THE CHALLENGE OF RETAINING TEACHERS: EVIDENCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SECONDARY HEADTEACHERS IN ENGLAND

BY ANGELA ADAMS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (ED. D)

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MAY 2024

ABSTRACT

Concerns over teacher retention in secondary schools in England are not new however, this issue has recently escalated within the education policy agenda as a result of rising pupil numbers, ongoing and chronic shortfalls in new teacher recruitment and increases in the proportion of teachers leaving the profession. There is little doubt that the quality of the teaching workforce makes a substantial difference to pupils' schooling and their educational outcomes. Thus, in order to deliver on the economic and social agendas of successive governments, it is more important than ever that we keep our best teachers.

My research aims to improve understanding of why retaining teachers continues to be a significant challenge, from a new perspective. By interviewing Headteachers I seek to capture their assessment of the problem, in terms of their struggles in retaining their teachers within their schools, combined with that of their wider perspective as to the problems within the profession as a whole, particularly as their views are rarely embraced within literature in this context, nor based on participant evidence, policy decision making.

This qualitative case study employs a two-stage approach. Firstly, an online questionnaire with twenty-five Headteachers, to provide an overview of the issues, combined with background and contextual data. Secondly, the main focus of data collection, through semi-structured in-depth interviews with thirteen of these participants. The findings were then thematically coded and analysed.

These Headteachers corroborated the long-standing tensions surrounding working conditions and the damaging effects of incessant policy-driven changes instigated by successive governments. Importantly, they provided insight as to other factors,

including pay, escalating levels of surveillance, quality of recruits and ITT provision, ‘parent-power’ and a societal changing attitude to career mobility. All these elements have a profound and detrimental effect on retention and are presented in my diagram ‘*Retention: untying the knot’*. This conceptualises retention in a different way, illustrating the substantial and important connectors within marketization, managerialism and career mobility and inspired by the work of Peter Woods, the interrelated macro, meso and micro levels. How these Headteachers navigate the issues depends largely upon their school’s funding position, with *some* using their advantages to ‘buy the best and keep the best’; others, less well-positioned are facing considerable challenges in retention. Yet all were of a mind that retention was critical to the success, even the very survival of their school.

Overall, the data exposes the complexities and interrelated factors involved in the retention of teachers, revealing some dominant, escalating and new factors as well as strategies employed by these Headteachers in an attempt to mitigate the problem. My analysis of the data demonstrates the profound dynamics at work, comprising policy, institutional factors and the individual respectively.

My findings offers an in-depth examination of how Headteachers negotiate and understand retention within the present-day, constantly evolving education system. Potentially, it has implications for current policy, the practices of Headteachers and for further academic application. This research adds to knowledge about those who leave and why they leave and why this continues to be a perennial problem.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend a very special thank you to my supervisors, Professor Karl Kitching and Dr Christine Szwed for their unstinting support and guidance throughout, so too their sharing of knowledge, detailed written feedback and determination to get me over the ‘finish line’ is greatly appreciated. Thanks also to Dr Sarah Aiston for her careful guidance and comments on the initial ideas for the research.

My sincere thanks goes to the 25 Headteachers who took part in the questionnaire and most especially, to the 13 Headteachers who shared their perceptions and experiences in interview as part of this important research. Without the contribution of these individuals, their enthusiasm and co-operation, this thesis would not have been possible.

Thanks to my family and friends, in particular to Amanda and Lyndon, Tracy and Francesca, Carol and Mike, Anne and Paul, who have been voices of continued positivity and encouragement for me to strive towards my goals. To Karen, particular thanks for her support over the years with the myriad of clerical challenges.

Finally I wish to express my huge gratitude to my husband, Nigel, in his endless support and motivation, his timely advice and insights and most of all, his sense of humour. I could not have succeeded throughout the process of writing my thesis without him.

Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASCL: Association of School and College Leaders

ASC: Annual School Census

BAME: Black and minority ethnic

BERA: British Educational Research Association

CPD: Continuous professional development

CEO: Chief Executive Officer (within MAT)

DfE: Department for Education

EBacc: English Baccalaureate:- an accountability measure in England. It measures the proportion of children who secure a grade 5 or above in English, Maths, Science, a humanity and language GCSE. Arts subjects are not included.

EHRC: Equality and Human Rights Commission

EP: Education Partnership

EPI: Education Policy Institute

GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education

H.o.C: House of Commons

HMI: His Majesty’s Inspectorate

ITE: Initial Teacher Education

ITT: Initial Teacher Training

LA: Local Authority

LEA: Local Education Authority

LMS: Labour Market Survey

MAT: Multi Academy Trust

MoD: Ministry of Defence

NAO: National Audit Office

NCSL: National College for School Leadership

NCTL: National College for Teaching and Leadership

NEU: National Education Union

NFER: National Foundation for Educational Research

NPQH: National Professional Qualification for Headship

NQT: Newly qualified Teacher

ONS: Office for National Statistics

Ofsted: Office for Standards in Education

OECD: The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

PAC: Public Accounts Committee

Pupil Intake Classification: HD: high deprivation; AaD: above average deprivation; BaD: below average deprivation; Mix: affluent and deprived, AF: affluent

PGCE: Post Graduate Certificate in Education

RSC: Regional Schools Commissioner

R&R: Recruitment and Retention Allowances

SEF: School Self-evaluation form

SLT: Senior leadership team

SMC: Social Mobility Commission

STEM: Science, Technology, English, Maths

STRB: School Teachers' Review Body

TALIS: Teaching and Learning International Survey

TES: Times Educational Supplement

TLR: Teaching and learning responsibility

TMR: Teacher Mobility Report

TWS: Teacher Workforce Survey

WP: White Paper

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

My research explores the retention of teachers within secondary schools in England, through the perceptions and experiences of Headteachers. This introduction explains the research focus and examines the scope and size of the 'problem'. It explains the research and policy context for the study and the changing role of school leadership within this. Furthermore, it addresses the research aims, my three research questions and why they are important. Lastly, it outlines the contribution to knowledge this study offers and the organisation of the thesis.

1.1 Research focus

Concerns over teacher retention are not new and over the past two decades extensive research has been carried out into this topic, with much of the resulting literature expressing concerns over the pressures on the teaching workforce in the face of complex interactions surrounding the supply of and demand for teachers (Galton et al, 2008; Alderman, 2015; Worth et al, 2015; Boffey and Helm, 2015; Coughlan, 2018). From 2015, rising pupil numbers, shortages of new trainee teachers and persistent numbers of teachers leaving the profession has intensified the problem. Some authors claim that the retention of teachers is the most significant challenge effecting schools in England and is an issue at all levels within the profession, by region and by subject (Lightfoot, 2016; Sibieta, 2018 and 2020; Worth et al, 2017; Allen et al, 2017; Doherty, 2020).

There is little doubt that the quality of the teaching workforce affects the schooling experience of young people and makes a substantial difference to their educational outcomes, future employability and more broadly, their 'life chances' (Day et al, 2007; Chiong et al, 2017; Worth et al, 2018; Andrews, 2019; Doherty, 2020; Waters and

Brighouse, 2022). It is imperative that we retain our best teachers to build an education system that is strong and sustainable for the good of all. There are many factors impacting upon teacher retention and it is an issue that to date, remains unresolved (DfE,[1] 2019; Foster, 2019; Perrone, 2022; Gorard, 2023).

My research explores why retaining teachers continues to be a significant challenge in secondary schools in England through the perceptions and experiences of serving Headteachers. This research is a qualitative case study employing a two-stage approach. Firstly, an online questionnaire with twenty-five Headteachers, to provide an overview of the issues, combined with background and contextual data. Secondly, the primary focus of data collection, through semi-structured in-depth interviews with thirteen of these Headteachers. As leaders in our education system, deemed responsible for retaining teachers in the profession (DfE, 2016), they are a vital and central presence to research in this field, yet a resource that is seldom 'mined' as to date, their professional and positional views on this topic are neither embraced within existing research, nor policy decision making. My aim is to add to existing research by concentrating solely upon the perceptions and experiences of Headteachers in relation to this complex issue.

By interviewing Headteachers I seek to capture their assessment of the problem, in terms of their day-to-day struggles in retaining their teachers within their schools, combined with that of their wider perspective as to the challenges within the profession as a whole. The empirical focus of my research therefore sits largely

[1]The Department for Education is a department of His Majesty's Government responsible for child protection, child services, education, apprenticeships and wider skills in England.

between the meso and micro level, on Headteachers as leaders of organisations and latterly, as individuals.

Important factors are explored in this research, ones that are centred around Headteachers' positionality, balancing Government policy and its influence on the working lives of teachers, including working conditions, professional development, job satisfaction and teaching practices within the current contemporary context. As explained by Anstead to the Select Committee for Education[2]:

> "*It is surely the barriers and facilitators from the perspective of this group* [Headteachers] *that we need to uncover, if we wish to improve teacher retention*" (DfE, 2017, p8).

1.2 The scope and size of the problem

The empirical and conceptual literature interrogating what will retain teachers in the profession is a large and growing knowledge base, one which presents some highly consistent factors.

Overall, the key underlying factors cited include the impact of constant policy change, increased workloads, accountability and surveillance, with particular references to Ofsted[3] inspections being high on the list (see for instance: Woods, 2001; Day et al, 2007; Lynch et al, 2016; Perryman and Calvert, 2020). Teacher workload is perceived to be worsening, with teachers having a negative perception of their workload

[2]The Education Select Committee: a select committee formed of sitting MPs of the House of Commons in the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The remit of the committee was to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Education. In 2017 the remit covered teacher supply, recruitment and retention.

[3]The Office for Standards in Education(Ofsted) inspect service providers of education and training for learners of all ages. In relation to schools, a team of Inspectors will visit over a two to three day period and carry out an evaluation working to a framework based on performance standards. Most schools will be inspected within a four to six year cycle depending on their existing performance judgement. A four point scale of judgements are used: outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate.

compared to other professions (Antrade et al, 2018; Walker, et al, 2019). Other factors identified, albeit of less significance, are pay and monetary incentivisation, which is seen as both ‘important’ (Propper, 2006; Britton and Propper, 2016; Busby, 2016; Langbein and Roberts, 2023) and ‘unimportant’ (DfE, 2010, 2016; Matthijs and Visser, 2011; Carter, 2015; Sibieta, 2020). For some a factor is the impact of pupil behaviour and how it is addressed (Barmby, 2007; McKinnon and Walker, 2016); similarly, the quality of CPD and mentoring are emphasised as important (Ovenden-Hope et al, 2018; See et al, 2020).

The literature also indicates that the role of school leaders is key to the job satisfaction of teachers and their decisions to stay or leave (Watt and Richardson, 2012; Coldron et al, 2014; Scutt, 2019). Recruitment is cited as an issue within a multi-faceted training provision (Allen et al, 2014; Worth and De Lazzari, 2017). As literature emphasises, the role of teachers has considerably changed in the last four decades and some suggest it has been deprofessionalised (Ball, 2008; Lynch et al, 2012; La Velle and Reynolds, 2020) as the balance of power has shifted away from the teacher into the hands of government, *some* parents and the media (Ball and Junemann, 2012; Bamford and Worth, 2017; Carpenter, 2023).

There is no shortage of statistical data evidencing the gap between teacher supply and demand (Bloom, 2017; Sibieta, 2018; Worth et al, 2018; Allen and Sims, 2020). As Doherty (2020) identified, the number of working-age teachers leaving the profession year-on-year has been consistent since 2011, averaging between 9 to 10 per cent for secondary teachers in England. Similarly, he reports that the proportion of teachers in their 50s remaining in the profession has decreased markedly during this period; some for retirement, but a sizable proportion leaving for other reasons

(Worth et al, 2018). In 2022 nearly 44,000 teachers left the profession (an increase of 7,800 over that of 2021); a staggering figure given the DfE's (2022) assertion that more teachers are employed than ever before. On the face of it yes, more teachers are in employment, but the numbers of pupils are also substantially increasing and by a larger margin, thus in proportion, the ratio of teachers to pupils is effectively declining. Regarding recruitment[4] there was an anomaly in one year (2020-21), widely attributed to the impact of Covid-19, where an increase in those applying to train to teach occurred. This was the first time the DfE target for recruitment had been achieved since 2011. Barton (2023) suggested this one year is unlikely to have reversed the chronic shortages which have built up over preceding years and perhaps predictably, this indeed has turned out to a 'blip' in the statistics, a trend that has not been repeated to date. In this context, the most recent validated teacher training numbers make grim reading, with government missing its own target for secondary teacher recruitment by a record breaking 50 per cent (DfE, 2023) with 15 out of 18 secondary subjects registering below target-figures, by some margin.

In addition, teacher numbers leaving secondary schools within the first five years continues to be a problem[5] (Lightfoot, 2016; Sims and Allen, 2018; Perryman and Calvert, 2020; Fullard, 2023). According to Foster (2022), 31.3 per cent of those recruits starting in 2016 had left within five years and it is consistently the subjects of Mathematics, Science and Modern Languages that are most affected. On a slightly less negative note, there was a small improvement in those remaining after two years

[4]The DfE sets targets for recruitment each year based on pupil numbers/curriculum needs and employment fluctuations. Targets from 2011 have not been met, except for 2020/21. Given the forecast of ITT applications by the DfE for 2024/25, which again indicate low numbers, this is of enormous concern.

[5]DfE data reports (2016 and 2018) that almost a third of teachers left teaching within the first five years of entering the profession.

in teaching, but there has been less improvement for mid-career teachers and almost none for experienced teachers (EPI[6], 2023). Worth et al (2022) also found the situation regarding part-time teachers in secondary schools is particularly acute; the leaving rate amongst this group has risen sharply from 18 per cent in 2016, to 21 per cent in 2022 and vacancies (full and part-time) have doubled in the past two years; from 1,100 in November 2020 to 2,300 in November 2022. More affluent 'well-positioned' schools (Greany and Higham, 2018) carry less vacancies and posts that are temporarily 'filled', than those in more challenging circumstances (STRB, 2020; EPI, 2021) with regional variances across the country. For example in the West Midlands, secondary schools reported one in four posts were vacant or temporarily filled (STRB, 2020), this being considerably worse than the national average.

Regarding academization and retention, Arthur and Bradley (2023), found that *some* Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs)[7] have a higher than average rate of teachers leaving the profession, with an annual churn of over 25 per cent, as compared to other schools. This is attributed to the schools being in areas of disadvantage and with a high percentage of ethnic minority students; this matches the earlier research of Sellen (2016) and See et al (2020). However, research by Baxter and Floyd (2019) suggests that *some* MATs were consistently improving their individual retention rates by offering opportunities 'in-house' for promotion, learning and leadership. Those

[6] EPI: The Education Policy Institute is an independent research body that seeks to advise government on education policy

[7]Governments' strategy for education over several decades has seen the growth of schools with academy status, known as academization, they are independent from Local Education Authorities and are funded directly from central government. Multi-academy trusts (MATs) are not-for-profit companies that run more than one academy. Not all academies are part of a multi-academy trust.

involved in initial teacher education (ITE)[8], particularly those with a strong CPD focus, appeared to be the most successful. However, the most recent data on retention statistics in Academies and Multi-Academy Trusts (DfE, 2022), presents a very disparate picture, without any discernible pattern, nor consistency, as to retention success. Regarding Ofsted inspection and retention, being rated by them as "*requires improvement*", or "*inadequate*" appears to have a pronounced negative association with rates of retention, as found by Sims (2016) and more recently, by Perryman et al (2023). Conversely, those rated "*good*" or "*outstanding*", appear to have markedly fewer problems (Sims, 2016; Hilton, 2017; Bousted, 2022).

Research on teachers who leave the profession by Worth et al (2018) indicated that historically, a third actually return within five years; nonetheless, recent destination statistics show a worsening position (DfE, 2022). By far the largest percentage of leavers take up predominantly private sector positions, whilst about a quarter who leave (and not retire), take up a job in the wider education sector, such as consultants or inspectors, with small numbers undertaking further study, or to work abroad (DfE, 2021, 2022).

In summary, the scope and size of the problem is well established in literature and in statistical data and it would appear to be a worsening picture.

1.3 Research and policy context for the study

It is reasonable to state that teacher retention was not a policy issue in the late 1990s when school populations were steadily increasing in line with teacher numbers (Adams, 2014; Whitty, 2016). However, as outlined above, policy measures had to be

[8] Initial teacher education (ITE): School Direct providers, recruit and train. They often work in partnership with other schools.

developed to address the imbalance between teacher supply and demand. Government did so in three legislative documents. Firstly, the White Paper *'The Importance of teaching'* (DfE, 2010) predominantly focussing on recruitment, establishing new routes into ITE to facilitate and attract people into the profession; its emphasis being on a "*plan for attracting and training even better teachers*" (p 4). There was no mention of retention whatsoever within this document, neither was any consideration given as to the numbers of teachers leaving, nor any attempt to uncover the causes as to *why* they were leaving (Gallant and Riley, 2014; Kelchtermans, 2017).

Secondly, the White Paper '*Educational Excellence Everywhere*' of 2016 (DfE) set out the UK Conservative government's education agenda from 2016 to 2020. It significantly tightened the practices and organisation of education, intensifying structures of accountability, competition and comparison (Dean, 2016; Clark, 2020). The focus here again was on teacher recruitment strategies, forging ahead with the expansion of the number of teacher routes to train, only obliquely acknowledging, for the first time, that the retention of teachers was "*of some concern*" (p 12).

Strategies to address such concerns included bursaries and scholarships for trainees in shortage subjects, in addition to a review of mentoring and tutoring programmes (p 15). A further initiative within this policy was that Headteachers would now have an extended role and legislative responsibility for solving teacher retention:

> "*this is rightly the responsibility of headteachers, free from unnecessary bureaucratic interference and central prescription*" (DfE, 2016, p 25).

Thirdly, with a somewhat dramatic change in discourse was the '*Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy'* of 2019 (DfE, 2019). Now in a reversal of previous policy, this legislation was predominantly focused on the *retention* of teachers, with three out of the four sections prioritising initiatives to combat teachers leaving the profession. There is little doubt that this was brought about by the discourse within the Parliamentary Inquiry into Teacher Supply (House of Commons, 2017) where the retention crisis was evidenced by witnesses from the education sector, teaching professionals and parents. This new legislation emphasised the importance of school culture and reduced workload as key to resolving the retention problem, introducing an Early Career Framework, supported by mentoring and continuous professional development. Notably, this was to be centred around in-school provision and significantly, with no new funding; throughout it emphasised the responsibility, pivotal and crucial role of school leaders in implementing the strategy.

Not long thereafter, following further criticism centred around public commentary within mainstream media, a shift in government discourse regarding financial incentives for teachers occurred; a commitment was made to increase teachers' starting salaries by 23 per cent, to £30,000, by 2022. However, the Covid 19 pandemic intervened and the DfE postponed these financial incentives until September 2023. The School Teachers' Review Body[9] (STRB) advised this significant pay increase for starting teachers "*should be instigated unless there are good reasons for not doing so*" (p 5, 2023). However, as Zuccollo (2024) noted, the

[9]The School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) makes recommendations on the pay, professional duties and working time of school teachers in England and reports to the Secretary of State for Education and the Prime Minister. It is an advisory body, sponsored by the Department for Education.

pay freedoms integrated within the academy structure from 2013, may make this a somewhat empty gesture, as Headteachers can only adjust their pay structures to suit the specific conditions of their school.

Despite the policies above and numerous additional initiatives, there remains a significant discourse of concern expressed by educationalists and academic sources alike on this topic. The DfE acknowledged that despite their claim of considerable investment in retention strategies since 2019, they currently cannot see improvements "*as yet*" (House of Commons Report 2024, p 2). The most recent Select Education Committee Inquiry (March, 2023) into teacher recruitment, training and retention had, as part of its remit, to carry out a review of the effectiveness of the DfE strategies to date. The live transmission of the Select Committee saw compelling testimony of the issues from a variety of sources, including parents, who consistently reiterated concerns about the numbers of teachers leaving and the "*retention crisis*" in their schools (Allen, 2023, no page).The recognition that retention is a continuing concern places even greater relevance on discovering solutions. At the time of writing, no conclusions of this committee have been published.

In order to understand the 'forces' involved in retention, it is important to consider the wider context of the current educational landscape and the seismic impact of the neo-liberal policies of the last four decades. These have instigated significant reforms to school organisational and governance requirements, in conjunction with an extensive accountability regime, including mandatory national tests, regulated exams and high-stakes school inspections by Ofsted. As Elton and Male (2015) explain, neo-liberal policy has "*imbued market principles within education, resulting in unprecedented successive waves of reform*" (p 315). Embedded within this is a key

factor, the choice of parents and the funding associated with this; choices based on the examination performance of a school in comparison to another. Parents have become consumers and in order to attract their 'custom', schools now market themselves on the basis of performance criteria, particularly league table position[10] and Ofsted judgements. The increased significance of some parents, in line with the discourse of government and their 'capacity' of choice has, some suggest, positioned them as more influential than school leaders and teachers (Leckie and Goldstein, 2017) and has 'fuelled' the competition between schools.

Within the policy reforms, the product and outcomes of schools have become increasingly open to measurement, leading to what Ball (2008, pp 27-28) cumulatively describes as the 'commodification of the profession'. This results in a view that children are now simply a 'product', having an associated monetary value, measured on arrival and exit to judge effectiveness of a particular school. What this means for the teacher and how their role, responsibilities and behaviours are being constrained and judged, is highly relevant to my research into retention. Conceptually, some suggest that such a transformation of their role has eroded the values teachers traditionally held, resulting in their disconnect with the profession (Perryman, 2009; Perryman et al, 2011).

1.3.1 The context for Headteachers

Similarly, Headteachers have also found that their own role and responsibilities have changed to facilitate regulation, business practices and private sector market

[10]The Department for Education (DfE) publishes league tables every year to reflect the exam results of children in primary and secondary schools. The main aim the DfE state is to motivate schools and teachers to improve academic performance. They rank schools in order of performance; they have been in place since 2010 and are readily available to all.

principles. Thus, their priorities are becoming increasingly focussed on what can be ‘measured’ and evidenced, such as examination results and Ofsted outcomes. Additionally, their ‘customer’ base, reputation and depiction within the media, all now take precedence (Gunter, 2010). The Headteacher is positioned directly within these parameters and thus are central to my research.

Changes to the role and declining influence of Local Authorities and a corresponding increase in school-level autonomy, by means of a “*self-improving school-led system*” (DfE, 2010, p10) has established an increasingly academized structure (Connell, 2013). Academization of state funded schools is clearly central to government policy, with a target for full academization by 2030 (Simon et al, 2021). Furthermore, academies are being actively encouraged to join others, with monetary incentives, to form partnerships within collaborative MATs; this policy stratagem has become “*radical and widespread, affecting almost every aspect of school life*” (Greany and Waterhouse, 2016, p 1192). These collaborations have changed schooling models even further, as MATs market themselves by ‘selling’ their organisational expertise to stand-alone schools, offering to improve their performance. What effect this dynamic, evolving school ‘system’ is having on retention is also a key element to my research and Headteachers are ideally positioned to provide evidential data on this.

In addition to the effects within the education sector noted above, my research is also positioned within the changes to societal attitudes to work and careers (Hutchings, 2011). Significant to this was successive governments drive to de-nationalise the public sector such as utilities (water, gas, electric), the transport network, telecommunications, coal mining, steel etc. and much of the MoD and Civil Service functions that could be readily ‘privatised’ (Strike, 2009; Lowrie and Hemsley-Brown,

2011). The discourse was directed strongly in favour of financial services and emerging technologies to develop 'the knowledge economy' that would "*dominate global markets*" (Whitty, 2016, p 4). This powerful change in the social and economic fabric of the UK brought with it a view that a flexible and mobile workforce would build a strong economy. Instigated by government, people were encouraged to embrace change and surrender the notion that they would have a mono-career structure, or a 'job for life'. What was promulgated by government was that multiple career changes would become the norm during a person's lifetime, a career portfolio adapting to a changing economy as necessary, to optimise job opportunities and reflect the 'fluidity' in the modern economic landscape. Naturally, this national trend in career mobility is of pertinence to my own research and what, if any, consequent effects have been experienced by Headteachers in teacher retention.

