practice'. Whilst Biesta *et al.* (2019, p.2) speculate that finding out 'what works' is important, they ask 'what does it work for?' Using high stakes testing as an example – we might say that we know what works for increasing test scores but does it work for giving children a meaningful orientation for their lives and their future participation in society? 'Creating the best conditions for public schools to do their best work is the real challenge of educational reform' states Robinson and Aronica (2019, p.28). They continue 'to engage children, education should offer a rich curriculum and a wide range of learning experiences.....extending their horizons, developing skills and deepening their understanding' (p.100). With this in mind I would like to pursue the following avenues for further research.

### **7.6.1 Leaders**

In my opinion, an urgent area of further research is looking at the supports that leaders themselves are actually receiving, need, or wish to receive. As seen in Chapter two, leaders are under great pressure when they interpret and enact



government policy. This not only impacts the school culture but also a head-teacher's own well-being. In Harris and Townsend's (2007) research they highlighted the increased upward trend in the number of head teachers and principals leaving many educational systems. They conclude this may be partly due to demographics but most likely, this turnover is due to the increase in the demands placed on leaders. Keddie (2017) agrees arguing that there is an underlying sense of anxiety in primary school leadership in England which they attribute to Ofsted and the consequential teach-to-test mentality. For these school leaders Ofsted inspections and measures are not an accurate or authentic picture of their school. They state it is the 'intrusiveness of these regimes on their schools and what they see as their perverse or anti-educational effects' (Keddie, 2017, p.125), which produces leadership anxiety. It is understandable why schools have adopted a results-driven approach to education but the current mismatch between a leaders aspirations for their school and what in reality they are able to do, results in an annual exodus of head teachers from the English education system. Bottery (2000, p.61) refers to this as 'managerialism' of leadership. Policy and externally mandated targets are dictated to the leaders, which often results in leaders being de-professionalised – a lowering of the status and standing of the teaching workforce as a whole (Bell, 2019). Referring back to section 2.6 of this thesis, Podolsky *et al.* (2016) argued that one of the most pressing issues facing policymakers is how to staff classrooms with a teaching workforce that is stable and responsive to student needs. Santoro (2018) adds that it is the policymakers themselves, who are causing this shortage of classroom teachers. She argues that the teacher turnover challenge is a direct result of current educational policies, which are 'driving away', experienced talented teachers. Responding to this, Ingersoll, Sirinides and Dougherty (2018) offer that it is

necessary for teachers to have a voice in these larger decisions relating to educational policy and See and Gorard (2019) call for a coherent governmental approach with a long-term trajectory to address this challenge.

This thesis demonstrates the importance of hearing the experienced teacher's authentic voice. Chapter 2 demonstrated that leaders heavily influence all aspects of the professional lives of experienced teachers. Therefore, if leaders are not receiving adequate support themselves, or disagree with educational policy they have to adhere to, then it is unlikely that they will have the personal capacity to continue to support their own staff and teacher turnover will continue to be a challenge. Allen and Sims (2018b) argue we need to give teachers a career worth having and that has to start at an educational policy level.

I argue that there is a need to research how to support those leaders in place.

Furthermore, there has been little research on the correlation between leadership attrition and teacher attrition. According to Bêteille, Kalogrides and Loeb (2012) head teacher turnover increases teacher turnover. In their research the likelihood of teachers leaving when a new leader took over increased by 18% the following years. They found that leader turnover has negative effects on average student achievement and particularly large negative effects on the achievement of students attending high poverty schools which already have many first-year teachers and so tend to experience high teacher turnover. They summarised that leader turnover is positively associated with teacher turnover, particularly the turnover of more effective teachers, and negatively associated with student achievement.

This sits in agreement with Henry and Harbatkin (2019) where they also found that leader turnover significantly increases teacher turnover, as well decreases student achievement. Which they attributed to the disrupted organisational operations which

results from no clear leadership within the school and the differences in the effectiveness of the incoming and outgoing leader. As schools in hard to staff areas already experience higher leader turnover, turnover will disproportionately impact schools which are already struggling (Levin & Bradley, 2019). These reasons alone could be justification for additional funding for leadership support. If turnover in leaders can be reduced, consequently, the knock on effect of teachers then leaving may also be reduced, creating a more stable and consistent work force.

### **7.6.2 Revolving Door Teachers**

Hobson *et al.* (2009) have already identified the need for developing comprehensive, effective teacher induction programs to prevent teacher attrition and increase the retention of promising beginning teachers. I see a need for further research into supports for revolving door teachers, teachers who have already left the teaching profession but have the potential to return to teaching in if the circumstances are right. If we could encourage, celebrate and harness the revolving door phenomenon mentioned by Ingersoll and Perda (2010), this would build on the earlier focus on experienced teachers and would now focus on returning and part time teachers. Encouraging part time work and job shares that are professionally respected and family friendly for both male and females, may go a long way to eradicate the predicted primary school teacher short fall.

The additional benefit of revolving teachers are they themselves are more likely to be parents. As Cathi mentioned in her interview, by being a parent herself, she now has a greater understanding of, and ability to connect with, her student's parents. During my research I had an opportunity to interview an experienced teacher who has just left teaching, he had no intention of returning to work in a school. The reason he

gave for leaving the profession was the rhetoric he was hearing on leadership training courses, it disheartened him and gave him no hope that things were going to change. I feel there is an opportunity to investigate what criteria and supports he would need to consider returning to the teaching profession.

### **7.6.3 Walking Interviews and their Contribution to Rich Descriptive Data**

As mentioned in the chapter four, rich points are the data that you should be focusing on in your research (Agar, 1996). During the walking interviews I noticed that often a participant would pause in their walk or turn to face me when they were about to say something that was significant to them. This appears to reflect Palmgren's (2018) study. I believe there is an opportunity to revisit the twelve transcripts from this study and analyse the walking pauses to see if indeed rich points are produced after a pause in walking. If this is indeed the situation, other rich points may be discovered which otherwise might have been overlooked.

## **7.7 Final Thoughts**

*'Late summer arrives  
And paws pad green grass beside  
Two talking humans'  
Jenna*

To conclude, the present study used a criterion sample of experienced, urban, primary school teachers to offer a rich description of supports they were receiving or wished to receive in their professional lives. Paul (1995, p.550) defines critical writing as:

‘to express ourselves in language requires that we arrange our ideas in some relationships to each other. When accuracy and truth are at issue, then we must understand what our thesis is, how we can support it, how we can elaborate it to make it intelligible to others, what objections can be raised to it from other points of view, what the limitations are to our point of view’.

It is my hope that this thesis has done that in regards to how experienced primary teachers in urban settings can be supported in their professional lives.

During the time I have taken to complete this thesis, the education world has not stood still. Yet, as the testimonies of the interviewed experienced teachers prove, one thing that has not changed is the critical challenge of teacher turnover and retention. Countries across the world are responding differently to this challenge, however, underlying issues of society muddy the water as to what is important. On the 31<sup>st</sup> July 1937 Mahatma Gandhi spoke the following words, ‘By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning.’ (Kumari & Kandasamy, 2017). Social justice is a huge motivation in my desire to complete this PhD, if we can support experienced teachers in the classroom, not only do teachers and students benefit, but in my opinion, so does our society as a whole.

I now appreciate the enormous professional and personal rewards gained from undertaking a PhD. As stated earlier, Townsend (2014) suggests that the development of practice should be a researcher’s goal and not just the production of knowledge. The findings have several promising applications for both myself and school leaders. I can wholeheartedly say that my leadership practice has improved as I now have a comprehensive understanding of professional supports. Leaders can do a great deal in supporting experienced urban teachers but I feel those making demands of leaders also need to act more intelligently and empathically. Most

significantly, I appreciate how important it is to hear the voices of experienced teachers. I hope that there will be a beneficial change to both the participants of this project but also to others who may read this thesis.



“At the end of the day people won’t remember what you said or did; they will remember how you made them feel.”  
—Maya Angelou

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Consent form

Appendix 2 - Teacher information sheet

Appendix 3 - Interview Guide for semi-structured 1-1 interviews

Appendix 4 - Sample transcript

Appendix 5 - Sample page of theme coding

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY**

**Research Title:**       How are teachers in urban settings influenced by their leadership team in their professional practice?

**Principle Investigator:**   Sue Langford [sue.langford@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:sue.langford@plymouth.ac.uk)

**Purpose of study:**               The aim of this research is to better understand the professional needs of primary school teachers working in an urban environment.

**Please initial  
each box**

1	I confirm that I have read and discussed with the researcher, the participant information sheet for the above study. I understand the objectives of this research, the interview process and data that will be recorded and how it will be recorded.	
2	I confirm I have considered and understood the information detailed on the participant information sheet, have asked any questions and have received satisfactory answers.	
3	I understand that every effort will be made to keep my information confidential and identifying details about me will be changed within the research, to protect my anonymity as far as possible.	
4	I understand that all data relating to me will be kept securely for a 10 year period once the study has been completed and destroyed once that period has passed.	
5	I understand my participation in the study is entirely voluntary and I can withdraw without giving a reason and without negative consequences. My right to withdraw myself and my data, up to when the data has been anonymised, has been fully explained to me.	
6	A clear explanation of the complaints procedure has been given to me and I have contact details of the researcher and their director of studies.	