Further to the above, the position and perceptions of Headteachers in England, has to be understood in the context of their changing role, as the competitive, consumerist and performative dimension of neo-liberal policies has evolved and accelerated (MacBeath, 2007; Thomson, 2008 and 2011; Gunter, 2010; Glatter, 2003 and 2021; Coldron et al, 2014; Fuller, 2019). Lynch et al (2012) suggest, Headteachers are now the corporate executives in the evolving 'business of education' and as Ball (2006, p 15) argues, with the imposition of such reform "*It is not simply that what we do is changed; who we are, the possibilities for who we may become, are also changed"*.

Headteachers play a major role in the way their schools strategize and prioritise the retention 'problem' in a competitive context and how they negotiate the opportunities and constraints of policy is key to the success of their schools (Higham and Earley,

2013; Greany and Higham, 2018; Day et al, 2020; Thompson, Lingard and Ball, 2021). Much has been written on the leadership of schools in England, most of which relates to how the behaviours of Headteachers have altered in their leadership 'development' (Gunter, 2010, 2016; Glatter, 2017). Headteachers in the current retention context, some suggest, have to perform a difficult balancing act, 'juggling' with the implementation of policy, whilst maintaining their teachers' job satisfaction (Ball and Junemann, 2012; Hammersley-Fletcher, 2015; Fuller, 2019). As MacBeath (2012, p 171) describes it: *"Headteachers are in a continuous quest to find a marriage of convenience between dutiful compliance and intellectual subversion".* Their success, as defined by Ofsted, performance targets and parental choice, are now fundamental in defining school leaders' capability. Such high stakes public performance indicators can affect not only their own prospects, but that of their teachers' prospects and the school's reputation and financial security. Thus, the challenges in retaining their 'best' teachers, are complex and failure to do so has far reaching repercussions (Coldron et al, 2014).

Taking all of the research context into account, my conceptual framework addresses the neo-liberal policy 'forces' of marketization, managerialism and career mobility. I have combined these forces with the theoretical approach developed by Peter Woods (2001) in his research on teachers, wherein their reasons for leaving the profession were interconnected within three defined strata; comprising the macro, meso and micro levels.

The macro level deals with the wider forces deriving from government policy initiatives, imposing wholesale reforms to the practices and organisation of education; resulting in the intensification of teachers' work, their surveillance and

accountability. The meso level is related to institutional factors within schools, related to the working conditions of teachers, the quality and the behaviours of leadership and the context of a particular school, especially a school's ethos and culture. The micro level refers to factors within a teacher's individual biography and person, principally their commitment and resilience to cope with the role.

By combining these, I conceptualise the retention of teachers in a novel way. This is explained in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.4 Research aims and questions

My primary goal in this research is to explore the retention of teachers through the perceptions and experiences of Headteachers. My reflections at the start of the research process raised several broad questions: what is happening in our schools? What is pushing teachers to leave? What is pulling them to other professions? Is this solely about working conditions, or are their wider considerations? Why is it continuing?

Whilst many have done important and valuable research into retention, much of it is grounded within the perceptions of teachers thinking of leaving, or those who have just left the profession (Woods, 2001; Smithers and Robinson, 2005; Day et al, 2007; Hilton, 2017; Perryman and Calvert, 2020). This positions their research within the particular individual perspective of those leaving. My research includes this individual perspective through Headteachers but also explores their perceptions, as both 'insiders and outsiders' to the problem (Mason, 1996).

My first research question is: *In Headteachers' experience,* w*hat are the factors within the profession, impacting upon retention?* This is directly linked to

Headteachers' perceptions and experiences in their school context, digging down to grass roots level and asking: why do Headteachers think their teachers are leaving the profession? What are school leaders' perceptions around the root causes of the problem? What is happening within policy and practice? Are the working conditions of teachers, well established in literature such as workload, surveillance and performance management *still* prominent factors in their teachers leaving? Finally, are Headteachers in control or out of control of retention? How are they negotiating the challenges within their schools? What are their experiences and individual 'struggles'?

My second research question is: *In Headteachers' experience, what are the wider factors, outside of the profession, that have impacted upon retention?* This takes a somewhat different position, by looking to the external forces affecting teachers' career decisions, including, the wider political, economic and social factors impinging on the profession. Existing literature suggests there has been a distinct change in attitudes to careers over the last four decades as market reforms have gathered pace, from a mono-career structure to one encompassing several changes (Bayer et al, 2009; Mahon, 2011; Mathou et al, 2023). This directly leads onto further questions as to these external factors. Is the status of the profession an issue? Is the shortage of graduates and competition with other careers a factor? Is teaching losing out to changing societal conceptions regarding long term career choices? Is the overall market-place promoting career mobility, rather than longevity in the profession?

My third research question is: *In Headteachers' experience, a*re *some schools better at retaining teachers than others*? Since 2010, significant changes have occurred in how schools are organised and managed. The proportion of schools that are

academies, outside of L.A. control, has increased substantially in the West Midlands to 86.4% (DfE, 2023). Academies have significant privatised features, including greater freedom over pay and the contractual and working conditions of teachers (Ball and Junemann, 2012; Wilkins, 2017; Player et al., 2017; Andrews, 2019; Scutt, 2019; Burgess et al, 2022).This development has significantly changed the education landscape and added substantially to the role of Headteachers, imposing wider responsibilities in leadership and management of their schools. It has in terms of government discourse, given Headteachers greater autonomy and freedoms to lead their schools as businesses but in doing so, it has arguably also created tensions, increased competitiveness and inequalities (Ball, 2004; Higham and Earley, 2013; Coldron et al, 2014; Courtney and McGinity, 2022).

By exploring these research questions, my aim is to conceptualise retention, as perceived and experienced by these Headteachers; a group of professionals that are seemingly rarely involved in either policy formulation, or research into strategic retention solutions.

1.5 Contribution to knowledge

Given the well-established literature documenting the teacher retention challenge, what more can be added? As a long-standing and worsening dilemma affecting the profession and arguably society generally, it is highly pertinent to spotlight how and why retention continues to be an issue. My research is different from that within most literature. Headteachers' perceptions and experiences are rarely sought regarding the retention of teachers, a gap which this study seeks to redress. They are key to what happens in our schools and obviously have a strong and personal vested interest in retaining an effective workforce. Their position is one of being

simultaneously ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ (Mason, 1996) to the problem, their understanding and experiences ‘on the ground’ are central to this study’s contribution to knowledge.

At the school level this is a study which can inform others, to develop a better understanding of the challenges involved and the strategies which some Headteachers have found to be successful. A qualitative inquiry also has the potential to be more resonant with the profession generally, as it directly relates to their daily experiences. It can also be useful for school and MAT governance by offering comparisons and reflections on retention and at a practical level, demonstrate how other schools and Headteachers are dealing with the problem.

Furthermore, this research can inform policy makers at national and local levels to formulate and implement solutions to the retention problem. Regarding its contribution to academic literature, this study, by developing and extending the theoretical framework established by Woods (2001) and integrating the forces of marketization, managerialism and career mobility, my research could lay the foundations and inform others for a useful starting point for future research.

1.6 Organisation of the thesis

Following this introduction, Chapter two defines my conceptual framework and reviews empirical and conceptual literature on the retention of teachers. Chapter three describes the methodological decisions taken during my qualitative case study, with data collected initially by questionnaire, followed by my principal investigation through semi-structured interviews. Chapter four presents my findings, concentrating on the responses of Headteachers in interview, firstly presented in a diagram entitled ‘*Retention: Untying the Knot*’ and secondly, through my four interview questions,

integrating existing theory and literature. Chapter five identifies and discusses my key conclusions from the data and their implications. I address what significant contribution I believe my work makes to the current understanding in this field and what potential future research stems from the foundations of this study. The appendices include supplementary documentation as outlined in the thesis.

1.7 Summary

The retention of teachers is a complex and multilayered phenomenon. Despite much published literature, policy makers only began to officially recognize the problem in 2016 and it wasn't until 2019 that legislation was introduced to address the issues. Yet seemingly these initiatives have had little impact, as the DfE's own statistical data evidence. As the literature shows, the neo-liberal policies specifically creating a marketized education system has had profound effects on schools, school leaders and retention.

This introduction has outlined my research focus and I have described the scope and size of the problem through literature and statistical data. It has discussed the research and policy context for the study and the impact of neo-liberal policy on the school system. Government policy, specifically the White Papers of 2010, 2016 and 2019 and current matters have been explained. The changing role of the Headteacher within competitive, consumerist and performative dynamics are addressed. My research aims and my three research questions and why they are important are described. Lastly, what contribution to knowledge this study may bring and a brief resume of the thesis organisation is outlined. The next chapter outlines my conceptual framework and reviews the existing literature with regard to retention.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

I begin this chapter with an explanation of my conceptual framework, which addresses the neo-liberal policy 'forces' of marketization, managerialism and career mobility. I have combined these forces with the theoretical approach developed by Peter Woods (2001). In his research with teachers, he found their reasons for leaving the profession were interconnected within three levels; the macro, meso and micro. By combining these, I conceptualise the retention of teachers in a novel way, I also use Woods' model to structure my review of literature as detailed below.

2.1 Conceptual framework

My theoretical premise is that imbued within Woods' macro-meso-micro strata, the economic, political and social forces of marketization, managerialism and career mobility provide the critical conceptual framework through which to analyse Headteachers' experiences and advance the current theories surrounding the teacher retention challenge.

The model developed by Peter Woods was a consequence of a long academic career, during which he undertook significant qualitative research with teachers, with publications dating from the 1980s to recent revisions of previous work. Woods describes himself primarily as a sociologist and ethnographer, notably, much of his research is qualitative, using narrative and biographical approaches in natural settings. As a consequence of his research, he maintains the factors affecting teachers and their career decisions, arises from the structural macro level of government policy; the organisational meso level of school specific factors and lastly, the micro level of individual, personal factors. His research concludes that all three

levels are often interrelated for teachers in their daily lives. Retaining teachers in the profession, is he says:

> "*A multilevel and multidimensional phenomenon, requiring a number of theories of different kinds for full comprehension rather than one all-embracing theory or model. The micro refers to social factors within the teacher's biography and person; the meso is related to institutional and other middle-range factors; the macro deals with wider forces deriving from global trends and government policy. The interaction between the three is the field on which teacher experiences are played out"* (Woods, 2001, p 115).

Woods' understanding of the agency and experience of teachers is based on his research with individual teachers. His research navigated the profound changes of neo-liberal policies and the experiences of teachers, in his words, from "*a well-respected professional, with opportunities for some autonomy and creativity*" (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p 35) to a "*factory style model of schooling, with values of efficiency, judged through the narrow range of student outcomes*" (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, p 36).

Questioning why teachers were leaving, he found, at the micro individual level, the personal commitment and resilience to cope with the role were important. At the meso level, the quality and the behaviours of leadership and the context of school, particularly a school's ethos and culture were important. These factors he linked to the macro level, the intensification of teachers' work and its manifestation at national level through government policy.

The wealth of material and analysis in Woods' body of work are frequently cited within empirical literature and accredited by some as contributing to their understanding, analysis and findings (for example: Leithwood et al, 1999; Day et al, 2007; Hargreaves, 2010; Nias, 2014; Menter et al, 2013). Although his work was primarily situated in England, he contributed to international projects, with academic colleagues such as Michael Huberman, Geert Kelchtermans and Kenneth Leithwood. However, Woods' theory that all three levels are interlinked for teachers, is not without its critics. For example, Day et al (2007) in their VITAE[11] project and more recently Gorard (2023), suggested the micro level was not always related to macro policy or meso factors but was more idiosyncratic and dependent on many personal factors. This was a consideration for my research when linking Woods' framework with Headteachers' negotiation of retention.

Woods' use of the macro, meso, micro framework in his research is a familiar and a recognized methodological format, often utilised by others to analyse, as a structure for evaluation, education policy and its impact (for instance, in the work of Gale, 2001; Fairclough, 2013; O'Conner, 2013; Gale and Parker, 2015). It is, notes Connell (2013) one which provides perspectives from varying angles, a 360° multi-level model particularly useful in exploring perspectives of individuals in qualitative approaches, a key aim of my research.

2.1.1 Developing my conceptual framework

It is important to clarify that Woods' theory of the three levels affecting retention is highly pertinent to this study. The levels are used as a structure to review the

[11] The VITAE project (Variations In Teachers work, lives And their Effects on pupils) ran from 2001 to 2005, included research with 300 teachers, working in a hundred schools, across seven Local Authorities in the UK.

literature within the macro-meso-micro factors and utilized as a means of exploring the findings, analysis and conclusions. Woods' research methodologically has many similarities with my own, as Woods used qualitative approaches, attuned to offering focussed, detailed and substantive findings, a key aim of my study. Much of his work involved interviews, through localised, small scale case studies, some ethnographically (see for instance, Woods, 1996) centred on the personal perspective of teachers at all levels of responsibility, including those new to the profession and at management and senior leadership levels.

In much the same way that Woods approached his research, my aim in interviewing Headteachers is to explore why retention is still continuing to be a challenge in secondary schools in England, through their perceptions and experiences of their teachers in their schools and more widely of the profession generally. The link to Woods' model is that I view Headteachers as being at the centre of the three levels as they implement macro policies formulated and developed by others. They have to develop their own in-school strategies and balance this with the personal needs of their pupils and their teacher workforce. As such, they are simultaneously operating between and within all three levels, whilst trying to operate a successful school.

I seek to explore Headteacher experiences and personal struggles in negotiating retention within their schools. I aim to unpick their perceptions, examining the personal and professional pressures at play and the tensions and challenges to their values, beliefs and practices in negotiating retention. The empirical focus of my research therefore sits largely between the meso and micro, on headteachers as leaders of organisations and as individuals.

For me, linking Woods' framework to my thinking about Headteachers negotiation of retention, was *the* fundamental starting point. He describes how different factors are involved, from policy, flowing downwards to schools and to individuals and also a flow upwards, as personal circumstances influence decisions, such as those associated with career mobility. How Headteachers implement policy, their actions within their schools and its impact on teachers, follows this model. My research will question further influential factors, such as Headteachers' school context, how well they are positioned (Greany and Higham, 2018) and their capacity and resources to support retention, as well as their individual agency, values and beliefs. How much 'space' Headteachers have for negotiation and adaptation (Lynch et al, 2012) within a high level of specification and direction, is an important element within the research.

Woods' (2001) perspective on school leaders was that the most successful ones were good at adapting, working 'the system' to good effect whilst deriving considerable intrinsic reward from their activities and achievements. He described such school leaders as 'composite Headteachers' (Woods et al, 1996; Woods, 2001) who have the capacity to develop individual forms of leadership in the face of rapid change, to meet statutory requirements whilst maintaining an ethos and culture of positivity with their teachers. This is a perspective highly applicable to my research in exploring how Headteachers negotiate macro level policy, how they lead their organisations and their own micro experience in the retention of teachers.

2.2 Literature review

Woods' model of three levels of influencing factors is a structure that I use in this literature review. Therefore, I first review literature within the macro level of marketization, managerialism, career mobility and deprofessionalisation. Secondly at

the meso level, exploring leadership and the multiple factors at play within schools. Thirdly, I review what has been written about the micro individual factors concerning retention.

When looking at practices and their impact on teacher retention, it is apparent that literature has, to date been overwhelmingly focussed on the micro level viewpoints of individual teachers, at all levels of experience, who have left or are thinking of leaving the profession (for instance: Worth et al, 2018; Andrews, 2019, Sibieta, 2018 and 2020; See et al, 2020; Worth and Van den Brande, 2020). Only more recently, has the literature begun to broaden the research through the perspectives of other stakeholders, for example those who return to teaching (Hilton, 2017) or with undergraduates (Gorard et al, 2020), or why teachers remain in the profession (Chiong et al, 2017).

The literature on Headteachers' personal and professional experiences and leadership effectiveness, in generic terms, is vast (Gronn, 1999; Gunter and Ribbins, 2002; Percival and Tranter, 2004; Ribbins, 2008; Gunter, 2016; Denholm et al, 2017; Fuller, 2019). However, there appears to be very little research specifically examining the perceptions and experiences of Headteachers in relation to retention. What does exist is almost always focussed on analysing their leadership, effectiveness and influence on the job satisfaction of teachers and only obliquely looking at the retention of teachers (Arrowsmith, 2007; Fuller, 2019). Due to the complexity of factors at macro, meso and micro level and the absence of literature on Headteachers' experience, my strategy therefore, is to examine the literature on retention more broadly and include throughout aspects pertinent to Headteachers.

2.3 The macro factors impacting upon retention

In this section, I explore literature which examines the macro level neo-liberal policies of marketization, managerialism and the deprofessionalism of teachers and lastly, career mobility. To understand the evolving nature of why teachers leave the profession, it is necessary to look far beyond schools and teachers themselves and examine how neo-liberal policy has changed education.

I found that the extensive works of Lynch (both singularly and in conjunction with others) and Ball, of particular relevance. Lynch's research was based upon extensive studies of Ireland's education reforms, whilst Ball is very much English centred. That said, both authors independently critique marketization and managerialism through the global trend of neo-liberal 'policy-borrowing' (Phillips and Ochs, 2004; Morris, 2011; Burdett and Donnell, 2016; Whitty and Wisby, 2016). As Lynch et al (2012) explain, neo-liberalism has had a profound influence on the management and orientation of education, as part of a world-wide education reform movement, characterised in terms of policy 'freedoms' (autonomy) and structural constraints (accountability) so as to develop education into a marketable commodity. Internationally, governments in Australia, Europe and Canada have followed similar policy changes as in England, to initiate a tightly controlled restructuring of their education system (Poppleton and Williamson, 2004). This has involved the development of competitive markets into all areas including the economy, politics and society as a whole and "*is embedded within discourses of choice, responsibility, performativity, accountability, competition and marketisation"* (Springer, 2016, p 2).

Successive governments of England have, over the last four decades, instigated a significant transformation towards neo-liberal forms of education policy, embracing

the discourse of marketization at its core and its implementation through managerialism (Ball, 2008; Lynch et al, 2012; Chiong et al, 2017; Bamford and Worth, 2017). This shift has created an education system largely driven by government set targets (Ball, 2008; Whitty and Wisby, 2016; Fuller 2019). The revisions to the national curriculum and examination structure during this period has established the parameters of comparison and competition, combined with 'parent power' through choice, all contributing to a culture of performativity and measurability, (Ball, 2004, 2008).

2.3.1 Marketization

As Gewirtz (1995, p 13) suggests, the marketization of education is underpinned by the need for *"a 'policy solution' to the problems of cost, control and performance and is driven by self-interest".* The 'cost' is supported by funding directly linked to pupil numbers, the 'control' is through government policy, the 'performance' measured by externally set (government) targets. Schools in such circumstances have become businesses and as Lynch (2015) noted, Headteachers, at the forefront of the business of education, have had to embrace an entrepreneurial approach in order to survive. Increasingly, as policy has established the power of parental choice, the aspirations and preferences of *some* parents have come to prominence, as school funding is attached to their children (Morrison, 2012). Arguably, this has made pupils a commodity, "*defined by funding and value*" (Ball, 2008, p 14).

The emphasis on 'measurement' and ranking schools in league tables by analysing Progress 8[12] performance and surveillance through inspection, has enabled the state

[12]Progress 8 is a way of measuring the progress that pupils make from the end of key stage 2 (the last year of primary school) to the end of key stage 4 (when they take GCSEs). The higher a pupil's

to impose considerable control and regulation (Greany and Waterhouse, 2016). Such constraints have created substantial challenges for school leaders, subjugating their 'autonomy', as institutions increasingly are defined as "*turning a public service into a private tradable one"* (Lynch, 2015, p 44). As Greany and Waterhouse (2016) suggest, the focus on test results by policy makers is *the* extrinsic instrumental goal of marketization and has impacted with some force on teachers. Introduced ostensibly as a means to "*improve education standards*" (DfE, 2010, p 4) it has become highly structured and intensely focussed, through national standardised testing of children. The results of such testing have wide-ranging consequences as they are used to measure the performance of teachers, affecting their pay and career progression. The impact of these reforms as Caldwell and Spinks (2013, p 278) explain, *"has made very real material changes to teachers and teaching"*. This view is supported and explored by Ball (2008), who argues this has led to the "*proletarianization of the workforce"* (p 307) a shifting paradigm in teachers' deprofessionalization.

Its impact on schools has profoundly altered the "*schooling landscape*" (Greany and Waterhouse, 2016, p 1192) as more schools academize and Local Authorities[13] (L.A.) decline in influence. The work of Greany and Higham (2018) identifies that a two-tier system of schools has evolved: the 'winners', those schools which are over-subscribed and well-resourced and the 'losers', those schools which find it difficult to

'Progress 8' score, the more progress they have made in comparison with pupils who started at a similar level. This translates to a school's overall performance score and ultimately its league table position and marketable appeal.

[13] A local authority (L.A.) is an organization that is officially responsible for all the public services and facilities in a particular area and historically, this included the control of schools within their area. There are 317 local authorities in England, funded by local taxation, many of them now have no control over schools in their area.

maintain pupil numbers, creating a spiral of decline in terms of funding and capacity to attract and retain teachers. This is consistent with the wider literature which suggests ‘successful schools’ have fewer problems in retaining teachers (Andrews, 2019; See et al, 2020).

Less discussed in literature is the effect of the academization programme and its impact on retention. DfE data confirms some academies, primarily those in ‘privileged’ contexts, have the best retention rates with only around a 6% turnover annually, as compared to the national average of 21% (DfE, 2021). Baxter and Floyd (2019) found a somewhat different picture. Their research focussed on schools within areas of high deprivation[14] in England, with schools traditionally being termed as ‘hard to staff’. They found some variation in the success of academies, citing poor retention with corresponding high numbers of teacher ‘churn’ (or ‘turnover’), particularly in core subjects and high vacancy rates overall. However, they suggested several advantages were to be gained by Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) internal collaboration to attract and retain teachers, by utilizing their combined resources and opportunities to benefit career choice and ultimately, improve the retention of teachers.

2.3.2 Managerialism

Managerialism, at its core, is systematically framed around efficiency, economy and ‘value for money’. As explained by Ball (2009, p 13) managerialism is “*ideologically, a motivated approach to managing public services”*. This gives primacy to product and output over process, endorsing market-type accountability in public sector spending.

[14] ‘High deprivation’ is a term given to geographical areas identified as 'deprived'. This can relate to people having a low income but it can also mean fewer resources or opportunities across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing.

As Lynch argues (2015, p 1), a further key feature includes a change of "*nomenclature from that of citizens, rights, welfare and solidarity, to that of customers, service users and competition".* It is a complex mix of social, economic and political organizational change (Clarke and Newman, 1997) which has impacted on the education system as a whole and has specifically effected the management practice and activities of schools and their Headteachers (Gunter and Forrester, 2008; Hargreaves, 2010; Skinner et al 2018).

Managerialist principles have endorsed, says Ball (2008), the perception of education as a commodity, as increasingly the 'product' is monitored and measured. This has substantially changed the role of Headteachers, impacting on how they enact their responsibilities and on their daily work (Fuller, 2019). Research into school leadership consistently emphasises how radically their role has changed and their autonomy marginalised by government, relegated to mere 'conduits of policy' (Ball, 2019). As Greany and Waterhouse (2016) argue, the policy presence in schools and increasing accountability, appears to have both a coercive and normative power over school leaders, "*in that it requires them to act in certain ways and also ingrains a sense of this is the only way to do things*" (p 1202). Drawing on the work of Lynch et al (2012) school leaders "*have been re-constituted to succeed*" (p 128) and as Hulme et al found (2021, p 3) in their study with Headteachers: "*increasingly they are bridging, brokering and buffering policy"* within a 'government knows best' narrative.

This restructuring of education has transformed the role of Headteachers (Forrester and Gunter, 2008; Ball and Junemann, 2012; Hill et al, 2012; Tomlinson et al, 2013). Marketization and managerialism has positioned school leaders as business employers, financial controllers, marketing managers and efficiency supervisors who

are concerned with performance and ‘outputs’ of their pupils. It is a data driven model which seeks to measure the effectiveness of schools, teachers and Headteachers (Gunter and Rayner, 2007; Hall, 2013; Cotterrill, 2017; Hallinger, 2018; Thompson, Lingard and Ball, 2021; Lundie, 2022).