7	All potential benefits, risks or inconveniences have been explained to me and I have been given a copy of this information in writing to retain for future reference, including contact details of where and from whom I can access support should I need it.	
Full name of participant:	Signature:	Date:

## Full Information Sheet



### **Research Study: What do experienced primary school teachers need in their professional lives?**

Thank you for your interest in the above study. Before you decide I would like to take this opportunity to fully explain and discuss with you, why this research is being carried out and what you can expect as a participant. Please take time to read the following carefully and ask me any questions. You may also discuss it with others if that helps. If there is anything you don't understand, or need more information about, please ask me or contact me and I will be happy to speak with you personally. My direct contact details are at the end of this letter.

### **Invitation to participate and research summary**

#### **What is the aim of this study?**

I am conducting this study as part of my PhD, to explore and understand the needs of experienced primary school teachers. My focus will be teachers who have more than three years teaching experience, in an urban environment.

#### **Why do we need this research?**

Currently in Plymouth and across the UK generally, there is less research on the needs of teachers once they have passed their newly qualified status, if we can better understand the needs of experienced teachers, decisions can be made that reduce teacher turnover and increase teacher efficacy.

#### **If I take part, what's involved?**

If you would like to take part, we will need to schedule a one on one meeting at your convenience and a location of your choice.

For the exploratory stage of the study, I would like to talk to you individually for about 45 minutes, about your experiences of teaching, how you feel about your career, and how leadership within your school impacts you. The interview will be semi-structured which means I will have some planned questions, but we will also have the opportunity to have an open discussion around teaching. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed for analysis, to identify any themes. Interviews can be conducted at any time, or place to suit you.

#### **What are the benefits of taking part?**

Taking part in this study offers all participants the opportunity to contribute to new research, hopefully leading to improvements in the lives of some teachers. Taking part will enable you to reflect on and discuss your particular experiences and share those insights with others.

### **What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?**

Talking about teaching experiences and leadership support, might be uncomfortable at times. Should you feel uncomfortable at any time, we can take a break, reschedule the interview or if you would prefer, you can withdraw from the study at this point.

### **Data Protection**

In line with data protection laws and Plymouth University's ethics policy, all data will be stored securely. Electronic data will be stored password protected and encrypted and hard copy data will be stored in locked filing cabinets, for a period of 10 years, after which it will be securely destroyed when no longer required. Access to participant's raw data will be restricted to the researcher and the project supervisory team.

### **What will happen to the information I give?**

Your interview will be analysed to identify common themes and findings will be written up as part of my Doctoral thesis. The results of the research will be disseminated through future publications and the whole report will be available through the open-repository, Pearle, at Plymouth University.

### **I want to take part - what do I do?**

If you wish to take part, please contact me at [sue.langford@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:sue.langford@plymouth.ac.uk)

### **Can I change my mind?**

You can change your mind and withdraw from the study at any time prior to data anonymization, and ask for your information to be removed from the study and be securely destroyed. After the data has been anonymised, it will be impossible to identify your data from that of other participants and it will not be able to be extracted. However, every effort is taken to remove all identifying features within your information, to protect your ongoing privacy.

### **What if something goes wrong?**

Although extremely rare, research interviews may very occasionally reveal something which gives cause for concern for a participant's safety or the safety of others. In the unlikely event of this happening, the correct and required course of action would be to discuss this with my director of studies. Should anything in the research upset you, please contact Professor Megan Crawford [ac9759@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:ac9759@coventry.ac.uk)

## **Interview Guide for use during the semi-structured one-to-one interviews**

Welcome and thank interviewee for agreeing to meet and share their thoughts and opinions.

Explain the purpose of interview and the how the data is collected and that it will be recorded and analysed.

Get signed and verbal permission to use the data provided and for the interview to be recorded.

Start recorder and begin the interview with background questions.

Interviewee's job title and responsibilities

Time with this organization

Total time teaching

Brief description of career path eg TA, Schools Direct or B.Ed.

Check interviewee is comfortable and continue with open-ended questions on teacher support.

Describe your role in the primary school classroom.

What support do you receive from your head teacher to enable you to fulfil this role? Can you give details on this support?

What support would you like to receive from your head teacher? Why? Are you thinking about something else that you would like?

What does your head teacher do that you really like/dislike in your professional setting? Can you give any other examples?

How does this make you feel?

Who in your organization do you turn to for support? Why?

Who do you provide support for?

Those are the questions I have written down here, is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

Thank interviewee for time and let them know they can always contact me if they have any questions.