These discourses, argues Cribb (2009), have refashioned professional roles with ‘values’ geared towards serving extrinsic policy objectives, rather than the intrinsic goals of professional practice. It is a model of corporate commitment with school improvement based on ‘quality systems’ where everything is quantified, measured and assessed (ibid). Moreover, suggests Ball (2006, p 10), it is a model where Headteachers “*have to produce ‘quality’, they have to strive for excellence”* or they are deemed unsuccessful, which leads to “*discourses of derision and redemption*” (ibid, p 10).

How and why managerialism is causing teachers to leave is addressed by Lynch who argues such reforms have led to a loss of the “*professional capacity*” (2015, p 6) of teachers, as trust in the teacher has been removed and effectively silenced. Their capability as a teacher is now evaluated solely on their results and “*are being monitored and appraised continually*” with the “*fear of questions raised regarding their competence”* (p 8). This has a direct influence on their pay, promotional and career development opportunities and thus, a powerful instrument of accountability and control.

This not only undermines teacher professionalism but as Ball (2008) argues, considerably adds to their “*ontological insecurity*” (p 29) within the profession, as they are ‘scored’ as to their productivity and value-adding capacity. The measurement of teachers is a factor in retention literature, linked strongly to how this challenges

teachers' idealism and commitment (Tomlinson, 2001; Day et al, 2007; Burghes et al, 2009; Savage, 2017). The impact on the personal and professional lives of teachers within this culture and discourse, says Connell (2020), has been at the core of "*remaking of the teacher*" (2020, p 8) challenging their ideals and posing questions as to why they are teachers.

Arguably, the increasing accountability of teachers through factors integral to marketization and performance management, have led to a loss of professional capacity, or deprofessionalisation as trust in the teacher has been removed (Barton et al, 1994; Ball, 2008; Beck, 2008; Keddie, 2017; Perryman et al, 2020). The intensive assessment of teachers in every aspect of their actions, has, as Tomlinson (2001) argues, "*made them a technical workforce rather than a profession to be respected*" (p 41).

This as Woods (2001) contends, challenges the traditional 'value system' of teachers, impacting upon their status and respect within society, de-stabilising their sense of well-being, their commitment to the profession and their insecurity. Teachers in such circumstances says Woods, leads many to question their value and purpose in their evolving role.

The 'prescription' referenced above is closely linked in literature with neo-liberal policies, escalating 'control' around assessment and the imposed dictatorial methods of the way teachers 'teach' (Goodwyn, 2012). Notably, Perryman and Calvert (2020) found this had demotivated teachers, removing their autonomy within the classroom, stifling their creativity and capacity for innovation. This 'prescription' imposes upon the personal lives of teachers, inhibiting their freedom to teach, so too their natural

moral reflection and innate passions, thus challenging their very professional identity (Hilton, 2017; Worth, 2018; Allen et al, 2020).

As Allen et al (2019) noted, this has embedded a culture within teachers where individuals are incited to improve themselves, their performance and seek responsibility. As Lynch et al (2012) argue, this is a principle which underpins managerialism, supporting a view that it is good practice to aspire to improvement, better performance and 'output' in personal and professional life. As teaching has a traditional hierarchical structure, one based on teacher performance and attached to pay, some authors suggest this structure works against retention, as it effectively devalues those who want to remain in the classroom, as patently not all teachers seek promotion and ever-increasing responsibilities, so are thus forced to look elsewhere if they wish to improve their remuneration and standard of living (Worth and Van den Brande, 2020).

Literature cites the negative discourse of the profession in mainstream and social media as causing further erosion of the status and role of teachers (Brady and Wilson, 2021). Valtierra and Michalec (2017) note the need to feel 'publicly' valued is essential for retaining teachers and similarly Scutt (2019) concludes, the deprofessionalisation of teachers by the dominant media platforms, was a major factor detrimentally affecting retention. In the 2018 OECD[15] survey, only 35% of teachers in England felt their profession was valued by society, as compared with 66% in Korea and 60% in Finland, two high-performing countries in relation to their educational systems.

[15]The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is an inter-governmental organisation with 38 member countries. Surveys are completed across all countries.

Shine (2020) suggested government policy has exacerbated the continual negative portrayal of teachers within the media, by drawing attention to education and teachers as needing constant reform. Further aggravated by successive government rhetoric surrounding ‘failing schools’, again undermining teachers and the profession at large. A significant body of literature cites the overall effect of this lowering of ‘image’ as being a contributory factor for teachers, at all levels, leaving (Allen et al, 2017; Ovenden-Hope et al, 2022). This negative portrayal has affected Headteachers at the personal, micro level. Research by Lynch et al (2016) found not only performative pressures were contributing to Headteachers leaving, but the broader societal view of the role and the profession was seen as a key influence. A further point was the effect on Headteachers of their own teachers leaving; in effect retention impacting upon retention, as found by Coates, Adcock and Ribton (2015). How Headteachers deal with negativity in the wider community has attracted some attention in literature, with strong correlations with how ‘successful’ Headteachers can negotiate such criticism in positive terms. This says Fuller (2019) is one of the key challenges for Headteachers as they remodel and reappropriate negativeness, to replace it with positivity.

2.3.3 Career mobility

The impact of teacher mobility in literature suggests it is strongly linked to *both* individual preferences and dissatisfaction in working conditions (Appleton et al, 2006 Reid & Collins, 2013). As Woods (2001) noted, teaching used to be seen as a "*job for life*" (p 126) and one with considerable attractions, as it provided a solid career framework for their working lives. However, this as Woods argues is no longer the case, as teachers *"hold a different concept of career*" (p 128). Career mobility factors in the existing literature are framed around changing societal attitudes and expectations of employment opportunities (Robertson-Smith and Markwick 2009; Spence, 2011; Wilson and Muir, 2022). As Patton and McMahon (2021, p 46) suggest, "*Individuals have been encouraged to think of themselves as free agents, to embrace career mobility away from previous generations' 'mono-career' expectancies*". As Tomlinson (2012) noted, the shortage of well qualified graduates has created intense competition, both within the education sector itself and more widely, in other professions. As Worth and Van den Brande (2019) suggest, this attitude surrounding multiple careers, has led to a more flexible, adaptive career landscape with teachers embracing career self-management and looking for ways to enhance their lives through different paths. Such changes in attitude are linked to the marketization of the public sector, strongly influencing the direction and expectations of employment and with changing conceptualisations about careers (Lynch, 2015).

As well qualified graduates, teachers have potentially a wide choice of careers and opportunities outside the profession: "*the possibility of higher salaries and a perceived lower workload is an attractive proposition*" (NEU, 2021, p 3). Teachers are able to maximise their career opportunities and take advantage of the fluctuations

within a *"knowledge economy*" (Abreu, Faggian and McCann, 2015). As She (2017) suggested, many factors impact on mobility and influence decisions: such as societal attitudes to the profession, the 'quality' of recruits and how well they were initially trained and mentored. Other literature identifies many other idiosyncratic, individual and personal factors in narratives surrounding career choice (Allen et al, 2018; Patton and McMahon, 2021; Gorard, 2023).

Research by Bamford and Worth (2017) evidence increasing numbers of STEM[16] subject area teachers were migrating to other careers, corroborated by data in Teacher Mobility Reports (DfE, 2021). This epitomises the challenges for school leaders, in that the shortage of well qualified graduates, notably within STEM subject areas, has created intense competition within the education sector itself and more widely in other professions. As Perryman et al (2020) suggests, teachers with a good degree find themselves in an excellent position, with many options in this 'marketplace' having highly developed and readily transferable skills. The difficulty of competing with other professions exemplifies the 'pull' and 'push' forces within retention (Evans, 2011). Where the 'pull' of other careers includes, for example: higher salaries, better work-life balance, improved career structures and the 'push' of working conditions for teachers includes, for example: excessive workload, accountability and diminishing real term pay.

Some of the literature published during the pandemic (2020-2022), predicted career mobility would be curtailed. Hutchinson et al, (2021) related the pandemic circumstances to those experienced after the 2008 global financial crisis, where an

[16] STEM: an acronym used to encompass the core subjects of Science, Technology, English and Mathematics; also termed as Shortage Subject Areas in terms of teacher recruitment and retention.

overall improvement in teacher retention was seen for a short time. As Allen et al (2020) notes, the opportunities to retain teachers during what government envisaged would be a period of low growth, is linked to two main factors. Firstly, there would be fewer jobs opportunities for teachers in other sectors as the labour market contracts, with the net result that teachers would remain. The second, is that teaching is seen by many as ‘recession proof’, providing secure employment at a time of rising unemployment (Worth and McLean, 2020). Current data and literature suggests this did stabilize retention for one year, in 2022, but now previous patterns of employment have resumed (Allen, 2023; ASCL, 2024).

Research on the experiences and perceptions of practising Headteachers and the tensions they face regarding career mobility is limited in literature. Hall, Gunter and Bragg (2011) questioned the extent to which Headteachers can mediate wider societal trends and attitudes within their educational practices and a ‘free market’ culture. Asada et al (2020), suggest Headteachers negotiate career mobility by adopting two positions: acceptance of the inevitability that teachers will have multiple careers with little they can do, or a more assertive coercive attitude to try and influence a change of decision, using what resources they have. As Sims (2020) suggested, the many individual factors involved in career mobility are complex, a situation conceivably out of the control of the Headteacher, however, they suggest from their findings, leadership was often an influencer in decisions, part of the complex picture but not all of the picture.

2.4 The meso factors impacting on retention and how Headteachers may respond

This section explores the organisational (meso) level of school specific factors

impacting ~~on~~ retention. I begin with a focus on literature pertinent to Headteachers, a critical dimension at this meso level encompassing Headteachers' leadership effectiveness. Thereafter, I examine the literature largely concerning the working conditions of teachers, particularly their workload, accountability and pay. Other school-based factors such as teachers' professional development, mentoring and the influence of parental expectations and pupil behaviour are also addressed.

2.4.1 Literature addressing effective school leadership

As there is little direct research on Headteachers' experiences of retention, I address in this review, literature exploring effective school leadership and its impact on retention. This is a distinct difference to my own study, as I am not analysing Headteachers' leadership effectiveness, however, understanding the leadership literature is an important dimension within the retention of teachers.

Much of the effective school leadership literature highlights the importance of the Headteacher's vision, in determining the ethos and culture of an individual school and in practical terms, the working conditions of its teachers (Hargreaves, 2003 and 2007; Day et al, 2007; Day and Armstrong, 2016; Sims, 2017; Gorard et al, 2020). Sims' (2017) research highlights very strong associations and the critical importance of school leadership for teacher retention, arguing that it is strongly associated with "*higher teacher job satisfaction and a reduction in the odds that a teacher wants to leave teaching*" (p 57).

Within the literature, retaining teachers is found to have considerable benefits for Headteachers, affording them familiarity with their staff, supporting their leadership and raising academic achievement (Currie et al, 2009; See et al, 2020; Menzies,

2023). As noted by Fuller (2019) these retained teachers are offering more than merely their presence, as they add their experience and knowledge base to underpin the strategic direction of the school and are key to a school's improvement and success.

Headteachers that build trust and meaningful relationships with their teachers and support them actively, are key to job satisfaction and retention:

> "*Leadership which is inclusive with an ethos of collaboration and enthusiasm, impacts positively on teachers' commitment and effectiveness and as a consequence, on their retention"* (Day and Gu, 2018, p 28).

Teacher surveys have found that school leadership is one of the 'top-five' influencing factors in teachers' decisions to leave (Worth and Van den Brande, 2020; Brady and Wilson, 2021). Notably, they consistently record almost all 'successful' Headteachers use the same practices to retain teachers, by providing professional support through CPD, mentoring and personal support for teachers who find themselves in difficult life circumstances (Sims, 2017 and 2020; Travers and Cooper, 2018; Worth and Van den Brande, 2020; Towers et al, 2022).

Government expectations, particularly from 2016 (DfE, 2016) have consistently reinforced Headteachers' increasing accountability and responsibility to recruit, deploy and promote teachers and significantly "*to retain them"* (DfE, 2019, p 2). Within the current context, such expectations have with one hand ostensibly given school leaders autonomy and control (Greany and Waterhouse, 2016; Fuller, 2019); whilst on the other hand, operating within a centralised Government agenda allowing "*the state to retain considerable 'steerage' over the goals and processes of the*

education system while appearing not to do so" (Ball, 2019, no page). Glatter (2003 and 2021) found that whilst the autonomy of Headteachers is emphasised in government discourse, school leaders felt themselves to be increasingly constrained by government control and direction.

Such control and direction, Fuller (2019) suggests, has developed Headteacher behaviours, as they go about their daily business in complying and implementing policy, whilst perhaps questioning and critical of its effectiveness. This allows the individual school leader to 'play the game' whilst at the same time holding underlying beliefs that the policy or initiative is unworkable, or unlikely to improve things. This is relevant to retention, exposing the tensions between 'keeping their staff happy' and the requirement to introduce unpopular "*initiatives forced on an organisation*" (Norman, 2019, p 33). The way headteachers act and their agency and capacity to 'filter' constant changes for teachers, in terms of their policy interpretation is crucial in this respect. As Coldren et al (2014) found, the 'balance' is a dilemma for school leaders, as they have to conform to external requirements, whilst adopting change in the most supportive way possible for the well-being of teachers.

In her trans-national critique, Lynch (2015, p 12) argues, competition within the education system has impacted with some force on Headteachers to "*prioritize the interests of their own school"* (p 12) through a mechanism that Barber et al, (2010, p 42) called "*deliverology"*. Barber et al (2010) argued that schools in competition with each other would "*drive up student performance and extract maximum outcomes for students"* (ibid, p 43). This is supported by Simon et al (2021) who suggest that Heads in tune with such practices, have evolved "*their pedagogical beliefs and values to suit the market"* (p 113).

Throughout the literature these circumstances are cited as having created substantial challenges for Headteachers, as schools are operating in competition with others, thus are promoting their own interests to retain and attract quality teachers (for example: Morrison, 2012; Doherty 2020). This Fuller (2019) argues, has altered the role of the Headteacher from leading educationalists to executive officers, promoting and marketing their 'product' as a commercial business enterprise.

These themes are explored in the research recently published by Norman (2019) and Courtney and McGinity (2022) which found 'everyday erosions' by policy makers are limiting and constraining Heads in their role, specifically related to retention. Hilton (2017) suggests school leadership has evolved to adapt to the changing landscape, in order to attract and retain teachers. This has prompted the development of an ad-hoc and unregulated incentivization system with 'retention packages' to be formulated around market principles. A situation which Ball (2019, no page) argues "*has perpetuated and exacerbated the messiness and incoherence*" within the education sector.

Notably, critical scholars suggest marketization and managerialism has a "*vice like grip*" (Stevenson and Wood, 2013, p 49) control of the profession and that Headteachers are simultaneously "*both authorised and disempowered"* (Hulme et al, 2021 p 8) as prescribed curricular and pedagogies act as a "*straight jacket*" (Hill et al, 2012, p 22). Fuller (2019) suggests Headteachers' 'resistance' takes many forms: 'everyday resistance' which was hidden or overt; compliance as game playing, selectivity, masquerade and reinvention, with the further factor of ambivalence and ambiguity. However, Greany and Waterhouse (2016) suggest that to simplistically imply Headteachers are either compliant or resistant, a binarized approach, does not

take account of the complex and fluid forces impacting on them and their context and that they are likely to embody a semblance of both. Perryman et al, (2011) say that some school leaders will adopt a position of policy evasion, or will reconstruct policy, by changing the language used, to make it more appealing to their teachers to "*reappropriate, mask and reinvent, to translate policy reforms in the context of a particular school"* (p 45).

2.4.2 Workload

Much of the extant literature suggests the prevalence and persistence of teacher turnover is strongly linked to their workload (Doherty, 2020). Some suggest this is *the* crucial factor influencing teachers' decisions to leave the profession and is the greatest threat to retaining them (Barmby, 2006; Smethem, 2007; Galton and MacBeath and Lambert, 2008; Gu, 2018; Worth et al, 2018; Wood, 2019; Gager and Percival 2022).

Significantly, research carried out for the DfE (Foster, 2019) supports claims that unmanageable workloads were adversely impacting upon teachers' general wellbeing and was a significant factor in their decision to leave teaching, pointing out "*an unmanageable workload is the most consistently cited reason teachers give for leaving*" (ibid, p 19). The workload of secondary school teachers is often framed by a discourse of crisis, as annual Teacher Workload Surveys evidence teachers working a minimum of fifty hours per week in term time (TWS, 2019, 2020). Other organizations providing survey data, reinforce that teachers perceive their workload has increased (NEU, 2018 and 2020; ASCL, 2019). 'Burn out' is a condition frequently referenced, as being a significant factor occurring within the teaching profession "*where the risk of job-related burn-out is high"* (Harmsen et al, 2019).

Keddie (2017) argues, pressures of constant changes to the curriculum, more time spent on assessment and greater accountability and performative measures have steadily increased workload pressures on teachers, with consequent job dissatisfaction and low morale. Hilton (2017) in her qualitative study concluded, teachers felt an overriding sense of "*being swamped*" (p 45) with *"constant work that never ends*" (p 46). The general perception by teachers of their workload is that it is higher than other professions, their pay is less and they regard their workloads as problematic (Hilton, 2017; Richards et al, 2019; Worth and Van den Brande, 2019). The perception of mounting workload with stagnating pay has been linked importantly in the literature to poor retention (Day and Gu, 2014; Foster, 2019).

Despite the strong emphasis relating to work-overload, notably, *some* literature suggests that teacher workload has remained quantitatively stable for the past 25 years (Allen et al, 2021). As Sims and Jerrim (2020) suggest, contrary to popular belief, the number of hours teachers work does not appear to be rising, a perception corroborated by Walker et al (2019) which found the number of hours worked by teachers in their study was slightly falling, by an average of up to five hours per week from 2016-2019.

The disjuncture between the perception of workload as unmanageable and the recent suggestion that it has remained quantitively stable, is as Gewirtz et al, (2009) cites, more about how teachers feel, than what they do. Kelchtermans (2017) suggests, it is not the volume of work involved but is connected to the lack of control teachers feel over their work in responding to constant 'top-down' changes. He asserts the lack of control undermines motivation and autonomy, leading to them feeling their workload is out of control. Richards et al (2019) argued, as teachers'

work has altered, such as the variety and complexity of tasks undertaken, this has added to their own perceptions of an increasing workload. Gu (2018), Sims (2017) and Foster, (2018) all discuss the rise in ‘second order activities’ of teachers, which are bureaucratic and administrative and how these have reinforced negative workload perceptions within the profession.

As Allen and Sims (2018) point out the discourse of teachers being ‘overworked’ has become integral to the thinking of many teachers and authors, which may not actually “*match the reality*” (p 84). Perryman and Calvert (2020) found that teachers enter the profession expecting to work long hours, suggesting it is an accepted culture within teaching in England and a continuous narrative endorsed by teachers. The literature discusses the measures taken at policy level to ‘solve’ the issue, including Workload Agreements (DfE, 2010-2023). However, recently Burrow et al (2020) questioned their effectiveness in actually addressing workload, as strategies tied to resourcing will have limited value for schools with low income streams and constrained expenditure. Interestingly, in an earlier work by Ball (2008) on similar policy initiatives, he suggests they are little more than tokenistic and are non-performative in solving the issues, whilst perpetuating the policy changes with the justification as being “*in the pursuit of excellence*” (DfE, 2010, p 4).

Notably, an analysis of teacher workload by Allen et al (2021) during the Covid pandemic, strongly suggested teachers working hours *had* considerably increased. This they argued was caused by teachers being required to develop, adopt and operate new ways of teaching online, implementing new schemes of work, assessments, curricular and ‘programmes’, in addition to the self-certification of

marking examination papers; a perception supported post-pandemic in research by Johnson and Coleman (2023).

The views of Headteachers on *their own* workload, have been highlighted in several studies, for instance, in evaluative research led by the University of Birmingham (Gunter et al, 2004) and other recent literature, for example, Walker et al 2019 and 2020. The latest DfE report (2023), indicated that school leaders had revised their school policies and approaches in an attempt to reduce workload during the previous year but overall the DfE questioned whether some of the initiatives had been effective.

In leadership literature, controlling workload is seen as essential to the job satisfaction of teachers; predominantly through cultivating an environment in which teachers feel supported (Day and Gu, 2013; Day and Sammons 2020; Leithwood et al, 2020) often manifesting itself in 'shielding' teachers from tasks not essential to core-teaching and learning.

How Headteachers negotiate policy, in this instance on workload, Ball et al (2012, p 48) explains is "*simultaneously a process of invention and compliance"* as they reflect on the potential impact on their school and on their teachers, they "*contain*" (ibid, p 51) the reform. As Gewirtz and Ball (2000) found in their study on the shifting discourses of school headship, from 'welfarist' to 'new managerialism', the way in which Headteachers talk about, think and act out their roles is tied to their personal qualities, complex histories and social positionings. Gerwirtz and Ball (2000) also suggest that as marketization and managerialism has taken hold, "*the role and sense of identity and purpose of school leaders are being reworked and redefined*" (ibid, p

266). They concluded this resulted in an embedding of language and practices allied to the market position of the institution within the local competitive arena, with the Headteacher representing the 'embodiment' of such factors.

2.4.3 Pay and monetary incentives

The discourse, within government administrations since 2010, is that teachers are not motivated by money, they stay in the profession for altruistic reasons, to 'make a difference' (DfE, 2010 and 2016). In education policy there is an abundance of such narratives, with 'evidence' that teachers' sense of worth and professional self-efficacy are more important than financial reward (DfE, 2010, 2016, 2019).

Notably, literature on pay and pay incentives for teachers and its relation to retention encompasses two 'positions'; one being that financial renumeration is not the prime reason for teachers exiting the profession (Smithers and Robinson, 2003; Worth and Faulkner-Ellis 2021; Bamford and Worth, 2017) and the second, supporting that pay is clearly a factor in this issue (Smethem, 2007; Busby, 2016; Chiong et al, 2017). See et al (2020) found strong evidence suggesting that whilst 'targeted' money can encourage people into teaching, it does not necessarily *keep* them in the profession.

Some suggest the status attached to pay *is* significant within the 'market values of contemporary England' and is a resonating narrative of wider global and societal regard for material wealth (Maguire et al, 2020; Cooper et al, 2022). Strongly associated with Margaret Thatcher's government (1979-1990), the principles of home ownership and material wealth, as Rizvi and Lingard (2009) note "*has become the defining political and economic paradigm of our time*" (p 104). As Worth et al (2015) expedite, teachers like everyone else are "*caught up in such ideology and want a*

high standard of living" (p 86) but are increasingly experiencing diminishing levels of pay, as compared to other professions.

Ball (2019) argues, the prolonged and consistent rhetoric from policy makers that pay is not an issue in retention, endorses strong market-type accountability in public sector spending; to keep pay within 'reasonable limits' particularly in the light of austerity measures from 2008. Compared to other graduate professions, some authors estimate since 2010, real term average pay for a teacher has fallen by 15% (Bamford and Worth, 2017; Walker et al, 2020). The latest statistics published by the DfE (2021) evidences a continuing decline in the pay of teachers and a widening gap with the private sector. This, say professional associations, is clearly a detrimental factor that affects the retention of teachers (NEU, 2021; ASCL, 2021). Recent data presented by the Education Policy Institute (2023) confirms that in comparison to other OECD nations, the pay of teachers in England has fallen in real terms. It cites some countries where teachers pay rose in 'real terms' by over 30% in the last decade, but in England it has been allowed to fall. In terms of inflation and the rising cost of living suggests the EPI, "*it is likely that the fall in pay will contribute to the retention problems*" (p 3).

In literature, how teachers' pay has evolved in the context of marketization is explicitly linked to performance management (Mahoney et al, 2004; Gerwitz et al, 2021). Recently this process has accelerated, as all pay progression has become 'performance' related (Skinner et al, 2021). Stevenson and Wood (2013) note, ostensibly, school leaders now have substantial power and authority over pay structures, as teachers are assessed through appraisal processes and targets set by school leadership. The perspective of teachers' professional associations is that such

a system has few benefits, questioning its implementation to actually improve performance (NEU, 2018-2023).

Allen and Sims (2018) argue that the policies and practices of devolving pay freedoms to schools (DfE, 2013), has fragmented the pay structure, influenced by the burgeoning financial independence of academies. Furthermore, Day and Gu (2014) and Doherty (2020) argue, such freedoms on pay and monetary incentivisation have created division and inequalities and are a contentious issue, being seen as an ad hoc, informal and unregulated pay structure.

That said, recent research suggests most secondary schools, including academies, have not used their "*considerable financial freedoms*" (DfE, 2013, p 9). The large scale annual survey of Headteachers by ASCL in 2015, reported, in tune with equality legislation (EHRC, 2010), that most are utilizing the national pay and conditions structure as outlined by policy and the recommendations of the STRB. This includes set parameters for pay on each scale, starting salaries and incremental responsibility allocations. Thus, arguably remuneration freedoms is somewhat of a misnomer; effectively as Greany and Higham (2018) suggest, some schools with little or no surplus within their delegated budgets, can actually do very little *per se* to increase basic salaries of their teachers.

Significantly absent from literature, are the perspectives of Headteachers and how they are enacting their pay 'freedoms' in addressing retention. Recently, the STRB established that "*significant gaps*" (2022, p 18) had developed between the salaries of teachers and those in other professions and concluded this was indeed a major factor in teacher retention. Additionally, some small scale studies with early career teachers, suggest that teachers educated under market-based systems are more

aligned to ideas of competitive pay ‘deals’ recognising their shortage positionality. Specifically, Williams and Grayson (2018) and Herbert et al (2020) speak of a generational divide, whereby new teachers, unlike older colleagues, see the value of being in the market and acknowledge and identify their ‘purchasing power’; a factor they conclude which will affect retention in the long term.

2.4.4 Surveillance

Much of the empirical research in this field references the scrutiny of teachers and its effect on job satisfaction and retention in the profession (Page, 2017; Godfrey and Ehren, 2020; Proudfoot, 2021; Skerritt, 2023). The perspectives of Headteachers has also been sought on this topic, both in quantitative terms and in qualitative research (see for instance, ASCL annual survey publication, 2021; Cotterrill, 2015 and 2017; Bousted, 2020; Thompson, Lingard and Ball, 2021; Lundie, 2022).

Much has been researched and written on the effects of Ofsted inspection (for instance: Perryman, 2009; Courtney, 2013; Worth and Van den Brande, 2020; Perryman and Calvert, 2020). The literature makes clear that for many years Ofsted has been the major driving force in monitoring the performance of teachers and secondary schools. As Greany and Higham (2018) argue, Ofsted inspection is often cited as being one of the most feared forms of scrutiny, as the ramifications of their judgements has profound consequences for individual teachers, the school and Headteacher. Indeed, ‘underperforming’ headteachers have been removed and replaced, schools forced to academize, or even in extreme cases, closed down. Headteachers have no alternative but to conform with the systems of surveillance; given the high stakes involved, non-compliance is unthinkable (Greany and Waterhouse, 2016; Skerritt, 2023).

As Bush (2013) and Tian (2023) argue, schools in preparation for Ofsted inspection have therefore instigated complex monitoring protocols, such as 'practice runs' and 'mocksteds'[17] involving frequent observations of teachers, combined with constant data collection about their performance and effectiveness. Such practices have resulted in teachers feeling judged, relentlessly, on a daily basis, leading to increased anxiety and stress levels, as they perceive that they are "*constantly under the microscope"* (Worth and Van den Brande, 2020, p 56). In some leadership literature, it is argued that Ofsted expect and require evidence of scrutiny; a point resolutely challenged by the DfE (2018) in their published 'Ofsted myths' campaign. However, as Ball (2019) argues, whilst teachers (and Headteachers) are judged as to their effectiveness by results within a performative system and culture, the 'fear' factor of inspection will never go away. These circumstances of a perpetual 'in-school' performance cycle, emulating the processes involved by Ofsted *"is accepted as routine and normal and part of everyday life of our schools"* (Perryman, Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2011, p 750).

As there are now no national limits to how many hours teachers can be observed, as Page, (2017) notes, Headteachers and others can now watch teachers' lessons without policy constraints. This internal school surveillance can take many forms, including lesson observation, learning walks, pupils' lesson book trawls, department review and parental and student voice; this is in addition to the regular teacher performance management appraisal (Poole, 2023). Such measures are often promoted in the training of school leaders as being 'positive initiatives' if applied in a developmental, supportive manner (Luff, 2021; Woods et al, 2022; Perryman et al,

[17] Mocksteds: a term widely recognized to mean an in-school inspection routine that emulates and 'mirrors' the Ofsted inspection processes.

2023). That said, much of the literature linking this to retention, consistently reports that as teachers are surveilled from every direction, it has eroded "*what it means to be a teacher"* (Ball, 2008, p 21). Furthermore, Colman (2021) suggests, the 'Ofsted effect' challenges the practice of teachers as they look to fulfil 'impression and performance'. A *"subjective alienation"* suggest Ball, (2019, no page) of teachers, which erodes their sense of worth, their efficacy and challenges the values many of them hold. An observation supported by other authors, such as Day et al (2007) and Skinner et al (2021).

In leadership literature, some argue that such in-school monitoring and evaluation is accepted practice (Bamford and Worth, 2017; Didau, 2015 and 2021). Headteachers having risen through the ranks with evident success, are expected to be 'wedded' as Lynch et al (2012) terms it, to the principles of a highly competitive and surveillant culture, to embrace 'the system' even if this fuels dissatisfaction within teachers. Thomson (2009) argued Headteachers in such circumstances attempt to wrap surveillance within a positive coaching discourse, to create strategies for improvement whilst wearing down resistance and opposition. The fear inherent in the Ofsted inspection regime for Headteachers is the consequences of failure, which can result in reputational damage and collapse of parent trust in the school. All of which can ultimately lead to school closure and possible dismissal, both of themselves and their teachers (Thomson, 2009).

Some literature notes, that there are some school leaders who speak out against audit and inspection regimes, but as Thomson (2009) notes, such actions are easier, if it is unlikely to cause them or their school, harm. She (2017) notes, those critical of

policy, were often experienced Headteachers in high achieving schools, "*literally well placed to speak out against policy"* (ibid, p 93).

The overriding importance and emphasis on surveillance and measurement is, as Lynch (2015) explains: "*giving primacy to product and output over process and input*" (p 11). The data, the product and output, have overshadowed teachers' process and input. Arguably, this devalues the classroom presence of teachers, diminishing their meaningful input to pupils' learning. As Doherty (2020) cites, authors such as Furlong (2015) and McIntyre and Hobson (2016) reinforce this position, in that such a discourse adds to teachers' negativity and disconnect, leading them to question some of the reasons why they entered the profession in the first place.

How Headteachers negotiate surveillance, argues Fuller (2019), is determined by the status of the school, its position in school performance league tables and previous Ofsted judgements. It is also affected by the disposition of the Headteacher concerning their values and their confidence to question and challenge such systems, their educational philosophy and *"headteacherly habitus"* (Fuller, 2019, p 44). As Coldron et al (2014) explain, most school leaders will act in compliance, navigating through the system to make it work with compromise; reworking the language and drawing upon their powers of persuasion and personal charisma to convince others. This aspect, exploring the complexity of leadership in a surveillant culture is very pertinent to my own research.

2.4.5 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The premise that high quality CPD is both desirable and necessary in retaining teachers, is supported by those in the profession and well documented in the

literature (Cordingley et al, 2012; Walker et al 2018; Allen and Sims 2017; Ovenden-Hope et al, 2018; Worth and Van den Brande 2020; Perry et al, 2022). However, as the DfE (2019, p 17) pointed out:

> "*the provision of CPD in our schools comprises a disparate array of in-house and/or external delivery, with teachers experiencing varying quality and content*".

The varied and bespoke approach to CPD offered by schools, particularly if poor quality, is one of the main reasons attributed as to why early-career teachers struggle and ultimately leave the profession (Carter 2015; Gu, 2018; Sullivan et al, 2021; Perryman and Calvert, 2020). Similarly, a negative impact occurs if the CPD is mainly focused on the smooth running of the school, particularly if a disproportionate prominence is given to accountability measures e.g. pupil performance data and Ofsted inspection; as distinct from a holistic approach of professional learning and development (Ovenden-Hope et al, 2018; Foster, 2019; Worth and Van den Brande, 2020; Enser and Enser, 2021). The literature concludes that, for example in the research of Andrade et al (2018), compared with other professions (e.g. Police and Nurses), CPD for the teaching profession in England lacks a defined and structured approach, as schools operationally focus on their individual requirements, rather than the holistic approaches referenced above.

Less explored in literature is how the emphasis on examination performance of pupils has affected CPD provision. Recent research by Gibson and Outhwaite (2022) suggests budget and performance pressures have all but removed CPD which *"enhances teacher professionalism*" (p 13). Fuller (2019) suggests CPD has become "*driven by a schools' accountability statistics*" (p 201) involving meeting standards,

rather than encouraging commitment and ownership of expertise and knowledge and as Ball (2019) argues, this means the CPD of teachers has been permeated and driven by market ideology.

Furlong (2015) and McIntyre and Hobson (2016) found the most beneficial CPD is that which is tailored to the individual and looks to the long-term, interspersed with episodes of practice and challenged by external expertise. They also suggest it needs to continue throughout a teacher's career to enhance retention. The time spent on CPD by teachers in England is considerably less than that in other OECD countries (Sims and Jerrim, 2020). The requirement in England is for a minimum of 30 hours per annum, equating on average to four days. Whereas in Singapore (for example), they are required to have a minimum of 100 hours per annum (Cordingley, 2015).

As Didau (2021) argues, school leaders are balancing two forces within CPD; developing the job satisfaction and commitment of teachers to train and implicitly retain them, whilst working within the pressures of accountability, performativity and meeting standards. Notably, he suggests Headteachers are directly involved in negotiating between sometimes contradictory imperatives and drivers in CPD provision; a tension not easily reconciled he argues.

2.4.6 Mentoring

Research literature, some carried out in tandem with that of CPD, focuses on the impact that mentoring has on those in the first years of teaching and as to whether it helps retention. The overall impact on retention is difficult to evidence from some of

the research, as it is mainly based on the self-reported perspectives of mentors and mentees (for example, Murtagh et al, 2024).

The developmental benefits of effective mentoring are discussed in detail in literature which suggests this improves the skills and pedagogy of teachers, as well as their attitude, feelings of efficacy and overall job satisfaction (Ross and Hutchings, 2003; Andrews, 2019; Perryman and Calvert: 2020; Gordon, 2020; See et al, 2020). The findings by Daly et al (2023) are significant in this context, despite a small sample, they evidenced that good mentoring in schools has shown a strong correlation with increased retention. The Early Career Framework (DfE, 2021) emphasises mentoring is key to keeping teachers in the profession. A view supported by See et al (2020) who highlighted the need for more robust research on mentoring and its impact on teachers and ultimately their retention. Conversely, others suggest the personal and close-relationship nature of mentoring can be demotivating for some (for instance: Day et al, 2007; Carter, 2015).

How Headteachers prioritise mentoring within their context is dependent on their resources, as mentoring has to be considered in budgetary terms. As Greany and Higham (2018) found, those schools ‘well-positioned’ in terms of resources, have the means to promote such structures, whilst others may struggle. A further important aspect to my own research in questioning whether some schools are better at retaining teachers than others.

2.4.7 Initial teacher education pathways and recruitment

Research commissioned by both the DfE (Foster, 2018/19) and other academic sources, discuss the evolving nature of teacher supply based on strategies to improve recruitment, as distinct from retention (Allen et al, 2016). Financial

incentives, such as bursaries and alternative routes into teaching were integral to the strategy. See et al (2020) in their wide-ranging analysis, suggested that whilst these policies had an initial positive effect on recruitment, there is little evidence as to its impact and effectiveness on retention.

Regarding the recruitment process, Ovenden-Hope and Passy (2019) argue, a system driven by targets is inherently flawed, as targets have to be met whatever the calibre of candidates. Allen and Sims (2017) suggest this has "*ensnared teaching in a low-quality cycle of recruit then leave"* (p 45); a cycle that has encumbered the profession for decades.

Arguably, the greatest impact of market reforms has been in provision of initial teacher education pathways, where a multitude of providers have emerged, with currently 33 different routes (DfE, 2022). This has created intense competition between the providers for trainees (and the funding they bring) in a complex patchwork of provision. As Ovenden-Hope et al (2022) explain, the multitude of differing providers has resulted in training models of varying quality, to satisfy the 'market' of recruitment. Furthermore, Ball (2008) argues the recruitment strategy has actually destabilised the teacher workforce, simply adding more recruits year after year, in a never ending cycle of recruit and exit. A further aspect to the recruitment strategy is that it has facilitated greater choice for undergraduate 'customers' with a growing number of conversion courses[18] available, created to 'plug the gap' in some shortage subject areas. Gorard et al (2020) questioned the quality of such disparate provision and found an increased number of recruits with lower degree classifications

[18]A conversion course is a postgraduate qualification open to graduates from different subject areas. They're designed to prepare for a career unrelated to a person's undergraduate degree. Some are professionally accredited or lead to further professional qualifications and others enable one to gain skills in a new area.

and conversion degrees, from less prestigious Universities, were being recruited into teaching.

Importantly, the literature often discusses bursaries within the above context, which notes the significant cost of this incentive to the taxpayer and questions the effectiveness for recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers (Allen et al, 2016; National Audit Office, 2017; See et al, 2020). As Gorard et al (2022) noted in their recent study, despite heavy financial investments by Government in these strategies, recruitment into teaching has not improved. Another report by Worth et al, (2023) questioned the 'value' of bursaries, yet considered that they should be continued, in the light of the ongoing crisis in teacher supply. At the time of writing, the present bursary system is under review (DfE, 2024).

A further factor within recruitment challenges was the need to attract those with subject specialisms to support the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) in 2010. The scope and implementational time-frame of the EBacc had several distorting effects on teacher recruitment. The sudden increase in subject specific areas had not been planned, nor matched, with a corresponding increase in the recruitment of teachers with the requisite subject specialisms. Consequently, only a somewhat imbalanced teacher workforce, in terms of subject knowledge, was available to implement this policy initiative (See and Gorard, 2020). This meant retaining teachers in these EBacc subjects became more crucial than ever, in a reducing pool of specialists, with little time for planning, or funding to address such shortfalls; hence the literatures' argument as to the current retention crisis (for example, Doherty, 2020).

A short-term positive effect on recruitment occurred during 2020, the census by DfE (2020) records higher numbers applying for post-graduate training during this year. Recruitment targets at secondary level in England in 2020-21 were ‘on target’ for the first time since 2012-13 and even in some subjects, exceeded. La Velle et al (2020) suggest that such a significant ’milestone’ in recruitment, was directly linked to the economic downturn and job insecurities in the private sector due to the Covid-19 pandemic. These authors projected that if such trends continues, the number of teachers leaving and entering would be in equilibrium by 2022-23, for the first time in a decade.

However, the most recent DfE data (2023) verifies that the trend witnessed in 2020 has not continued, stating that 13% of secondary Headteachers reported unfilled positions in their schools and 50% of secondary school leaders say their school couldn’t interview *any* candidate for a position, due to a ‘weak’ field of applicants. Consequently, 40% of these had reluctantly appointed a candidate lacking adequate qualifications, or someone who had performed poorly at interview; a marked increase from the 9% reported by the DfE in 2019.

A recruitment problem has also re-emerged after the improved levels of 2020-21. The number of applications (2022-23) are well below pre-pandemic levels, with targets missed in every subject, except Art and History (DfE, 2023). Allen et al (2023) suggest this downturn has occurred due to the cost-of-living crisis, recent strike actions within the education sector, the overall low status of teachers and the professions’ poor image. How Headteachers react to the increasing teacher shortages outlined above is an interesting point. As Higham and Earley (2013) suggest, in such pressured situations, Headteachers become more concerned and

constrained, less encouraging of those wanting promotion but also in strategizing any means to appoint and retain teachers; all factors highly dependent on their financial and situational context. Ball and Junemann (2012) offer a further opinion, that Headteachers in such 'squeezed' circumstances, adopt a greater calculating stance, as they take pro-active steps in targeted recruitment campaigns, all of which increase the competitive elements between schools.

2.4.8 Parental expectations

Successive governments have in policy, reinforced the premise that parents, as consumers of a service, should have a "*substantial and sustained*" (DfE, 2010, p 8) educational role. Literature says that this has led to *some* parents, those who have chosen this 'freedom', to exercise their 'consumer rights' over Headteachers and teachers. As Proctor et al (2015) found, this altered power-relationship acts as a form of control, as these parents are empowered to question the professionality and competencies of teachers and school leaders; finding fault in their practice and question decisions made. As Ehren and Baxter (2021) note, this change has somewhat demoted Headteachers and teachers and promoted parents, an unequal partnership which has implications within retention.

Conversely, Bilton (2017) suggests a more positive side of parents, in parent and teacher relationships, as he found parents often can generate reassurance, purpose and practical support for teachers. There are other sources with which to corroborate Bilton's analysis. Goodall's (2018) research found parents viewed their position as a positive help to teachers, supporting their role and according to Honingh et al (2020), parental pressure might not always be a negative, as parental expectations of

teachers may actually encourage development and higher aspirations within teachers.

The importance of strengthening relationships with parents and its importance on the job satisfaction of teachers, is explored extensively in literature (Didau, 2015; Worth et al, 2020). Woods (2001) in his research found sustaining teachers' enthusiasm and motivation was linked strongly to a "*community appreciation from parents"* (p 97) an interesting reflection from the past with perhaps still some relevance to current context.

Interestingly, Bilton et al (2018) now suggested parents know their 'power' and teachers know it and they are afraid. They added, the increasing power of parents' presence on social media to publicly criticise individual teachers' abilities was a significant cause in undermining teacher confidence and job satisfaction. Sturrock (2022) argued, the lack of a direct right to reply in such a public arena would appear to 'commodify' teachers even further and inevitably, such public and widespread criticisms will raise questions for some as to their self-worth, job satisfaction and longevity in the profession.

Without a doubt, a priority for Headteachers is to make their school marketable to parents, to safeguard their funding[19] and ultimately, their institutional survival (Gunter et al, 2018). This is relevant to retention, exposing the tensions for Headteachers between 'keeping their teachers happy' and 'keeping their parents happy', the main source of their income. As Didau (2015) and Fuller (2019) discuss, some

[19] A school's funding is based in the first instance, on per-pupil funding. Average of £5,995 (2024) per pupil. Additional top-up for contextual issues (such as deprivation factors) is allocated to some schools. Academies also have other funding streams. This study included two of the highest per pupil funding (£7,985) in England.

circumstances where differences of opinion or criticism occur, requires Headteachers to adjudicate between the parties, adopting a mixture of persuasion with parents and mediation with teachers to accept criticism, even if unwarranted.

2.4.9 Pupils

How pupil behaviour impacts retention has historically been the subject of substantial research, by both academia and teacher professional associations. Such research has established a significant causal link between disruptive, aggressive and anti-social pupil behaviour with teachers leaving the profession (Barmby, 2006; Hughes, 2012; Perryman and Calvert, 2020; Menzies, 2023). Other research has emphasised the role of leadership in moderating and resolving pupil behavioural issues. Allen and Sims (2018) suggest teachers in disadvantaged schools did not leave teaching because of pupil behaviour *per se*; rather they left because of perceptions of poor management and low levels of support. Significantly, recent reports by the DfE (Foster, 2020), including a substantial survey of schools, states pupil behaviour is *perceived* to be worsening with time, as measurably, the number of exclusions and other behavioural indicators have increased. Brady and Wilson (2021) maintain this is linked to the policy-led reduction of behavioural Local Authority support services (such as exclusion units) and Social Services support generally. Consequently, schools are having to effectively act in this capacity and fill the void.

In leadership literature, Headteachers are seen as the key role model of discipline within schools (Ribbins, 1999; Woods et al, 2020; Towers et al, 2022) and as such their agency and capacity to ‘deal’ with pupil behaviour is an important factor in the job satisfaction of teachers and retention.

2.5 The micro factors impacting on retention

For clarity, this section of the review is not focussed on Headteachers' personal lives. It explores literature pertinent to individual teachers at the micro level and although often dominated by idiosyncratic individual factors, I draw on the main themes of personal circumstances, issues of resilience, eroding commitment and teacher stress and burnout.

There are many substantial research studies that have been carried out over the last two decades focussed on the individual perspective of teachers and why they stay or leave (for instance: Rhodes et al, 2004; Hargreaves et al, 2007; Chiong et al, 2017; See et al, 2020). Within the micro perspective, Woods (2001) documented the personal and professional pressures on teachers, the tensions they were experiencing and how their changing role presented challenges to their values and beliefs. Woods' argued the intensification of teachers work had amplified their stress and incidence of burn-out, concluding that it had become "*an inevitable concomitant of the job"* (2001, p 138). Interestingly, he found the teachers at most risk of leaving were those imbued with strong feelings of vocation, those who cared strongly about their work and their pupils. Stevenson et al (2017) also focussed on the micro perspective, further suggesting teachers were being re-framed by policy prescription, being told what to do and how to do it by government; subsequently this decrease in their autonomy had created disillusionment and disenchantment with the role.

2.5.1 Personal circumstances

The personal circumstances of teachers plays an important part in an individual's decision as to whether they leave the profession (Day et al, 2007; Day and Gu, 2013; Perryman and Calvert, 2020; Worth and Faulkner-Ellis, 2021).

The literature suggests that there are many influencing dynamics, including, personal and individual traits, family responsibilities, emotional and psychological factors and their environment, which effect wellbeing and job satisfaction. As Smethem (2007), Chiong et al (2017) and Skinner et al (2021) found, teachers' ability to cope with the challenging role and on occasion, emotionally arduous scenarios, is directly linked to their varying capacities and agency. Their circumstances are additionally affected by their interactions with colleagues and the overall context of the school, including perceptions of how well it is managed, in conjunction with how they are supported both personally and professionally (Evans, 2011; Nias, 2017; Hilton, 2017; Kelchtermans, 2017).

From a leadership perspective, as Cribb (2009) noted, the way in which Headteachers enact their role "*to meet the needs of their teachers"* (p 31) is often difficult, one with many inherent dilemmas. This 'balancing-act' by school leaders as Cribb (2009) suggests, is they need to seek an equilibrium between "*institutional obligations and ethical obligations"* (p 31). A point pertinent to retention and again, as noted above, the Headteacher is situated at the meso and micro levels within this context, thus a consideration in my study, especially in times of intensified teacher shortages.

2.5.2 Resilience

The resilience of individual teachers and its relevance to retention has been the subject of great interest in research. Gu and Day (2007) define a teacher's resilience in terms of as their 'staying power' within circumstances which are significantly challenging. As Anderson and Cohen (2015) describe, in their view, such personal qualities are linked to biography and external social support building within

individuals, a sense of inner confidence which enables them to cope with the demands of the profession.

A study by Day et al (2007) whilst concurring with the micro perspectives above, also found in their extensive research that resilience is nurtured by leadership within the wider meso-level culture and ethos of the school. They argued, the working environment plays a crucial part in shaping the resilience of teachers and is an important factor in retaining them. They concluded that this is an active process of adaption, where teachers develop successful and effective strategies for coping with adversity, meaning that they are thriving, not just surviving. In addition, some literature suggests that schools that focus on the work-life balance of the individual teacher, develops their resilience and job satisfaction and ultimately improves the chances of their retention (Burgess, 2014; Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019; Day, 2021). Furthermore, Day et al (2007), Lynch et al (2012), Gordan (2020), Towers et al (2022) all reference the policy discourse surrounding ‘quick- fix’ initiatives that dominate the daily lives of teachers and its detrimental effect upon their resilience.

2.5.3 Eroding commitment

Smethem (2007) suggested a factor contributing to teachers’ erosion of commitment to the profession, was directly linked to successive governmental negative criticism of teachers and the profession generally.