**Don't console**

**Don't give advice**

**Don't interpret**

**Don't intrude yourself and your life history**

## Sample transcription

86 R - So reflect on when you were a head, and things that you felt you were doing to support your  
87 staff.

88 P - I have always taken it very seriously the things I did as a deputy that I took into my first headship  
89 when I had a lot of problems with doing this because it was not understood not liked the local  
90 authority as was. I had an appraisal system, which I revamped, in fact I revamped everything. I  
91 thought how to get the best out of the staff they had been a very difficult journey. It was a small  
92 team but they were disillusioned, in fact one of them said, she was the most senior teacher, I will  
93 give you till Christmas to see how this works out otherwise I would sooner go and work in Tesco's.  
94 And those were her very words and I had to win them over, to show how I was being supportive. I  
95 tended to steer away for observations because they panicked, they were petrified of being watched  
96 because that was how they had been ruled and conquered and divided by controlled the head that  
97 had gone and left prior to me. So I did something completely different, I got them to observe  
98 themselves and I gave them standard form. I would do one a year, I will do the official business as  
99 well but they knew very well that that's was not taking seriously what I wanted to know was they  
100 thought about their own teaching. And I tell you something, they were more honest and they told  
101 me stuff that I would never have seen, had I been in the classroom observing. And I think I'm pretty  
102 good at it, and I have been told officially by OFSTED advisers because I have had the OFSTED thing  
103 when OFSTED inspector said to me right I need to see how good you are at assessing how good your  
104 staff are. So he said which classes do you recommend and I said you can pick any class, you want  
105 three classes, you pick any class you want. They picked one, we went there. I would say you sure you  
106 want this one because we can change. We did it with three classes, and they were really amazed  
107 that I was prepared to do that and they said that I was bang on with my judgements. So ratified you  
108 know I mean, that was good. What was the question before that?

109 R - we were looking at what else you did to support your teachers.

110 P - oh yes, that was immensely powerful with my staff and I have done a bit as a deputy, although  
111 the head was very wary of it, she was very good head because she was one of the super heads that  
112 was out a lot and left me to it. I would say can I try this she was like yeah okay.

113 R - so did you feel supported from her?

114 P - oh yeah you kinda miss her, very much so. She was incredibly supportive she would even go  
115 against her better judgement because I would say this is worth trying, you know worth going for,  
116 and she would go with it she was more curious really, she was very very supportive, and I worked  
117 hard to bring in the new system, a new government agenda to be met and I would find an  
118 interesting way to do it. Just a completely creative curriculum where the children could choose what  
119 they wanted to do and we made it fit the curriculum to their interests we did some amazing work, it  
120 was that the results that came from that sold on the idea that when I had an idea she would kind of  
121 look at that and go with it, again, a how supportive was I in situations? Yeah I find them a bind, I find  
122 lesson observations very irritating I have no time for them.

123 R - in both roles?

124 P - oh with me, you know, I don't like the stress for the people, I have seen during an OFSTED  
125 inspection, better teachers than me, one woman who was my mentor went to pieces and had a  
126 breakdown. When you could bet your mortgage on her and how can that be getting the best out of a  
127 teacher you know, I think that somewhere seeds have been sown there has to be a better way  
128 maybe, if we trust teachers to know what their strengths and weaknesses are, with help and  
129 support, we have a system in place, they are more willing to take risks. Another thing is you always



## Sample page of theme coding

Line	Transcript	Theme
51	I just think it is a waste of time, the things I do I would do anyway, it just seems onerous that we have to justify ourselves all the time beyond the classroom	Work load, accountability, professionalism, trust
63	a little threat over me and from that point onwards I was very guarded and I'm still guarded with him, I keep my distance, it is a strange relationship	Trust and relationships
72	(I had to) raise the standard of ICT in the school and I had to do training every term, introduce new things - it was a time when computer suites were just coming into schools so it was a really really difficult time, it was really hard and he applied so much pressure	Work load, curriculum knowledge and relationships
97	it's good to talk and that is the thing about teaching you are very isolated because once you get into that classroom and shut the door, unless you have support	Supports
146	I'm frustrated at the profession. Parents see teachers as extra-curricular child care providers. So, you get paid for the hours you do, but so many teachers will do a club after school and it is an expectation - an expectation with children and the parents that teachers will provide their time free of charge, whereas if you were to ask a doctor or a solicitor to do that, what would the fee be? – So I get really frustrated, I just think to myself, you should not have that expectation of us	Profession, work load, and relationships
168	every opportunity there has been to employ new staff you know for certain that it is going to be someone who is cheap, so they don't necessarily go for the best candidate they go for the best candidate of the cheap candidates	Experienced teacher fears
216	I was fearful that I would lose my job because they have lost TAs and I know I am expendable they don't have to employ a teacher as expensive. I could be up to £17,000 more than a NQT, doing the same role.	
203	because I was getting married and he asked me to move year groups and I said I will gladly move into 5/6 next year but not this year, I just need to get married and my parents are moving down, I was helping renovate their house - all my personal needs, there was no balance there, and they wanted me to team lead as well, I need to stay in my year group , it was 'no we want you in there' it was a complete lack of consideration for me over what they thought I could provide.	Work life balance, class assignment, experienced teacher and relationships