In Woods’ (2001) study, he found that highly committed teachers, were often the most vulnerable to criticism, as they perceived it to be *“damaging to their personal worth*” (p 125). Such criticism he explored, emanated from several sources, including parents, colleagues (particularly leadership), pupils and more widely in mainstream media. Arguably, as Chiong et al (2017) explained, this has led to a crisis of

confidence within some teachers, resulting in them questioning their role and purpose, challenging their values and self-belief and even the reason(s) as to why they entered teaching; such discourse is prevalent in much of literature (for instance, Day et al, 2007; Coldron et al, 2014; Perryman and Calvert, 2020).

Conversely, the ‘defensive’ discourse from government and reinforced within policy, is that the profession has needed ‘direction’ and its development and improvement in standards has been achieved through reform (DfE, 2010, 2016 and 2019). They add, such sensitivity to criticism by those in the profession is an inherent weakness within the teacher workforce (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Wilkins et al, 2012; Day et al, 2013; Wilkins, 2020).

Literature also notes that diminishing autonomy in the classroom has steadily eroded commitment (Hargreaves, 2003; Hargreaves et al, 2007) and has led to demotivation and disillusionment (Worth and Van den Brande, 2020).

2.5.4 Teacher stress and burnout

A commonly cited reason within literature for teachers leaving the profession is closely related to stress and burnout (Day et al, 2007; Allen et al, 2017; Brady and Wilson, 2021). Woods (2001) in particular, carried out extensive research which documented the complexity of factors operating within stress and burnout. His most recent revised update to his original observations of 2001, confirms that these factors are at the centre of why teachers leave. At the micro level, he linked stress and burnout to workload, particularly the relentlessness of the daily deadlines, the stress of meeting targets and the way teaching had challenged the commitment and

resilience of individuals. He also considered school leadership and student cultures were contributory factors.

Notably, there is of course a wider literature addressing teacher stress and burnout (such as: Troman and Woods, 2000; Day, 2004; Day et al, 2007). Recent research by Skinner, Leavey and Rothi (2021) exploring teacher well-being and stress, found that constant policy change and target-led performance, combined with negative perceptions of policy implementation by school leadership, had exacerbated the stress individuals felt and was a contributor to their leaving the profession.

2.6 Literature addressing the pandemic

As my research took place in the midst of a global pandemic (2020-2022) it is important and necessary, to carry out a brief review of the pertinent literature published during this period. This unique set of circumstances prompted a sizable amount of research within the education community, regarding the "*opportunities and challenges*" (Worth and McLean, 2020, p 30) the pandemic might bring to the issues surrounding teacher retention. Considering the relatively short timeframe much of the literature was notably speculative and conjectural, as the full effects of the pandemic were yet to be witnessed.

Most research was concerned with the effect of the pandemic on teachers' well-being; this was linked to firstly, the mental health of teachers. There was a substantial increase nationally in teachers referring themselves for counselling during this time (NEU, 2021) and Allen et al (2021), suggested that "*very high work-related anxiety*" (p 67) rose sharply as schools were compelled by government to open post lockdown. Secondly, some suggested a further erosion of teachers' professional

status, through the negative public response to school closures and thirdly, the derogatory image of teachers portrayed in the media (Thomson et al, 2021). Furthermore, Johnson and Coleman (2023) suggested remote online learning had added to the "*depersonalized and de-socialised*" (p 3) nature of teaching, distancing the interaction with pupils, which is so important for some teachers. Both Allen et al, (2020) and Johnson et al, (2023) suggested more teachers would leave the profession because of the pandemic.

The most recent post-pandemic research (Allen et al, 2023, for the Gatsby Foundation), gives some cause for concern, as it records high numbers of vacancies and elevated levels of dissatisfaction within teachers in secondary schools in England, across all subject areas. Additionally, they evidence that the long-standing retention issues surrounding the STEM subject areas continues to be a particular problem.

For some time it has been recognised in literature that some subjects have specific challenges in retention, principally those of STEM and Modern Foreign Languages (Worth et al, 2015; Allen and Sims, 2017; DfE, 2018 and 2020; Doherty, 2020). Additionally, these curriculum areas also suffer from higher attrition rates within early career teachers (Worth and De Lazzari, 2017). This has been widely attributed to graduates in these subjects being in 'high demand' in the career marketplace, with multiple options for alternative, higher paid and more attractive job opportunities (Worth and Van den Brande, 2019).

Within this latest research by Allen et al (2023), secondary school vacancies show an increase of 12% compared to the previous year. Moreover, their survey of over 8,000 secondary teachers found that only 59% expect to still be teaching in three years'

time, a marked decrease from the pre-pandemic figures of 74-77%. Also recorded was that regret and reflection regarding teaching as a career choice had increased amongst respondents with 42% saying that, if given the chance again, they would not choose to become a teacher, as compared to 39% when asked in 2019. If these 'indicators' are reflected in the decisions teachers make now about whether to leave the profession, then the retention figures for 2024 could paint a very bleak picture.

2.7 Summary and conclusion

I have explained my conceptual framework and how I am connecting Woods' trilogy of macro, meso and micro levels to Headteachers' negotiation of retention. In this chapter I have reviewed literature pertinent to effective school leadership, in conjunction with the existing empirical and conceptual literature relating to retention.

Commencing with examination of the impact of neo-liberal policies through marketization, managerialism and career mobility. Secondly, reviewing the organisational meso-level school specific factors, that of workload, pay and monetary incentivisation, surveillance, particularly Ofsted, the quality of CPD and mentoring. At the micro level it has emphasised the personal circumstances, resilience of some individuals, combined with eroding commitment, stress and burnout. Lastly, the latest post-pandemic literature has also been reviewed which identifies a high level of dissatisfaction amongst teachers.

Overall, the consensus in literature is that teachers are leaving the profession because their expectations of the role have not been met, involving many different factors. Despite the volume of research spanning well over two decades with different participants, recurring themes have emerged and perceptions and experiences often consistent and replicated. The literature within the field of teacher retention is vast

and my engagement with it has definitely been ‘organic’ spanning several years of this research study and has naturally influenced my knowledge of the issues involved. I now in the next chapter explain my methodology and how my research was conducted.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter explores the methodological decisions taken during my research. It encompasses the whole process, evolving from an initial framework, through additions and refinements as the study proceeded (Bell, 1993; Robson, 2011; Bryman, 2012; Thomas, 2013; Silverman, 2013; Bucknell, 2014). I explain and justify my decision to use primarily qualitative methods and a case-study approach, discussing and drawing upon methods literature. I describe my data collection tools and processes by way of an initial questionnaire, followed by my main investigation through semi-structured interviews. I also discuss how the data was recorded, its transcription, coding and analytical methods. I describe how participants were selected and recruited, including a table profiling the participants and their schools' contexts. I then proceed to consider my role as researcher, my consideration of ethical issues and how my research met the requisite standards.

3.1 Qualitative research

From the outset, I considered in the context of my research, the most suitable method for my inquiry would be qualitative. The main aim of my study was to explore the challenge of retaining teachers in secondary schools in England, solely from the perspective of Headteachers. It explores their perceptions, feelings, ideas, thoughts, experiences and actions, whilst recognising their particularly unique perspective within their differing contextual circumstances. I aim for depth rather than breadth, much like many researchers in this field (such as: Woods, 2001; Patton, 2002; Barmby, 2007; Ovenden-Hope et al, 2018).

Qualitative research aims to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding through the experiences and opinions of people (Ritchie et al, 2003) and gives importance to the natural setting in which they are found (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993). As Mason (1996) explains, qualitative research focuses on the "*lived experience*" (p 78) of people, involving individual testimony to provide and develop understanding within actual contexts.

I chose to conduct my research through a qualitative approach within a case-study construct, as this format felt the natural choice for my investigation into the 'real-life' experiences of Headteachers, incorporating their stories and circumstances of workaday life. As Thomas (2016) observed, a case-study design is ideal to study something holistically, offering a wealth and depth of information which is not usually offered by other methods. It is well suited to inquiries that are complex and multi-faceted, concentrating on a phenomenon in order to investigate it extensively (Creswell, 2013; Court, 2013).

As Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) describe, a case-study allows the researcher "*to deepen understanding of a specific topic, within a specific situation"* (p 6) and "*aims to capture the complexity of relationships, beliefs and attitudes within a bounded unit"* (p 10). It also provides opportunities to capture the complexities of relationships, beliefs and attitudes (Elliot and Lukes, 2008).

It is important to note that in situating the 'case' for this study, within the context of my research, as distinct from a survey or sample, I do not view individual Headteachers in terms of a 'case-by-case analysis', rather the case study is a 'wrapper' around the Headteachers collectively. It is a single exploratory inquiry, used as an 'umbrella' (Yin,

2003) to encompass the ‘collective’ (Bassey, 1999) of several secondary school Headteachers, forming a ‘bounded unit’ (Thomas, 2016) to explore the perceptions and experiences of each Headteacher and their differing capacities to respond to retention. As King and Horrocks (2010) notes, it also recognises a “*multi-site*” (p 7) function as these Headteachers are situated in very different contexts and circumstances, albeit within their structured role and responsibilities.

There is a divergence of opinion in literature as to the capacity to which case-studies can be generalised or transferred (Thomas, 2016; Bartlett and Vavrus, 2017). Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggest that it is possible to have a school that is ‘typical’ of a larger group. However in my study, I feel there are too many variables at play to call them ‘typical’. My view is that although this case-study may not be ‘representative’, the value is in its contribution, improving understanding, adding to and illuminating some important ideas surrounding the retention of teachers.

3.2 Research participants

3.2.1 Selection

My selection of Headteachers was based on several ‘researcher determined’ fixed criteria (Mason, 1996; Ritchie et al 2003; Edwards and Holland, 2013; Brooks et al, 2018). Firstly, I wanted Headteachers with whom I had neither personal nor prior professional contact, as I wanted to start ‘afresh’ with all, without history, bias or preconceived ideas. Given the educational community is small, this was not entirely possible in all cases, but in view of the time lapse since my retirement from the profession, in the two instances where I had some previous associations, I deemed that the connections had been sufficiently ‘severed’ so as to minimise any bias.

Secondly, participants would comprise a broad span of Headship experience and vary in age and gender. This selection criteria had an important purpose, by offering multiple and differing perspectives it allowed for a comprehensive discussion of the issues to occur, by utilizing the combination of a wide variety of experience and circumstances. This optimised the probabilities of identifying a full range of factors surrounding retention and the success or failure of strategies developed in schools. By using multiple sources, from a variety of contexts and backgrounds, the quality, depth and totality of the data collected would be significantly strengthened.

The selection criteria for schools focused on those types commonly found nationally across the state system in England, comprising those managed by Local Authorities and those with Academy status. A larger percentage of Academies was included in line with current national percentages and featured mainly those in partnership with others within MATs. A lower number of schools maintained by Local Authorities reflects their diminishing number nationally, encompassing those designated as community, 'free' or foundation schools. Other school types, such as selective Grammar Schools and those with particular religious affiliations, although smaller in number, were still included. I felt that this broad spectrum of schools was particularly important to capture a wide range of evidence within a diversity of educational contexts. Headteachers serving in these schools all face the challenge of retaining teachers and they carry the same responsibility and accountability for "*an issue that only school leaders can and must address*" (DfE, 2019, p 28).

An additional and important criteria was their location and I chose the West Midlands region of England which included: Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Staffordshire, Solihull, Warwickshire, Walsall and Worcestershire; three main factors influenced my

choice of this location. Firstly, it is a region I know well professionally and have direct experience of how the region has developed its educational provision over several decades. Secondly, it provided a broad diversity of school contexts, as it included two of the most deprived areas in England and three of the most privileged and has one of the largest (and increasing) secondary school populations in England (ONS, Population Survey, 2020).

Thirdly, regarding retention of teachers specifically, this region is significant in having one of the worst retention rates in England (DfE, 2021), the percentage of secondary school teachers still in service five years after becoming an NQT (from 2014 to 2019) was 65%, only inner London was worse. Additionally, data confirmed the region had consistently recorded one of the highest teacher vacancy rates in England and at the time of my research, had one in four posts vacant (ASC[20], 2019). These factors made this region an ideal location for this study; the mix of schools, the differing roll size and characteristics of students and how they are funded and resourced. All factors germane to the participant selection criteria of this study.

The final criteria, that of including schools' latest Ofsted judgement, was also a key factor. There are significant differences across the Ofsted rankings in correlation to a school's respective degree of retention problems. 'Outstanding' schools have the lowest recorded level of teacher attrition rates, followed by schools judged as 'good'. Those schools requiring improvement and 'inadequate' schools have significantly higher levels of teachers leaving and 'struggle' with retention (DfE, 2019). Ofsted gradings carry immense consequences for teachers and Headteachers alike

[20] ASC (Annual School Census): a census carried out annually under the auspice of the DfE undertaken by all schools in England, covering a wide range of topics including teacher vacancies and specialisms.

(Courtney, 2013; McLaughlin, 2022) and I was keen to investigate this aspect to discover what, if any, other '*benefits*' came with the national Ofsted inspection framework and if there were any underlying factors associated with this affecting retention.

With regard to the number of participants, I took note of those involved in several previous research studies, particularly ones with a similar context and design (Ritchie, 2003; Robson, 2011; Hilton, 2017). I judged twenty-five Headteacher participants was a reasonable target to complete the questionnaire, being large enough to obtain a broad spectrum of perspectives, whilst having practical advantages, in being 'manageable' to achieve quality data collection and analysis. The numbers also had to be large enough to enable reduction and refinement to a level of participants to take part in interviews; I considered this number of contributors would facilitate that refinement. Appendix 1a outlines the selection criteria for participants.

3.2.2 Recruiting participants

Accessing and recruiting suitable participants was a challenging and complex process. Headteachers of secondary schools are working within highly pressured environments with significantly high workloads, they are also considered to be one of the hardest groups to access and 'enlist' for research projects (Mason, 1996; Flick, 2012; Bryman 2012). How they were approached in the first instance was key to their successful recruitment and was a major consideration at the outset (Macfarlane, 2010). I made two decisions at this stage: firstly, I rejected using social media, advertisements, agencies or online forums. This 'depersonalised' approach has many advantages in some research contexts, but not for the level of exploration involved in

this study (Bryman 2012). Secondly, I would approach schools personally, prior to this I did some initial research on the schools and Heads using information available within the public domain. Using the selection criteria above, I telephoned and emailed Headteachers, CEOs, partnership directors and utilized some links with schools through the University of Birmingham. This resulted in a 'snowball' effect, as some of the individual participants identified *potential* further participants, supplying their contact details. Consequently an ever expanding ripple effect emerged of an increasing number of referrals and potential participants (Burton et al, 2008; Cresswell, 2013; Thomas, 2016).

3.2.3 School contexts

Nineteen of the participants were Headteachers of Academies and the remaining six were maintained by two separate Local Authorities. Twenty three schools had student age ranges of 11-18 or 11-16, one was an all-age school 4-19; one was a 10-18 special school; nineteen were mixed, six were single sex. The Academies were part of eleven MATs varying widely in size, two of them were selective-by-ability Grammar Schools, a sector included to add breadth of provision and potentially interesting contributions to this study. The fewer maintained schools reflects the ongoing erosion of this category nationally, due to previous and current government policy. Single sex schools have declined nationally in number considerably in the last 40 years; however, in the West Midlands there is a well-established and growing number of this type and their inclusion in the research gave further perspectives and factors for analysis. All of these schools encompassed the full funding spectrum found within the national system, with some having increased financial pressures and a marked funding disparity with others.

After Headteachers had consented to participate, I compiled a portfolio of documentary data for each school, including items from their websites and further documents published by the DfE and Ofsted reports. My aim in examining such documentation was not orientated towards analysis (Richie et al, 2003) but to facilitate background and context: an impression, a view, a broad picture, a backdrop to the school and the Headteacher. This gave me valuable insights and aided the preparation for the next stage, which was to meet the Headteachers individually.

3.2.4 Introductory meetings

Brief introductory meetings were organised and participants were seen in January 2020. As Berger (2015) notes, introductory meetings at the start of the research: "*provides the researcher with an orientation to the field under study*" (p 24).The visits had two main purposes, shared with Headteachers prior to my visit: firstly and most importantly, they facilitated meeting the Headteachers. The advantages of meeting face-to-face and establishing a relationship were, I considered, vital to this study, where trust and engagement on a personal level was key. As part of this meeting, I also asked if they had questions about the research and any ethical, confidential and anonymity concerns they had. As suggested by Cohen et al (2011) this all embeds confidence in the research and the researcher.

Very few asked for reassurances or further information and generally, I felt Heads trusted me to present their perceptions and experiences in a fair and equitable manner. Their enthusiasm and eagerness to be involved was prominent in these meetings and my knowledge and personal experience, having been 'one of them' whilst being 'detached' encouraged enjoyable and relaxed conversations. Other considerations and practicalities were also discussed, for example, the best time to

complete the questionnaire, taking account of their workload schedules. Secondly, as the meetings occurred during the school day, I was permitted to talk with a variety of students and staff, observing the context, culture and atmosphere as well as the physical environment. This all added to the background and ‘big picture’ and starkly underlined the differences in schooling provision, namely those within modern multi-million-pound environs and those in considerably more challenging circumstances. Although visits had these common threads in purpose, in actuality they were all very different. Many of the Heads took me on a tour of the school themselves, generously spending time with me in conversation, discussing their career highlights and experiences generally, but most specifically, their concerns regarding the current situation in the retention of teachers and policy implementation. Visits ranged in length, but the majority were in excess of two hours, which provided me with a much better understanding of their individual contexts and an experience I found to be excellent preparation for the study as a whole. The following table profiles participants and their schools.

3.3 Research participants, school profile and context

HT code	HT years exp in total	Secondary school type	Students on roll	Age range students	Gender-students	Most recent Ofsted report	Question-naire	Inter-view
HT A	3	Comprehensive. Academy MAT	Medium	11-16	Mixed	Good	Yes	No
HT B	2	Comprehensive. Academy MAT	Medium	11-18	Mixed	Requires Improvement	Yes	Yes
HT C	5	Comprehensive Single Status Academy.	Large	11-18	Mixed	Good	Yes	Yes
HT D	4	Comprehensive LA.VA	Small	11-16	Mixed	Good	Yes	Yes
HT E	3	Comprehensive. Sponsor led Academy MAT	Small	11-16	Mixed	Good	Yes	Yes
HT F	5	Special School L.A./NHS Trust	Very Small	10-18	Mixed	Good	Yes	No
HT G	16	Comprehensive. LA Community	Very Large	11-18	Single sex+ Mixed: 12/13	Outstanding	Yes	Yes
HT H	3	Comprehensive. Academy MAT	Medium	11-16	Mixed	Requires Improvement	Yes	Yes
HT I	6	Comprehensive Sponsor led Academy MAT	Medium	11-16	Mixed	Good	Yes	Yes
HT J	3	Comprehensive Free School	Small	14-18	Mixed	Good	Yes	No
HT K	7	Comprehensive. Academy MAT.	Medium	11-16	Mixed	Good	Yes	Yes
HT L	15	Comprehensive. Academy MAT	Very Large	4-19	Mixed	Requires Improvement.	Yes	Yes
HT M	3	Comprehensive. Academy MAT	Large	11-18	Mixed	Outstanding	Yes	No

HT N	6	Comprehensive. Academy MAT	Large	11-18	Mixed	Good	Yes	No
HT O	5	Comprehensive. Academy MAT	Large	11-18	Mixed	Requires improvement	Yes	Yes
HT P	6	Comprehensive. Academy MAT	Large	11-18	Mixed	Good	Yes	Yes
HT Q	5	Comprehensive. Academy MAT	Medium	11-18	Mixed	Good.	Yes	Yes
HT R	7	Comprehensive. Single Status Academy	Large	11-16	Mixed	Requires improvement.	Yes	No
HT S	5	Comprehensive. LA Community	Small	11-16	Single sex	Good.	Yes	No
HT T	6	Comprehensive. Single Status Academy	Medium	11-16	Mixed	Good	Yes	No
HT U	1	Comprehensive L.A. Foundation	Small	11-16	Single sex	Good	Yes	Yes
HT V	3	Comprehensive LA Community	Medium	11-16	Single sex	Outstanding.	Yes	No
HT W	8	Grammar. Academy MAT	Large	11-18	Single sex	Outstanding.	Yes	No
HT X	5	Grammar. Academy MAT	Large	11-18	Single sex	Outstanding	Yes	No
HT Y	1	Comprehensive. Academy MAT	Small	11-16	Mixed	Inadequate	Yes	No
7 female 18 male; median age: 46	9 early 12 mid 3 late	6 LA Maintained; 19 Academies.	Total: 22,799	12: 11-16; 10: 11-18; 3 other;	19x mixed 3x girls 3x boys	5x Outstanding 14x Good 5 Improvement 1 Inadequate	25	13

3.4 Data collection tools and processes

Questionnaires and interviews are often used as an exploratory sequential technique within case-study research (Mason, 1996; Creswell, 2013; Thomas, 2016). I chose to use an online, open-ended questionnaire with Headteachers which would be followed by semi-structured in-depth interviews. As the purpose of the questionnaire had been explained during my visit to Headteachers, I received a full 100 per cent return rate. The questionnaire provided a broad overview of retention issues, as perceived and experienced by Headteachers. As a first 'look' it supported the beginnings of ideas, the first threads of discussion and conversation and most importantly, provided the basis of interview questions (later explored in this chapter). For my research, where 'delving deeper' into the perceptions and experiences of Headteachers was my goal, individual interviews were entirely appropriate. There are many benefits in interviews as Mason (1996) explains, the "*personal approach, exploring views, perceptions and behaviours*" (p 63) yields especially 'rich' data, which is particularly pertinent in my case-study.

3.4.1 Phase 1: The Questionnaire

Questionnaires are often used in sequence with other approaches (Bell, 1993; Saldaña, 2014; Thomas, 2013). In this study, the questionnaire provided background and contextual data to inform subsequent interviews (Hamilton and Corbett-Whitter, 2013). My decision to use a written questionnaire was a purposeful, strategic one centred around two motives. Firstly, by using a questionnaire I could engage with many more Headteachers than I would have been able to do so by interview and consequently, this approach enhanced the breadth and diversity of Headteacher perspectives. Secondly, it would be completed by individual Headteachers

themselves, without intervention or bias on my part, as I would play no part in their responses, their opinions, or their prioritisation of responses. This approach also allowed them to respond in a time-line to suit their work schedules. I felt that these advantages outweighed some obvious limitations with a questionnaire format, such as their variable quality of data and differing interpretation of questions by participants (Thomas, 2013).

I designed the questionnaire with three main objectives. These were, to (1) generate an initial understanding of the current issues for Headteachers surrounding retention, (2) provide a greater understanding of the research group and (3) to inform and contextualise questions for phase two, the interviews. Mindful of their time constraints, it also had to be manageable for participants and to some degree, this influenced my decision to have a mixture of closed (quantitative) and open (qualitative) questions. The quantitative data would be easily and quickly completed and Heads could elect as to the extent of qualitative data they documented.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A contained three closed questions, seeking background information on Headteacher experience, the location and type of school and student demographics. Section B, with greater relevance and emphasis, contained nine open questions designed to capture and encourage "*illuminating clarification*" (Bucknell, 2014, p 76) and freedom to offer detailed illustrations and explanations on what they perceived to be important. Questions were phrased as neutrally as possible to avoid leading the participants, to allow them to answer in their own way, not constrained by pre-determined response categories or formats (May, 2001; Robson, 2011; Bryman, 2012). Appendix 1c provides details of questions and the reasons for asking those questions.

The questionnaire was trialled with two Headteachers, similar to the target population, but independent of it. These reviewers suggested some re-wording to remove ambiguity and some presentation modifications. A final examination of the questionnaire was supported by a fellow student to review the content and format and some minor adjustments were made to the layout followed by a thorough final proof reading. Appendix 1d has the final questionnaire.

The questionnaire was then emailed to twenty five participants, with a brief synopsis of the aims of the study and reassurances regarding confidentiality and anonymity. At the request of Headteachers, the timing for completion was purposefully timed to span a half-term break, so as to give some flexibility and 'headroom' for considered responses (Burton et al, 2008; Thomas 2013). All twenty five questionnaires were completed within the deadline and emailed directly to me. Collectively, the majority were highly detailed, amassing some 38,000 words. To analyse the questionnaire, I used the strategic approach as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994) namely, acquisition of information, followed by identification and coding of common themes within the data; Appendix 1e is an example of coding.

The findings from the questionnaire were an essential element in preparation for interviews, as they laid the foundations of not only contextual importance, but also forming strengthened relationships with the participants. In due course, a full summary of the questionnaire findings was sent to all participants. Appendix 1f contains the full summary.

The next stage was the interviews. In considering how many participants to interview, I looked at the literature available in similar research projects (for example: Woods,

2001; Sims, 2017; Perryman and Calvert 2020). I judged around fifty per cent, i.e. twelve or thirteen of the Headteachers who had completed the questionnaire would be most appropriate. Given the 'pool' of initial participants, I considered this number would provide abroad spectrum of Headteacher experiences and their different school contexts, thus allowing quality data collection and analysis to be carried out.

As well as including a wide range of schools and Headteacher experience, I also considered the following additional criteria: the enthusiasm for the research, either in responses contained within the questionnaire and the introductory visit and that of the participants' varying retention challenges.

The choice of participants for interview were, to some extent, dictated by circumstances. Four Headteachers underwent role changes, a further three requested to be excluded from interview due to changes (and pressures) in their circumstances, namely the Covid 19 pandemic. With these decisions in place, fifteen Headteachers were emailed requesting participation for interview; thirteen confirmed their agreement and two offered to 'trial' the interview process.

3.4.2 Phase 2: The Interviews

The questionnaire had produced a large amount of data over a broad range of questions and the documentary data and introductory visits had also added to the picture. Now the approach through interview would enable greater depth, adding and building robust data for analysis.

As the "*gold standard*" (Mason 1996, p 7) of qualitative research, interviews provide a direct personalised approach and are considered to be one of the best ways to learn and understand more about the life, experiences, emotions and opinions of other

people. Sometimes defined as "*a conversation with a purpose*" (Mason, 1996, p 45) interviews offer a "*comprehensive understanding*" (Pascal and Ribbins, 1998, p 7) of phenomena, providing opportunity for in-depth exploration (Kvale, 1994; Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

Having reflected on the different types of research interview, I discounted a fully structured approach as constraining with the potential to limit opportunities to probe further into responses (Denscombe 2003; Silverman 2013; Powney and Watts, 2018). Conversely, leaving the structure of the interviews too open could lead to unrestrictive accounts from the participants and a somewhat 'roving' dialogue as Matthias (2014) suggests "*which can go in different directions rather than the pertinent issues"* (p 195).

I therefore elected to conduct semi-structured interviews. This I considered had several advantages, combining as Thomas (2013) explains "*the structure and the flexibility"* (p 164). It not only allows the research objectives to be structured into the main body of the question schedule, but also enabled me some flexibility to develop and 'tease out' Headteacher responses, pursuing discussion and opportunity to follow up on unexpected points. As Mason (1996) notes, it is a method highly appropriate for the "*informed researcher*" (p 170), as interviewer, to unravel multi-layered responses, particularly in a single-session interview format. In much of the methodological literature (Gillham, 2000; Burton et al, 2008) it is recognised that interviews do come with some disadvantages; they are time consuming both in preparation and action and particularly so in transcription, but these obvious challenges did not sway my decision to use this format. From the outset, I wanted the

‘face to face’ personalised approach, as the benefits of discussion and conversation were fundamental to collecting strong data.

To create the interview schedule, I initially assembled a storyboard of ideas for interview questions, based on an extensive review of the empirical literature and the analysis of the questionnaire data. In doing so, three main research areas emerged: firstly: Headteachers’ perceptions and experiences on the challenges of retaining teachers; secondly: the strategies they have found successful in retaining teachers; and thirdly: their perspectives on the current impact of the global pandemic on retention. The storyboard was an essential element in my preparation for interviews and part of the rigorous and detailed planning I undertook at this point. Appendix 1g presents the storyboard.

Mason (1996) explains that such preparation is vital for researchers to be able to “*think on their feet”* (p 43) in the interview itself, whilst keeping effectively to the research aims and as an *aide-memoire* supporting the discussion. From the development of the storyboard, a schedule of key questions with some sub-questions were drafted. Appendix 1h details questions and reasons for asking those questions.

My schedule of main questions would be the same for all participants, using a four-stage approach as described by Gillham (2000): an introductory ice-breaker, followed by the opening development, the central core and lastly, bringing the interview to a close. The introductory question referenced the summary responses in the questionnaire. The opening development probed ‘what retention meant to them’. The core area, subdivided into three, explored why teachers were leaving, the strategies employed for retaining teachers and potential future issues. The closing question facilitated any further comments they wanted to make.

At this stage, I carried out a review of the schedule of questions, for this I enlisted the support of two other post-graduate research students. Mock interviews were carried out with them and their feedback on content was implemented, for example: the simplification of some questions, they also provided suggestions as to probes and prompts, with guidance as to maintaining a neutral stance and listening skills.

After redrafting, I carried out a complete interview with the two Heads that had agreed to the trialling process, as advised by Mason (1996). Following the format described above, an introduction and 'warm up' question, four questions in the main body, an end question for clarification, or further responses and closure comments were tested. The pilot interviews were recorded and transcribed, to test the process fully and the completed written transcripts were checked for accuracy by the two participants concerned. Following their feedback, which was wholly positive, at their suggestion I slightly re-phrased two questions to ensure clarity. An example of a final interview schedule is in Appendix 1i.

3.4.3 Preparing and Conducting Interviews

In the original research structure, it was always intended that interviews would be face-to-face in participants' schools. The face-to-face research relationship had already commenced with my introductory visits in January 2020, prior to the questionnaire completion. Regular contact throughout the questionnaire data collection phase during February and March 2020, strengthened this personal link. However, within the Covid 19 mandatory regulations regarding social distancing, Headteachers were given the choice of face-to-face interviews in their schools, or alternatively, interviews by video conferencing. Given the pressures they were under

to maintain the safety of students and staff and their new technological ways of working, it was hardly surprising they all opted for video conferencing.

Headteachers were well used to this method of communication by this juncture, it being well within their "*comfort level*" (Grey et al 2020, p 129). As with face-to-face interviews, the same preparation procedures with Headteachers were implemented by email and in some cases, short online meetings. This established arrangements and times to meet with fall-back procedures agreed upon in case of absences or crises, so too recording mechanisms and procedures to be employed if the technology failed. Interviews were scheduled to commence from January 2021.

Headteachers were sent an information pack prior to one-to-one interviews. This included a summary of results from the questionnaire and a revised consent form which included the ethical guidance regarding online interviews. The interview question schedule was also included to give them the opportunity to think around questions and enable them ample time to consider their answers.

As with all interviews, preparation is vital and therefore, usually the day before a scheduled meeting, I re-acquainted myself with their documentary data portfolio and their questionnaire responses. This was an important precursor to interviews, taking around three hours of reading and familiarisation. This was time well spent I found, as it allowed me to make the most efficient use of the time in interview. Undoubtedly, the rapport established during the initial introductory school visits, meeting with each of them, had an impact on the rhythm and tone of interviews; there were no barriers to overcome, rather these were purposive, professional conversations.

The technology worked faultlessly and there were no difficulties with recording, as the sound quality was exemplary. The high visual quality on screen also meant interviews felt just like in a face-to-face setting; eye contact throughout the discussions was natural with breaks and reflective moments. The conversations flowed, my *listening* was very important, a point well learnt from the pilot trials. Our empathetic shared backgrounds made the interview experience an enjoyable one, rich in both content, breadth and detail. I requested email feedback on the interviews from all Headteachers; they all replied and said they found the interview a positive experience, for example: "*thought provoking"* (HT E); "*this has been a cathartic experience*" (HT K); "*a welcome reminder of what's important"* (HT D); "*talking and thinking about the staff, it's been good"* (HT H).

The shortest interview was 80 minutes, the longest around 120 minutes, resulting overall in just short of twenty-eight hours of data being recorded. This is in line with many other researchers as the 'ideal' length for interviews (for instance: Mason, 1996; Thomas, 2013) and I felt with each participant that this was the right length, at no time did I ever feel or consider that a conversation was hurried, particularly bearing in mind the work pressures they have.

Recording of the interviews was carried out by using two apparatus simultaneously, primarily directly onto my personal computer and secondly, a hand-held tape recorder to act as a back-up. All interview recordings were very successful and although I made brief handwritten notes during the interviews, my main focus was always on the conversation and on what they were saying. Given that this is a potentially negative orientated topic, there were also moments of humour and empathetic experiences, which leaps out strongly in the transcripts.

3.4.4 Transcription

Bryman (2012) advises allowing at least six hours transcription for every one hour of recorded talk; for my data that would equate to 168 hours; this presented a challenging and somewhat daunting task. Despite the many obvious advantages of self-transcription as a valuable step in research (Kowal and O'Connell, 2014), I decided to transcribe eleven recordings and outsourced four. In view of the high quality of the recordings, I was very confident transcribing by a typist would be a relatively easy process. True to what is often reported in literature (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Thomas, 2013) about the merits of self-transcription, I found it was a pleasurable and engaging part of the research process, even if a long one. Listening to the Headteachers again, typing, stopping, reflecting and thinking was of great value and although it took several months, as I transcribed I was identifying key themes and trends. I checked and worked through the outsourced four transcripts myself, verifying the content with the recordings to ensure quality of data. As transcripts are verbatim they provide a highly reliable record (Silverman, 2013) that is presented in the thematic analysis; the respective transcripts were returned to all for them to review and check for accuracy (Patton, 2002). I added at the end of the transcript a 'further insights column' for them to make additional comments if they wished and several did so. All participants confirmed accuracy and endorsed them as a true record of the interview; examples of transcripts at this stage and a summary of responses, can be found in Appendix 1j and 1k.

All of this provided a very useful starting point for the next stage of analysis, the coding of the data into themes.

3.4.5 Coding of the data

I sought an analytical approach that offered consistency as well as flexibility; repetition of concepts across transcripts was important, but for me a more nuanced approach was needed to note similarities and differences, as well as connecting and cohering factors. Enhancing my understanding of codes and themes by extensive reading was essential at this stage, to decide the framework most suitable for my subject matter. Saldaña (2009), Ryan and Bernard (2003), Gibbs (2007) and King and Horrocks (2010) all offer varying thematic coding structures; however, I felt the guidance offered by Braun and Clarke (2006) was the most appealing and best fit for my data set. Like them, I felt there was no need to complicate the process, what was important was that the framework should enable me to code clearly and thoroughly, to see the themes and "*build an account of the findings*" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p 8).

They note, keeping an open mind whilst asking, what are they saying here, what does it mean? This is essential when coding. As they explain, a code in qualitative inquiry is often one word or a small number of words, which convey a particular point. Codes summarily label the explicit content of the data, groups and categories of codes, which then become the themes.

Braun and Clarke (2006) also suggest seven thematic analysis stages. They are: (1) familiarisation; (2) initial coding; (3) specific coding (identifying strong themes); (4) quote selection; (5) defining themes for each research topic; (6) descriptive 'findings'; (7) adding context and building theoretical models.

I began the process by reading through each transcript to gain a sense of the 'whole'; a familiarisation with the content to identify recurring ideas, similarities and differences. Familiarization notes were added in a separate column for each transcript, these collated large portions of the data in general terms, with short sentences such as 'working conditions', 'lowering status of teachers', 'pay and monetary incentives' and 'changing role of teachers'. The familiarisation labels were written within the context of large segments of data; in all, 16 different descriptive labels were defined.

All transcripts were then re-read in conjunction with listening to interview recordings, during which I undertook an initial coding process, which was closely tied to the raw data emerging from participant responses. I concentrated on what was said, using the words of the participants, for example, 'workload', 'accountability', 'stress and pressure', 'culture', 'vision', 'leadership'. Some responses had double coding; others were termed 'problematic coding' for example those that had low consensus. Many of the codes, for example 'workload' had sub-codes attached to them: i.e. 'marking', 'lesson planning'; in total 457 codes were assigned. At this stage, the two Headteachers who piloted the interview, were asked to "*member check*" (Patton 2002, p 383) the coding to see if they accurately reflected their intent and meanings; successful feedback with some useful additions laid the foundations in preparation for the next stage. An example of my transcript coding is in Appendix 1l.

This stage encompassed "*further immersion in the data*" (Braun and Clarke, 2006 p 43), reading and re-reading the transcripts and listening to interview recordings to review the initial coding. My aim now was to look for recurring patterns, trends and ideas among responses and identify and 'name' strong themes. This involved

grouping together codes, systematically comparing sections of text and noting similarities and differences (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). I discounted nothing at this stage, as codes were grouped and in some instances, re-worded.

Given my prior engagement with the literature and my research history with participants, four completed transcripts with codes were reviewed by two post-graduate colleagues, to examine consistency of analysis and probe for any potential biases. After discussion and feedback, which stimulated further critical thinking on my part, some minor changes and additions were made. As a single researcher this was an important strategy and particularly useful at this stage. Subsequently, all of the transcripts were fully coded, rechecked, reread, printed and organised as a 'word-wall'; all thirteen interview transcripts were organised vertically by participant and horizontally by interview question. This configuration enabled instant visual recognition, easy to refer to and employ for the development of the next stage. See below photograph.

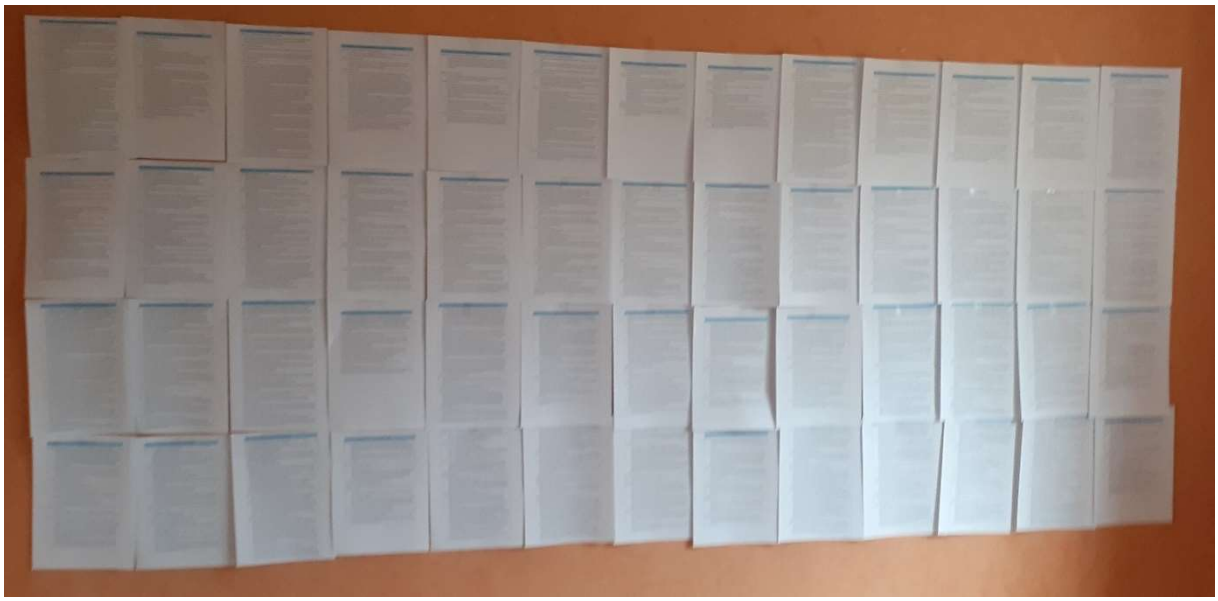

Figure 3.1: 'Word-wall' transcripts

As advised by Shelton and Flint (2020), it was now pertinent to view the data as a whole, bringing it all back together. Representative best quotes for themes within the data were highlighted, with at least one exemplar quote to illustrate each theme. In all, over 400 quotes were identified initially, which I then reviewed and rendered down to 180 as being the most relevant.

Looking horizontally at the data, research memos (Post-its) were generated to define the strongest and most dominant themes within each of the interview questions. Over 600 such memos were created, apportioned into themes across the data, identified by interview questions: (1) what does retention mean to you? (2) why are teachers leaving the profession? (3) what successful strategies have you identified to retain teachers and what would you like to see as national strategy? (4) what are your thoughts on the future? A second wall was used to display these memos. See photograph below.

Figure 3.2: 'Word-wall' coding

Reviewing the entire data set and themes at this stage was a particularly dynamic endeavour, moving between the original 'word wall' of transcripts and the 'Post it' wall, to ensure accuracy and clarity, with a continual 'questioning' for potential misrepresentation or bias. This thematic map gave emphasis to the emergent main themes and sub-themes across all of the data and all of the participants. It enabled the strongest themes to come to the fore and others that may be combined, following the advice to "*work systematically through the entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item"* (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p 18).

A final check of themes, clarifying their content and defining their importance in the data set was completed. I then listed the main themes onto a separate document, looking for repetition or overlap and those particularly relevant to help me answer my research questions; by now I had a much clearer understanding of what was relevant. In order to 'double check' I reviewed the list, revisiting every transcript (with recordings), updating and editing this final set of themes, in readiness for the next stage of writing the findings.

3.5 My role as researcher

Throughout the research, particularly during data collection and analysis, it is important to conduct a self-awareness and reflexive process; one that involves critical self-examination of a researcher's positionality (Berger, 2015). My position is particularly important in the context of this study. Having worked for almost forty years in inner-city secondary schools, progressing up through the promotional ladder in a variety of roles and responsibilities, including senior leadership, I have extensive knowledge of the field. I can more easily 'read' the people who inhabit this arena, as I have an empathetic understanding of the issues they are experiencing on a daily

basis, including the pressures of change and the high expectations placed on Headteachers. This shared background and experience is a strengthening factor in the research, providing a quality of awareness and understanding of 'how things work' from an insider perspective (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013). It helped me to focus my questionnaire and interview questions because I already had some insight as to what to look for and a greater awareness of the issues involved (Bryan and Burstow, 2018). It also gave me several benefits, not only by easing accessibility to this normally reticent group of professionals relating to research, but also during the interview process, by establishing immediate empathy, mutual trust and respect whilst enabling and supporting reciprocity throughout our conversations (Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

Whilst there are advantages to being immersed in the same culture and understandings of participants, it is not without its issues, particularly in my case. This "*insider knowledge*" (Ritchie et al, 2003, p 22) could have potentially led to influencing my interpretations, through my own preconceived ideas and experiences and personal biases (Cohen et al, 2011). My experience in education undoubtedly shapes my ideas and interpretations, they are integral to my being, but recognition of such personal factors and reflection on their influence must be part of any introspection on the analysis of data.

Having retired from teaching in 2014, I am in the fortunate position to have the experience of the complexities involved, combined with an 'outsider's' detachment from the immediate experiences of participants. This 'distance' I hope provided a certain amount of impartiality and a sense of objectivity (Robson, 2011).Throughout conducting the research, analysis and the development of conclusions, my aim, as

noted by Ritchie et al (2003) was to achieve "*empathetic neutrality*" (p 42).

In recognising potential bias, I have, in line with good overall research practice, employed several measures to ensure reflexivity and robustness throughout the study (Berger, 2015). Firstly, coding was always tied to the raw data evidencing what the participants actually said (Brawn and Clarke, 2006); thus, the findings were always substantiated within the data. Secondly, verbatim quotes were used to support themes and interpretations, directly connecting these with what participants actually said. Thirdly, techniques for enhancing validity and reliability from a procedural and practical standpoint were used, including for example, verbatim transcriptions reviewed by participants (Bloor, 1997). Lastly, a reflective diary provided an 'alert' to bias risks and supported reflections on methodology and interpretations (Macfarlane, 2010; Berger, 2015).

3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations in any area of research should always be of paramount importance and embedded throughout the process. As Bryan and Burstow (2018, p 54) note "*ethical considerations are a key part of educational research*". As my research would involve the personal testimony of Headteachers, it was vitally important that participants trusted me on a personal level with (potentially) highly sensitive material, such as confidential matters involving their own teachers, other schools, other headteachers and government policy and practice. With that uppermost in mind, ethical considerations permeated many of the decisions I made during my research. I now outline how I complied with the Code of Practice and the implementation of ethical guidance during the research process and discuss some personal dilemmas and how I overcame them.

The University of Birmingham ‘Code of Practice for Research’ (2019) was the guide for my submission for ethical review. As outlined in this chapter previously, after receiving initial ‘expressions of interest’ from Headteachers, I emailed each of them individually and confidentially several documents, comprising a participant information sheet and consent form, the study’s focus and purpose, the data collection process and how data would be used. In preparation of such documents, I extensively referenced the framework recommended by Macfarlane (2010). I explained to each Headteacher their right to withdraw, at any stage, including before, during and after introductory visits, before and after the questionnaire and at the beginning and end of each interview and that they could elect not to respond to certain questions if they so wished. It was explained that in the research design, Headteachers would be asked if they wanted to continue to interview after the questionnaire, I am pleased to say that no participants withdrew, nor expressed any concerns during the questionnaire process and fifteen of them enthusiastically enrolled for the interview stage.

I was careful to emphasise the anonymity of all participants and their right to privacy and confidentiality (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). It was important to stress and to define what was meant by anonymity: in some detail I talked about how their names would not be used and the data would be anonymised via the use of alphabetical aliases, ensuring confidentiality would be maintained throughout, by removing all references to location, school name, or any other identifier, also all references to headteachers would be gender neutral. If things said in interview made them identifiable to other individuals reading the thesis, this would be reviewed and addressed. Since Headteachers are used to the concept of confidentiality through

their professional standing, this was less of an issue in this study, however, I made certain that there were no ambiguities, nor fear of repercussions.

This course of action was straightforward as Headteachers represented a number of similar schools in size and location across several Local Authorities, making identification of individuals almost impossible, but not entirely, as quotes used in the thesis often featured some passionate and personalised responses. Arguably, any qualitative research that deals with individual personal experiences has limited anonymity for this reason (Mason, 1996). Consequently, I was the *only* person that knew Headteachers' details and I was sensitive, particularly in conversation with participants, or other individuals, of maintaining anonymity throughout. The outsourcing of the four transcripts was carried out by someone with whom I have had previous professional contact and have known for several years, someone I trusted implicitly with the task; the person also signed a confidentiality agreement in line with University of Birmingham protocols.

As advised by Macfarlane (2010) all data was also anonymised. In terms of data storage only consent forms and documentary data on schools were kept as paper copies, all other data such as emails and completed questionnaires were stored electronically. The recorded interviews on both devices were kept in my private home study. No names nor locations were used in the recordings thus, anonymising transcription. Once the transcription process was completed a single copy was stored on a personal computer that only I had access to and files were therefore password protected; all of the back-up tapes were erased/wiped.

From an educational research point of view, I was aware that my participants were under often difficult pressures, as Barton (2022, no page) asserts:

> '*these are the people under intense scrutiny, day in and day out with many working over sixty hours a week'*.

Potentially deflecting their focus or attention to their professional duties was somewhat of an ethical dilemma for me. I decided that Headteachers would control the logistics: the timing of introductory meetings, the questionnaire completion and the scheduling of interviews, with the caveat to allow postponement due to 'crisis' events. Gratifyingly, throughout the research process and most dominantly at close of interviews, many commented on the value of this research, reflecting on its importance to them and the profession generally and their place and contribution to it.

On a personal note, as others have found in their research (for instance Hammersley, 2006) there were times when my own opinions were at variance with participants. Although this happened rarely and I was careful during interviews not to share my own opinions, there were instances that I could have challenged their viewpoints. However, from the very start of my research career, I decided that my role, my position, would not challenge their personal opinions or attitudes, only listening without judgement. As Mason (1996) notes "*alternate views are the core of research, to be respected and valued"* (p 33), a view I applied assiduously throughout.

3.7 Limitations of the study

I recognise that this study has its limitations, chiefly in the selection of Headteachers as the sole participants, who are reporting their experiences of retaining their

teachers. That said, reporting indirectly on teachers was not my main objective, as unlike other work in this area, my main focus in this study has always been to ascertain just how secondary Headteachers experience and perceive the retention of their teachers within their contexts. A focus distinctly different from the personal perceptions of individual teachers who have left the profession, which are already well established in literature (for example: Woods, 2001).

My findings relied heavily on the participants self-reporting honesty, recall ability and mind-set on the day of interview and I acknowledge their perceptions cannot be critically interrogated, or verified by others.

Yet as previously explained, the major advantage of concentrating on Headteachers is their position to the research, being both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ to the challenges of retention. Their experiences add a depth, richness and personal narrative from a managerial perspective, views which are rarely found in literature in this field.

Whilst making every effort to ensure the research is thorough and robust, the sample size interviewed (13) was small and this clearly has inherent limitations, in that their views cannot be extrapolated to reflect that of Headteachers across all England. That said their collective experiences bring additional and valid insights into the issues.

I recognise that there are different approaches that I could have utilized, for example: a single school-case study interviewing a spectrum of participants, for example, the Headteacher, teachers, governors, parents and pupils. This *may* have provided some methodological triangulation, however, I was seeking something different, away from that of previous research to enable a different perspective to be gained.

3.8 Conclusion

Overall, this chapter has described my methodological decisions. I have justified my choice of using a qualitative approach, which gave Headteachers the opportunity to put forward their perceptions and experiences. I have described the research design, encompassing how participants were recruited, the development and use of a questionnaire and most importantly, semi-structured interviews as the main research method. In coding the data, I took account of repetitive themes and the developing arguments, which suggested that retaining teachers is a complex, multifaceted issue, one involving policy, institutional and personal levels. I have explained my own position in the research and how I ensured compliance with best ethical practice. The next chapter presents my findings, initially through a diagram entitled '*Retention: untying the knot',* followed by detailed discussion of Headteachers experiences and perceptions of retention through four interview questions.

Lastly and as a footnote to the above, the online questionnaire set out to provide an overview of the Heads themselves and their differing contextual circumstances; it was never intended to be an integral part of the data collection and analysis from the interviews. Fundamentally, I utilized the questionnaire to identify the issues that were important to them and thus, confidently prepare the questions I would use for the in-depth interviews. In addition, the summary document of the questionnaire findings was very well received by all participants and crucially, it laid the foundations for stronger relationships with and gaining the confidence of the participants.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter is organized and structured through my four main interview questions, integrating existing empirical and conceptual theory and literature. My decision to present the findings in this manner was consequent to a great deal of deliberation on my part, including a further, comprehensive review of analysis literature, (for example: Miles and Huberman, 1994; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Bartlett et al, 2017).

The rationale underpinning this organizational approach was based on my view that the data is *the* 'case', the 'whole argument', as distinct from each Headteacher and school being individual case studies; thus, *not* a case-by-case analysis of individual participant narratives. Furthermore, as previously discussed within my methodological chapter, Headteachers' responses were analysed as an 'entity', a collective, encompassed within my word-wall, embodying all responses from all interviews, across all four questions. I believe this technique avoids unnecessary repetition and emphasises the similarities and differences in responses to a particular question. In adopting this systematic approach the key themes became readily 'visible and transparent' and provided a robust overview of the 'whole case'.

In this chapter, I firstly present my data in the form of a diagram entitled '*Retention: Untying the Knot*' and explain how and why the illustration was constructed and how it conceptualises retention in a novel way.

The findings illustrate the challenges for school leaders in retaining teachers as they seek to resolve or at least mitigate the policy tensions within their everyday experiences. How they do this is dependent upon their context and their diverse 'positioning' amidst increasing inequity between schools. Front-line school leaders

unerringly prioritised institutional self-interest in retaining their teachers within a highly competitive environment.

Through the perceptions and experiences of school leaders, my findings demonstrate this is a complex, multi-dimensional problem. It is important to clarify as I have addressed in Chapter 2, the meso and micro-level issues I am analysing refers to Headteachers' perceptions and experiences of *their* teachers, *their* experiences and personal struggles in negotiating retention within *their* schools and that of the wider profession

4.1 Retention: 'Untying the Knot'

Qualitative inquiry strongly encourages the use of diagrams to synthesize major theoretical concepts and their connections, serving several purposes at all stages of analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003). I decided to emulate this tradition and by using a modified concentric circle diagram, provide a broad overview and pictorial representation of the data. This illustrates the 'web' of retention effectively and clearly offers an "*illuminating message"* (Eisner, 1997, p 8) of the complexities involved and the patterns of interaction (See Figure 4.1, below).

The diagram is founded on the conceptual framework developed and used by Peter Woods (2001). As discussed earlier, his research concludes that the influencing factors in teachers' decisions to leave arose via three individual but interlinking levels; namely, the structural *macro* level of government policy, the organisational *meso* level of school specific factors and the *micro* level of individual and personal factors. Turning the focus towards Headteachers experiences of retention, in my diagram the three concentric zones represent the elements that Headteachers negotiate with examples drawn from my data. The outer zone portrays the macro contextual factors

that Headteachers have no direct control of, nor part therein; the next zone depicts the meso context of school factors, which they arguably have *some* control of, whilst the innermost zone represents the micro context at the very core, the individual teacher.

Although these zones are presented individually, they are neither isolated nor independent of each other, as denoted by the perforated lines, indicating permeability between all three levels. In this context the factors are often merging and simultaneously operating within all three levels, yet sometimes independent to one another as circumstances differ.

Imbued within the macro, meso, micro strata, the forces of marketization, managerialism and career mobility, provide the critical conceptual framework through which to understand the data and advance the current thinking surrounding retention. As discussed in the review of literature, these 'forces' encapsulate some of the most profound economic, political and social influences affecting England's education system during the previous three (plus) decades "*creating discordance, messiness and incoherence*" (Ball, 2019, no page) in the teaching profession.

Within the diagram, the elements of marketization, managerialism and career mobility, although indicated in equal proportion, do not necessarily apply equal influence at individual macro, meso and micro levels. For example, some of the factors within managerialism may be more dominant for Headteachers rather than factors around career mobility. As outlined in Chapter 2, the factors within the diagram and their origins are centred on: the application of marketization, with its control, regulation and scrutiny; next is managerialism, which has at its core efficiency, economy and 'value for money' and lastly, the factors within career

mobility, of changing attitudes and expectations of careers. These are the basis of the elements identified in the diagram below.

Figure 4.1: Retention: 'Untying the Knot'.

It is important to note these factors are based purely on the Headteachers' assessments of retention and reflects what they *perceived* to be happening 'on the ground' (Thomas, 2013). This encompasses the differing individual views of

participant Headteachers, reflecting their 'world', where some collective experiences and perceptions overlap and others diverge. Not all Headteachers will feel the diagram reflects their individual experiences, moreover it is a collation of the factors as a whole, namely, the overall picture of the case. As Day et al (2007) reflected in their qualitative case-study, storying and microscopically unpicking individual experiences, adds to the "*quality of the whole and collective strength"* (p 26) and thus, enables the researcher to look beyond the obvious.

I feel it is necessary to develop this visual in order to better understand the questions that arise as to why retaining teachers *has* and continues to be a significant problem, particularly in secondary schools in England. What exactly is happening? What forces are working together or pulling and pushing against each other? Contrary to the simplistic causes of job dissatisfaction presented by policy makers and manifested throughout the literature, my data suggests that the causality is something far more complex, with multiple and congruent forces at play.

4.1.1 Overview of the findings

As previously stated in Chapter 3, the questionnaire data was analysed separately. Its sole aim was 'preparing the way' and was never intended to be an integral part of the data analysis from the interviews. Notably, its importance lay in providing crucial background and contextual information as to the participants' circumstances, nevertheless, it naturally underpinned *some* of their subsequent interview responses.

As the diagram '*Retention: untying the knot'* illustrates, a sizable volume of data was collected and given the word limit of this thesis, it is impossible to fully explore *all* of the factors that Headteachers raised to the same depth and detail. Thus, my aim in

this analysis is to ensure a clear exposition of the key findings, focussing on the responses that occurred repeatedly during interview, drawing upon the thematic analysis guidance of Braun and Clarke (2006) to explore responses in depth.

The main findings arising from the data are organised sequentially to address four interview questions. By way of introduction, my brief summary of the data is given below:

In question one, the overwhelming consensus was that retention was more important than ever to address shortfalls in teacher numbers. Their significance in improving pupil performance, providing stability and expertise and embedding many of the strategic goals of schools were emphasised. In question two, detailed responses outlined why teachers were leaving, including factors around recruitment, concerns of constant policy change, the high workloads of their teachers, excessive accountability and surveillance of the profession, pay and the prescriptive nature of teaching. Issues surrounding changing attitudes to careers and greater mobility opportunities were addressed. Question three explores the differing capacities of schools to retain and the varying approaches, priorities and strategies they used.

They emphasised monetary incentives, CPD, filtering policy to mitigate workload, the beneficial impact of academization and the need for strategic planning to effect change. Question four explores the effects of the pandemic on retention and views on the future.

Throughout the interviews it became clear that these Headteachers were differently able to respond to the issues they raised. Diverse opinions were evident and strongly influenced by their school context and their agency to negotiate the forces impacting

on retention. *Some* Headteachers expressed pessimism about their diminishing autonomy within centralised control and their perceived limited impact on retention. Others wholeheartedly embraced marketization and its principles, notably, those in 'well positioned' academies, having proactive strategies to attract and retain teachers, enabled by their beneficial funding situation. Areas of overlapping positions, such as the negativity of surveillance of the profession and the need to a return to the 'traditional values' of teaching were strong themes. The following now details the findings.

4.2 Interview question 1: What does retention mean to you?

By way of an introductory ice-breaker and connector to the original questionnaire, I opened the interview by asking each Headteacher what retention meant and its significance to them. Without exception interviewees were consistent in their responses, well-illustrated by HT O:

> *"Retaining teachers is more important than ever in the current situation ... we have to keep the teachers we've got, to build strong schools and ultimately a sustainable profession".*

One of the most experienced participants, HT O could not have put it simpler, saying the retention of teachers is *"more important than ever"* in light of the continuing disparity between increasing pupils and declining teacher numbers. An obviously well informed group, these Heads reiterated their concerns regarding recruitment targets:

> "*unmet again…that's ten years we've had of not enough* [teachers] *being recruited*" (HT H) and numbers leaving: "*ten percent leaving each year … it's not hard to do the maths ... that's the problem we face*" (HT L).

The ‘squeeze’ underpinning such responses were reiterated and stressed throughout, as were their evident worries regarding staffing their schools.

HT E stated:

> *“Retaining my teachers and having enough and the right teachers … that’s the thing that keeps me awake at night … it’s a continuous battle to keep on top of”.*

The discourse from HT E and the majority of Heads was one of a retention ‘crisis’ as they detailed examples of teachers leaving to other professions and how historical and current working conditions of teachers “*was driving against*” (HT C) their retention. Adverts which received *“one or two applicants*” (HT H) or in HT L’s case “*none at all”* were commonplace experiences and certainly concentrated minds. HT U added:

> “*The retention of my teachers has become the biggest part of my job…they are my lifeline ... it’s so difficult to recruit here for lots of reasons … keeping* [my] *teachers is crucial”.*

More of a priority than is generally recognized in existing literature, underlying interviewees’ responses was the highly competitive ‘marketplace’ for a diminishing human resource. Given their substantial levels of accountability and responsibility, it is of little wonder they strive to retain their teachers, as there are no guarantees as to finding suitable replacements.

4.2.1 Stability and experience

Moving on to why retention was important to them, the response from *all* Headteachers to this question was *stability*; a term they reiterated and stressed repeatedly throughout the interviews. HT Q stated:

> *"Retention for me is centred around stability and experience which in turn results in a better quality of education for the children. For me the most inspirational schools don't have hordes of new staff starting every September. Retention has got to be centred around what does it mean for children? and what it means is stability, experience and ultimately improved quality and progress*".

As explored in the review of literature, the importance of retaining teachers and the benefits their skill-set and experience has on pupils' achievement is well documented (Worth et al, 2018; Andrews, 2019; See and Gorard, 2019). As HT Q stated, retaining teachers is directly linked to examination results, improved quality and progress of pupils. As a key performance indicator of how successful schools are, this underlying motivator to retain teachers was never far away, as Headteachers, well aware of their high-stakes accountability, stressed that securing a quality teaching workforce was imperative. The benefits cited by HT Q appears sensible: developing, nurturing and advancing teachers in order to improve results, whilst affording students continuity and confidence. Few would argue with such sentiments, or the strategic benefits that a stable and experienced school workforce provides; working with an established team and 'known quantities' gives school leaders security and safety. An important consideration for these Headteachers, where performance and examination results are fundamental to their institutional survival (Ball, 2008).

The identification of ‘inspirational schools’ as those that retain teachers is interesting, as HT Q explained upon closer questioning, these were the ones *visibly* the most successful, those who are ‘the winners’, well-funded and well positioned (Greany and Higham, 2018). In the light this Headteacher’s position is one characterised as a ‘winner’ and by his own admission, has found it much easier to retain teachers than others.

A further benefit of a stable workforce was that on school improvement;

HT H said:

> *“Retention for me is about keeping a core cohort of staff, which enables you to create a strategic direction around them, they build the culture and the ethos of the school”.*

For HT H, the positive difference such a nucleus of teachers brings to the culture and ethos of the school was evident, these teachers offer more than their teaching presence, as they enhanced the strategic direction of the school. This Headteacher emphasised that such teachers, all working to a directed strategy and a shared common objective, had enabled improved examination performance and “*were the ones most influential in our ‘good’ Ofsted report” (*HT H). Such strategic prominence attached to retention is centred around the fundamental importance for Headteachers to attain year-on-year improvements in examination results, thereby improving their school’s status, reputation and marketability and ‘appeal’ to parents. As Heads are continually required to measure their professional performance and that of their schools against such key indicators, I suggest that assembling and retaining their teams, particularly those central to it, essential.

4.2.2 Pastoral care

On the 'rapport building' benefits of retaining teachers, HT K stated:

> *"Retention for me, adds things you can't quantify, the quality of relationships, the improved behaviour* [of pupils]*, the long-standing relationships with families. That all makes the difference to children's aspirations and their lives*".

The benefits of retaining teachers and their influence upon the pastoral care of pupils is, as HT K reflected, not something which is measurable. Nevertheless, school leaders based in very differing contexts, praised and exemplified how teacher-pupil 'bonding' had increased student aspirations and life chances, improving the "*social capital of pupils*" (HT D). Headteachers particularly emphasised how their longest serving teachers, added "*the most value to some of our most disadvantaged students*" (HT I). Perhaps most concerningly, this is given little importance, some might say, overlooked completely, within education policy (Allen and Sims, 2018; Andrews, 2019; Asada et al, 2020). As Lynch et al (2012) noted, government consigns no value on these beneficial but unquantifiable factors, relegating them below that of examination results, which are easily measured and costed in terms of efficiency and productivity.

4.2.3 Differing capacities

The ability to retain teachers is directly linked to a school's capacity; HT E said:

> *"Retention for me is about creating systems and job roles and utilising people to the best effect. If you have the capacity to grow people within roles, then*

hopefully you will retain them and retain good people, in the classroom, the school and in the profession".

Importantly, the management-driven systems quoted above, is unquestionably easier to achieve within HT E's context. By far the most well-funded school in this research, a totally new built facility, benefitting from the highest per pupil funding in England, HT E has the means, the resources and the capacity to 'grow' people into roles. Such elevated funding levels, in comparison to other participants, exposes the differing capacities of schools to respond to retention. The practices noted by HT E are all very laudable, but they are entirely dependent upon financial and organisational capacity and ones that are very difficult to emulate for those in less well-resourced contexts and circumstances, such as others in this study.

In contrast, HT L added:

"Retention for me it's not just about staffing my own school, it's about developing highly skilled professionals and committed, dedicated teachers for all schools, not just for [those] '*best' schools, in the 'best' areas. That's got to be for the greater good of education in the long term*".

The challenging context of HT L's school strongly influenced the response above; a school with acute retention difficulties, financial instability and within an area of high deprivation. Understaffed for several years and "*struggling to attract teachers",* HT L's plea for developing and retaining teachers for all schools was interestingly replicated by some others, with varying contextual circumstances. An indication perhaps of Headteachers' awareness of their vulnerabilities, where schools are continually jostling for position and 'status'. A point emphasised in the work of Greany and

Higham (2018), where schools are operating within a hierarchy of well-positioned schools (the ‘winners’) and those not well positioned (the ‘losers’) such as in HT L’s case.

Several school leaders in similar position to HT L connected strongly with retention being important to the profession as a whole, as they detailed the need for a collective policy for all schools to be developed; not an idea that sits well within a discourse of marketization and competition. Nevertheless, the stark messages about ‘the best’ schools in the ‘best areas’, as schools which have the means to attract and retain, whilst others in less favourable circumstances do not, perfectly illustrates the problems of retaining teachers.

4.2.4 Summary

Headteachers’ responses to this question emphasise their similar and consistent views regarding the benefits of retaining teachers. They concurred that retention was more important than ever, given the ongoing recruitment problems and persistent numbers leaving the profession. When asked why it was important, they overwhelmingly agreed it was about stability and the experience such teachers bring to their schools. Throughout, they stated how retaining their teachers was key to improving examination results, which would enhance their schools’ reputation and prominence. They added that, retaining teachers advanced their leadership and their schools’ strategic development as well as considerably enhancing pupils’ life chances. Their differences in their ability to address retention became evident, particularly their differing financial and organisational capacity, as they grappled with the everyday problems of recruiting and keeping teachers.

4.3 Interview question 2: Why are teachers leaving the profession?

In this interview question, Headteachers gave their perceptions and experiences on why their teachers are leaving and so too of the wider profession. They presented a multitude of factors in some depth and detail, with a strong sense of disappointment and at times, a deep frustration with the current 'crisis' situation of teacher retention. With such rich data, I chose to explore what these Headteachers often perceived as "*classic cases*" (HT P) of the factors they identified at the core of the problem.

4.3.1 Recruitment

These Headteachers began, as one might expect, by focussing on those coming into teaching, questioning the quality of recruits, their training and their resilience to stay in the profession. HT Q reflected:

> *"I question the quality of recruitment to train in the first place. ITT targets have meant that some* [providers] *have opened up the flood gates to everybody. That's lowered standards and then you're going to get fewer quality teachers coming out the other end. Which in turn results in three or four years' time the departure of people from the profession, because they should have never been recruited into the profession in the first place"*

As HT Q explained, part of the *quality* problem was the recruitment process, a system driven by government targets to meet teacher supply demands; as targets, regardless of the calibre of candidates, have to be met. Two Headteachers, heavily involved in ITE, added that current arrangements to "*fill places*" (HT C) and "*the limited supply of graduates*" (HT L) had encouraged a system riven with issues; that is to say it 'permits' compromises in quality. This has been exacerbated by the differing number and complexity of routes available to train; 33 at the time of writing.

In literature, some suggest that such a fragmented system, organised and operated within different institutions, will arguably have systemic and integral quality variables (Allen et al, 2016; Ball, 2019; Gorard et al, 2020).

As HT Q reflects above, the resilience of newly qualified teachers is tested from the outset, in what is recognised as an intensely challenging and formative period, as they have to contend with some considerable pressures in the workplace. This is a very pertinent point upon which to delve deeper, as it demonstrates the cycle of recruit and then leave that has encumbered the profession for decades; as evidenced in literature and statistical data (Allen and Sims, 2018; DfE, 2018; ASCL, 2019). A cycle, which HT Q implies, is ongoing and perpetuated by current circumstances. A further contributing factor to the quality of recruits was:

> *"I've seen a real downturn in trainee teachers subject knowledge … they haven't the firm foundations of specialist knowledge and I've seen new recruits grapple with that one and then leave"* (HT P).

A marketized higher education system has created a multitude of different degree compilations, to facilitate greater choice for 'customers' with a burgeoning number of conversion degrees to 'plug the gap' in some shortage areas (primarily STEM subjects). No doubt intended to remove barriers and facilitate 'mobility' into the profession, yet these Heads are saying that this is seemingly resulting in a dilution of specialist knowledge, which tests resilience, adding 'pressures' to early career teachers and perhaps precipitating their departure. As in the review of literature, there is a view that these 'pull' and 'push' factors around career mobility are

increasingly pertinent but rarely fully explored in terms of retention (Allen and Sims, 2018; Foster, 2020).

A further aspect to recruitment which prompted many forthright responses was the 'benefits' of bursaries:

"I believe that bursaries have been the biggest waste of money that the Government have done. It was poorly thought out, an idea that sounds good on paper but just hasn't worked as an incentive to stay in teaching" (HT H).

The bursary system met with some derision in collective responses. None of the Headteachers supported it as a benefit to retention, in actuality, quite the reverse. Bursaries are a significant cost to the taxpayer and whilst questions have been raised about their effectiveness, for instance by the National Audit Office (2017), little change has been forthcoming from government. One Head bluntly responded: *"you can see bursary chasers … they come* [take the money] *and then go"* (HT O). Arguably, such policy incentives are to attain targets, however, based on these Headteachers' responses, bursaries have seemingly had little effect to fundamentally solve teacher shortfalls, or indeed teacher retention.

Interspersed throughout this part of the interview was the perception by Heads that teaching was not attracting the 'right' people, as HT C mused:

"*Are we attracting and recruiting the right people into teaching?"*

Questioning if the right people were entering teaching and their suitability for the profession raised some interesting perceptions around how, or if, some 'recruits' comprehend the demands of the role prior to enrolment. School leaders implied that some have a naïve view of the realities and are unprepared for the demands of the

role. Teaching, particularly when depicted in media recruitment drives, is often portrayed ‘romantically’ one that is fulfilling, improving society, with gratifying career status. Conversely, in my interviews, the most frequent and thoroughly discussed aspects of the job were that the actualities are far more onerous than is commonly portrayed (Doherty, 2020); consequently, some recruits often do not understand that teaching is a “*hard job*” (HT B).

A further aspect to this was raised by some Headteachers; HT L said:

> “*Is teaching for some a fall-back career? I think* [yes]*, sometimes when things get difficult in other professions … you get some who see it that way. I don’t think they are the right people and in my experience, they are the ones who go*”.

The above response illustrates the reality of mobility within teaching and was highlighted a number of times by these participants, recounting similar experiences in their interviews. Rooted in their own love and passion for teaching, some Heads were highly critical of those they felt had less altruistic reasons for being in the profession (Hargreaves, 2003). A clear disconnect between ‘modern’ attitudes and approaches to teaching by some, as Heads reiterated what they wanted *“were the right people … who are going to get involved in the whole ethos of education and are dedicated and committed”* (HT L).

4.3.2 Constant policy change

Notably in response by most Headteachers, was that in their experience, teachers were leaving because of the negative and compound effect of constant policy change and the impact of managerialism on individual schools and teachers. HT C explained:

> "*I think the Government shift and constant policy changes have really impacted on teachers, the pace and scope of reform had been constant, frantic, relentless and at times, overwhelming … for me, why teachers leave is down to the constant change. The constant change means you can never become an expert because the goal posts change constantly. Staff find that really difficult to deal with".*

Described as "*an outstanding leader in education"* (Ofsted report, 2020), HT C's response is supported in literature, which suggests the prevalence and persistence of teacher turnover is strongly linked to the constant reform instigated by successive governments (for instance: Ball, 2008; Greany and Waterhouse, 2016; Bamford and Worth, 2017).

As HT C says, the constant policy initiatives and the rapidity of change has resulted in an unprecedented escalation of challenges that teachers face. Participants cited a staggering list of over twenty examples of policy changes in the last two academic years alone (2018–2020) bringing new tasks, that teachers had to carry out. HT U exemplifies this:

> *"It's one change after another. The continual change in specifications, the assessment, the moderating, the expectations around marking and assessment … continually being told to do this, do the other, make these changes … there comes a point and I've experienced it very recently, when teachers say that's enough, it's too much, I'm going to do something else"*.

As this response illustrates, change has become the norm within schooling. All of the Heads in interview agreed they have little choice but to implement top-down

directives, working within the structural constraints, as they do, of accountability and this has a direct impact on their teachers. The dictatorial nature of policy and the extensive instructional 'commands' was a repetitive and thus significant factor in interview, as these school leaders gave vent to their frustrations with policy "*download"* (HT B) and the disarray it caused. What clearly underpinned their responses, as HT U emphasised, was that being told what to do had effectively disempowered teachers and like the teachers in Woods' research (2001), initiative overload and fatigue had taken its toll. Above all else, Headteachers' responses encompass beliefs that the suppression of the 'voice of the teacher' within the confines of policy was a causal factor in their teachers leaving; a point made strongly in the work of Ball (2006, 2008). This suggests that the macro, meso and micro levels described by Woods (2001) are interlinked and embedded in policy, cascading through the institutional level to the individual and as such, posing specific challenges to retaining teachers.

4.3.3 Workload

The rapidity and constancy of change has inevitably led to an intensification of teachers' workload; a view particularly emphasised by HT B:

> *"Teachers leaving, has got to be about workload. Some just get 'burn-out' … it's the relentless nature of what's got to be done when"*.

As HT B succinctly states, as teachers are required to conduct tasks within a given schedule, or to meet a certain set of targets, their workload is increasing and often compressed within a given timescale. This has led to their teachers feeling at times "*overwhelmed*" (HT C), with many citing the number of hours worked by their teachers as "*unmanageable*" (HT H) and directly leading to a lowering level of job

satisfaction. Interviewees suggested a link between workload, class size and number of classes. For example, HT D detailed some teachers teaching 500 children a week over 16 different classes and as he pointed out "*this gruelling workload led to hours and hours of marking".* Like other participants, the function of school policy in this case was often driven by financial constraints and the evident need to fill school pupil places to the maximum and occasionally, beyond.

These Headteachers emphasised that in their experience workload had intensified, particularly within the last five years, as the need to fulfil national performance targets and the competitive environment had accelerated. They exemplified this as an *"increase in bureaucracy, tick boxing and with little to do with children*" (HT H) which now forms a central part of a teachers' job function. The burn-out condition referred to by HT B is recognised as being a significant factor, particularly to teaching, more so than in other occupations because of compressed time frames, as found by Worth and Van den Brande (2020). My interviewees remarked on burn-out as a consequence of the "*data driven system*" (HT G) and listed over twenty items in the last year, that had added to workload. This Head felt particularly strongly about the communication with parents which had become time consuming and paperwork rich, particularly email: "*we get parents emailing staff at all times"*. This Head admitted that this parental expectation and mode of communication was difficult to manage in terms of teacher workload, conscious that parents hold the increasing power of 'choice' and "*keeping them happy is so important"* (HT G).

It was clear that these school leaders were somewhat cynical around government intentions and actions to address workload; illustrated by this typical response: HT C:

"Government knows the issues around workload, they just don't want to address them"

The criticism of government by HT C is unsurprising as the policy 'presence' in schools has become so acute and many of the contributions to workload are enmeshed in policy. The narrative here from school leaders was very much about the interplay between overall macro policy and how it is integrated at the meso-level within school policy and its consequence for teachers workload. One of the most experienced Heads had this to say: HT L:

"I question the 'real' value and purpose of solving the workload problem through workload agreements. In my experience they move things around, it feels superficial and then suggest things which largely depends on resourcing. Money we just don't have"

With at least eight incarnations of workload agreements since 2010 (DfE, 2010-2020), much of the advice and guidance to schools is based on strategies linked and highly dependent on resourcing. HT L explained:

"*Yes, lower class sizes, but have we the money to do it?* [no]; *Yes, get more teaching assistants, but have we the money to do it?* [no]; *Yes, give teachers more non-contact time, but have we the money to do it?* [no]*….at the moment* [no] *we just haven't the money".*

Listening to Heads in interview, what came across repeatedly was the limited value of workload agreements. In a sense, many of them distanced workload as a policy issue "*and a problem for the profession*" (HT B); one they attempted to address by balancing accountability and the wellbeing of their teachers within their individual

school policy. Such compromises were marked by scant attention to workload agreements, indeed in actuality Headteachers ignored such documents, cynically saying "*they should be viewed with scepticism*" (HT U). Underpinning this was the view that whilst policy makers *say* they are dealing with the problem, justifying policy measures as being "*in the pursuit of excellence"* (DfE, 2010, p 4), from these Heads' responses, it would appear such agreements are tokenistic and non-performative in solving the problems. As HT H succinctly put it:

> "*they are another of those plaudits, to remain on good terms with the teaching workforce and the demands of unions rather than anything really useful".*

4.3.4 Surveillance

Headteachers' perceptions and experiences of surveillance in relation to retaining teachers falls into two distinct positions, those that found them to be *"divisive and a hindrance to retention*" (HT O) and conversely, a minority, that found them supportive.

Scarcely any empirical research in this field exists without at least some reference to the scrutiny of teachers (for instance: Jones and Tymms, 2014; Godfrey and Ehren, 2020). Prompting some of the most forthright responses in interview, Heads identified the intense 'Orwellian' (Hollis, 2017) practice of surveillance, by government, the public and mainstream media, as a major factor in the retention equation, more of which is explored in later interview questions. By far the most frequent responses on this subject was that of the Ofsted inspection framework, with its focus on data and the subsequent knock-on effect for internal school monitoring; HT H exemplified:

> *"I don't think there's a profession out there that is more scrutinised than teaching. Staff just get fed up with the barrage of scrutiny and that does effect retention, not just in your school but in the profession as well"*.

The "*barrage of scrutiny"* referred to by HT H was a theme many Heads agreed upon, bemoaning the sheer number of performance indicators imposed by policy makers that teachers are subjected to as part of the Ofsted framework (itself an ever-changing landscape). So too the web of surveillance that had gradually increased in intensity and rigour, to what HT L termed as "*unacceptable levels*". Their responses included views on league tables as "*a divisive ranking that is no good for anyone"* (HT D), Progress 8 measures "*which don't take account of the whole child*" (HT O) and performance management of teachers as "*frustratingly one-sided, focussing on exam results"* (HT H). Addressing the inspection process, HT Q explained:

> *"Inspection, it's not helpful to keeping teachers … in my recent experience Ofsted added considerably to stress levels … it's the written feedback and the judgement that gets to people* [teachers]*, it effects their pride and self-worth and that's when they look elsewhere"*.

There was little disparity in their perceptions with regard to the 'helpfulness' of inspection and the constant need to monitor and assess their performances against the Ofsted benchmarks. This increases the stress levels of teachers on two fronts: the constant state of readiness that is required in preparedness for an inspection and the very real fear of failure. The feedback from Ofsted and their inescapable judgement as cited by HT Q, are fixed and immutable, they are 'labels' of competence which have direct consequences for teachers themselves, the school's

reputation with potentially serious ramifications for the Head (Gunter and Forrester, 2008; Nias, 2014; Greany and Higham, 2018; Fuller, 2019). As HT Q pointed out, such labelling of teachers has a visceral and intimate effect, impacting on their personal lives, their self-esteem and their perceived worth and value.

The added impact of Ofsted inspection on internal school monitoring was an integral and significant theme as Headteachers emulated within their own schools a 'system of surveillance'. HT K explains:

> *"Everybody seems to do lots of 'mocksted' activities … in preparation for the real thing. I think sometimes the monitoring that schools do is too much … observations, learning walks, book trawls, data capture … performance management is on top of that. That's what wears teachers down … I think, it builds up and up and then they go. I've put a stop on some things but you have to do it … its part and parcel of quality assurance, the 'practice runs' to protect the school and teachers"*.

As this response illustrates, schools have organised and instigated a persistent level of profiling and evaluation, ostensibly to facilitate quality assurance procedures. Conspicuously, *all* participants said they were compelled to operate such practices to minimise the school's vulnerability to inspection through practice runs. Notably, a whole "*paper trail to document evidence*" (HT I) supported what appeared in discussion, to be a perpetual in-school performance cycle, emulating the processes involved within an Ofsted inspection; a cycle similarly recognised as a causal reason for teachers leaving by HT K. This exemplifies the pressures of a surveillant culture within education (Page, 2017; Unsworth-Hughes, 2022; Skerrit, 2023).

By implementing the activities noted above within their schools, these Headteachers have become, as noted by Ball (2008) ‘agents of policy’ and despite acknowledgement of the pressures, not one of them questioned the notion that these could or should be discontinued. Conversely, they tended to justify such measures, underlining the importance of the development outcomes of surveillant activity and emphasising the need to support teachers. They argued, these measures protected the school and by default also their teachers; it was also accompanied by a strong sense of personal responsibility to the community “*to get a successful judgement*” (HT E).

Some participants said the intended objective of ‘mocksted’ was, by design, to reassure and reduce the pressures on teachers but clearly this is a response to the fear generated by Ofsted inspection regimes (Greany and Higham, 2018); another example of their ‘virtual presence’ in schools, having the power of ‘directing from a distance’ (Hulme et al, 2021). Moreover, the Heads recognized the debilitating effect on their teachers of the constant checking, auditing, monitoring, evaluation, scrutiny “*from every angle*” (HT C) and readiness *“to perform”* (HT B) and the perception, embodied in inspection, that teachers are required to continually improve.

As HT E reflected:

> *“For teachers, I think they just get exhausted with this idea that they have to keep improving. It’s as if they are condemned for not keeping up”.*

My interviewees, particularly the four most experienced, were at pains to say that the culture within Ofsted inspection and its judgements had resulted in some teachers feeling undervalued, under pressure and powerless to alter, or even maintain their

situation. These perceptions concur with much of the existing literature, strongly linking retention and the need for teachers to feel professionally valued; if not, it leads to disillusionment, dissatisfaction and departure (Scutt, 2019).

Furthermore, Heads questioned the effects of a data driven Ofsted criteria.

HT O summarises this well:

> *"Data is the important thing for them … if your Progress 8 score is good, your results are good, that drives the end judgement … my experience is that data is more important than what they see*".

HT O's recent experience reflects the theories of Lynch et al (2012), in that the overriding important criteria was data, overshadowing what Inspectors *actually* witnessed. Arguably, this devalues the classroom presence of teachers, diminishing their meaningful input to pupils' learning, adding to teachers' negativity and disconnect with the role and potentially, questioning some of the very reasons as to why they entered the profession (Ball, 2006).

On inspection, HT L muses:

> *"It's a fact of life now, you have to work with it … and there has to be some level of accountability otherwise things can slip 'through the net' … I just wish we could have something less punitive with more mutual trust and respect … that could help retention".*

Despite their many protestations in interview, there was clearly compliance to Ofsted inspection, recognising the power such a regime holds and the effects a poor judgement can have on their school and for their teachers. As Fuller (2019) explained, they have little option but to conform with the systems of surveillance,

where non-compliance is unthinkable given the high stakes involved, even if this fuels dissatisfaction within teachers.

Notably, the recognition that some accountability is needed was a significant perception, but the plea by HT L for a mutually supportive structure is not one that sits well within current policy. The policy agenda of continual improvement, raising standards and results may well, I suggest, prompt increased surveillance and direction as government promotes "*external monitoring as crucial to developing schools"* (DfE, 2021, p 5).

However, there was one lone voice that had a markedly differing perspective as to Ofsted inspection and its relationship to retention.

HT G said:

> "*I don't think inspection itself causes teachers to leave, you do need an external view of things. If schools aren't doing something right, or teachers aren't doing something right, they need to be told about it. I think that honesty and then putting in development strategies to support can help retention in the end"*.

As Head of one of the most successful schools in England (DfE, 2020) and previously a lead inspector within Ofsted. Inspection clearly worked for this Head, who articulated a strong sense of conviction, openly supporting and defending the rationale of the Ofsted regime and its outcomes, maintaining this can support retention. Advocating such structures, HT G went on to detail:

> "*Part of being a successful Head … you have to run with it … in many ways if you want a successful career, you have to, honestly, know how to work within*

the system. Heads might 'say' differently, but we all know how important it is and if you get it right, that helps retain teachers".

Working within the system was recognised and implicit in many responses, but not articulated in quite the direct tone HT G adopted. Arguably yes, Headteachers who have 'risen through the ranks' with evident success, are 'wedded' as Lynch, et al (2012) terms it, to the principles of a highly competitive and surveillant culture; they have coercively been 'shaped' by their experiences to embrace 'the system'. A view addressed in the work of Greany and Higham (2018), which found "*active policy resistance was largely absent"* (p 98) in the implementation of education reforms by school leaders. This resonates within my case study of schools where Headteachers demonstrated 'pragmatic compliance' (Greany and Higham, 2018) to work, in HT G's words, "*within the system*".

4.3.5 Pay and monetary incentives

Moving on to pay, Headteachers' perceptions of pay and monetary incentives for teachers differed substantially from existing literature, where financial renumeration is often cited as *not* the prime reason for teachers exiting the profession (for instance Judge et al, 2010; Bamford and Worth, 2017; Foster, 2019).

It came as a surprise to me that *all* of the Headteachers maintained that pay was indeed one of the prime factors within retention.

HT E explains this:

"I think pay is important. I think people tell you it isn't but I think it is in the world we live in, the housing market, the quality of our life, our children's life. My generation certainly and the generation behind me, we want the best

things, we want the flat screen TV, we want it on the wall now. We don't want to wait, we're all Thatcher's children".

HT E's perception that pay is important to sustain a certain "*quality of life*" in the "*world we live in"* and thus help retention, is a telling narrative of wider global and societal regard for material wealth (Furlong, 2013). Strongly associated with Margaret Thatcher's government reforms (1979-1990) that promoted the principles of home ownership and material wealth (Joseph, 1984). Not only do Headteachers believe that teachers have internalised such ideas, they recognised "*austerity measures have really impacted on teachers' pay*" (HT U); many of them referencing to declining pay in real terms over the last fifteen years. This they insisted, had elevated the importance of pay in teachers "*mindset*" (HT H) altering and repositioning their teachers' fundamental values and consequent consideration of their career choices. This is directly in contrast to the government narrative surrounding pay policies of the last decade, which maintained a stance that teachers' altruistic motivations were far more important than renumeration *per se*. Ball (2019) suggests, such discourse is promoted by government to reduce and restrict public sector pay and to keep it within certain limits at times of low economic growth. These Heads were certainly aware of its adverse consequences to retention and expressed relief of the Government's intention in the Conservative's manifesto of 2019 of "*a big raise in starting salaries has been mooted … that's been long overdue*" (HT U).

The status attached to pay is significant within modern-day society, particularly how this is equated to a person's 'worth'. As Heads implied, the perceived diminishing levels of teachers' pay, as compared with other professions (Worth et al, 2015) was another "*factor in lowering the status of teachers and their importance within society*"

(HT U). Arguably, it has as Ball (2008) terms it, commodified teachers at a calculable lower worth, less important than some other professions that are pointedly marketed as higher value and status, e.g. Financial Services. Related to the above accounts HT G had this to say:

> *"Pay is a factor in teachers leaving … teaching it's not easy … in my experience they go because they don't feel they are paid enough for the hours they do and the responsibility they have … particularly in the first five years … we've lost quite a few to local businesses"*.

As HT G noted, the effect on teachers within the first five years of teaching was of particular concern, a retention trend extensively documented in statistical data (DfE, 2010-2019). Three Heads, in similar contexts, cited the increasing needs of early career teachers, primarily high living costs in their locations, but also the added pressures and complications of student loans. All of which had "*focussed minds on starting salaries*" (HT D).

An additional factor, was highlighted by HT P.

> *"The pay of teachers, how it works … teachers get stuck on a responsibility point, there's no progression after certain stages and that's made people question their career in teaching. Those who are at the ceiling of UPS 3 and don't want leadership positions, there's nowhere for them to go. I think that's had an impact and its why teachers are leaving"*.

In interview it became increasingly clear that most Heads were utilizing the national pay and conditions structure as outlined in policy (STRB, 2020). This includes parameters for pay on each scale, starting salaries and incremental responsibility

allocations. That said, policy makers maintain that Headteachers working within this structure still have "*considerable financial freedoms*" (DfE, 2013, p 9), particularly academies. Yes, certainly they have freedoms, but only if their budgets allow.

As Andrews (2019) explained, this national pay structure confines teachers' earning capacity within clearly defined hierarchical scales, dependent on levels of leadership responsibility. This effectively devalues those who want to remain in the classroom, or at middle leader responsibility, as patently not all teachers seek promotion and ever-increasing responsibilities, so are thus, as HT P noted, 'forced' to consider other alternatives.

Yet the data illustrates that some school leaders with budgetary capacity are circumventing, or at least re-shaping the national pay structure model to suit their needs.

As HT I said:

> "*We pay more to shortage subjects, I think they expect to be paid more and I think that's accepted by other teachers … they are after all the ones carrying the most responsibility, under the spotlight a lot more than others*".

Like HT I, four other Heads, whose schools are well-funded, described by Greany and Higham (2018) as the 'elite academies', candidly acknowledged and utilised their budgetary positions to address the problems of retention. These Heads openly offered pay incentives to retain and recruit, embracing market principles to secure an ever diminishing commodity and in doing so, circumvent the competition. During interview, they often interjected with justification for such measures "*to improve and protect the pupils in my charge … they are the important ones to me*" (HT E) and

"*you have to do everything you can … let's face it we are in competition … someone's going to lose out somewhere … that's the way things are*" (HT O).

Heads in concurrence which such strategies were sensitive to the moral dilemmas of such practices, but to those who had the budgets and the agentic behaviours to support it through their adeptness, capacity and confidence, it was entirely justified as an acceptable approach to protect their own school. Merendino et al (2018) describe this as 'protectionist centring' as business leaders prioritise their own needs against others, acting in what they see as a necessary strategic manner.

In rather different circumstances, HT Q contended:

> *"It depends on where a school is. Because funding has become so tight, the flexibility we had a few years ago to be creative about pay and retention have been taken away by the necessity of balancing the budget. Ten years ago, I could have done something but I'm not in the position to afford that kind of incentive anymore"*.

What was striking in responses, as HT Q highlighted, was that the historical aspect to retention had changed. Headteachers of academies, generally, had more retentive powers, particularly those benefitting from enhanced pupil funding and government top-up grants, available to *some* but not all academies. Nationally, DfE (2021) data confirms that overall some academies, particularly those in MATs, had the best retention rates with around 6% turnover, as compared to a 21% average turnover within other secondary schools in England.

Aside from the funding inequalities referenced above, there is an additional factor to consider, that of differentiated pay and its effect on some teachers. It was evident

from some participant responses that shortage subjects and their "*best, most outstanding teachers"* (HT K) commanded higher salaries; yet enacting the same role with the same levels of responsibility but delineated by subject and / or performance rating.

This free-market approach, which some Heads have adopted, has created a complicated and multilayered remuneration system, which potentially motivates some teachers but conversely de-motivates others. Contrary to some Heads assertions "*that this is accepted practice"* (HT K), in order to 'win' in the retention crisis such school-led policies, within the current iteration of market reforms, could exacerbate competition between schools, widening the division between those who can pay and those who cannot. Arguably, for these Headteachers, protecting their own patch 'trumps' the benefits to the wider profession, as they contest with other schools in navigating the teacher supply crisis. As a footnote to the above, the substantial increases in teachers starting pay (DfE, 2022) was implemented in September 2023.

4.3.6 Changing attitudes to a career in teaching

Moving on from some of the contextual school factors discussed above and taking a wider view of why teachers are leaving, these school leaders identified the markedly changing attitudes they were experiencing from a growing number of staff, both new and established teachers, who no longer viewed teaching as one that will necessarily be their sole career pathway.

HT E said:

> "*There doesn't seem to be a view that a job is for life anymore. In my experience, teachers don't necessarily see it as a lifelong vocation. It's a*

different world we are living in, around peoples' views, around careers and that's impacted on teachers".

As HT E reflects, today's teachers find themselves in the midst of a career landscape that differs strikingly from the conditions experienced by previous generations, in that they now do not view teaching as being a life-long vocation. Conspicuously, this was endorsed by most of these Headteachers, with surprisingly consistent experiences, whatever their individual contexts and circumstances. Taken together, participants emphasised their teachers were embracing career self-management and looking for ways to enhance their lives, perhaps having several "*switches in career*" (HT G). A marked change in attitude from previous generations, as HT E points out, away from an expectancy of a lifelong occupation.

Such attitudinal changes are strongly linked in literature with the impact of marketization of the public sector and the political discourse that career mobility and flexibility in the workforce was highly desirable (Blair, 2004). Hilton (2017) indicates these have strongly influenced the direction and expectations of employment within society, with new conceptualisations about careers. As the Heads explained, teachers in their schools have been encouraged to "*think of themselves as free agents*" (HT Q), "*to look at all the options*" (HT L) and to "*think 'outside the box'* " (HT O). What was interesting to note in their responses, was the differentiation they made as to STEM subject teachers:

HT K said:

"*I think there's been a big change in attitude to careers in STEM teachers. They have potentially more career paths, in research or other sectors. I've*

lost quite a few STEM teachers who have been drawn into other careers … it's so difficult to compete with what other professions can offer".

The perception that increasing numbers of STEM subject area teachers were taking up other careers is reinforced by statistical data in Teacher Mobility Reports (2019/2020). This epitomises the challenges for schools within a market driven public sector and a greater need in the private sector for well qualified graduates, particularly within STEM subject areas. This has created intense competition both within the education sector itself and more widely in other professions. As Perryman et al (2020) suggests, teachers with a good degree find themselves in an excellent position with many options in the marketplace, having highly developed and readily transferable skills.

The difficulty of competing with other professions exemplifies the combined effect of the pull and push factors involved in retention. The pull of "*higher salaries and enhanced work-life balance*" (HT Q), "*better long-term career plans and a lot more flexible working arrangements*" (HT B) and the push of "*excessive workload and accountability"* (HT C), "*diminishing real term pay*" (HT K) and "*prolonged stress and pressure"* (HT D). The pervasive sense from Headteachers was that they received little support from government to make teaching a more attractive career option in the long term. Indeed, several of them cited examples of how other professions were actively marketed to teachers "*just look at the amount online 'how to get out of teaching' … massively incentivising them to move*" (HT O). HT U added:

"The competition for graduates … it's got worse not better. Some of my best teachers … many long serving … have gone and I don't think will return".

Several Heads in the same context as HT U, located in densely populated urban areas, surrounded by private and public sector organisations, had lost substantial numbers to other careers, with two Headteachers quoting twenty five percent of their teachers exiting "*to other jobs"* (HT K) in the last two years. Many of these teachers, they say, were neither disaffected nor disillusioned, nor were they lacking in commitment and effectiveness, being "*experienced and highly motivated people*" (HT D); they were teachers wanting "*something else with better prospects in the long run"* (HT D).

My data also indicated that a further contributory factor is the changing nature of teacher contracts. HT C stated:

> *"The way we employ teachers … its different to what it used to be. I use a lot more temporary contracts … to help me see if they are right for us and given my financial state, that's sometimes easier. Of course, it works both ways … teachers may not feel the same commitment … they can leave pretty quickly and that's means retention problems again".*

As HT C commented, temporary contracts have some benefits for Headteachers, affording them more time to look at quality and 'fit' as well as addressing budgetary insecurities and being less constrained by contractual law. Such temporary contracts are rarely catalogued in terms of their impact on retention, except for brief references in recent Labour Market Surveys (2019-22), which evidences an increasing proliferation of short-term and temporary contracts in secondary schools but not their impact. My data seems to suggest Headteachers were increasingly using such contracts, as a 'safety net' or a short-term solution to uncertainty, whilst recognising the "*negative effect this has on teachers"* (HT D). As school leaders respond to

market forces, perhaps this is the unintended consequence underpinning the short-term career view discussed earlier, or "*teaching as a steppingstone before they go onto something else*" (HT K). The lack of contractual certainty may well be a factor that modern-day teachers see as 'unaffordable' in today's society, where quality of life depends upon security and tenure of employment.

4.3.7 The prescriptive nature of teaching

Amongst the most insistent responses and repeated narrative from some participants, was that teachers were leaving because of their increasing disenchantment with the changing role within the classroom environment as imposed by policy.

HT D said:

> *"The prescriptive nature of teaching has affected retention; the passion and joy has gone out of it. It's become formulaic, this is what you have to teach, this is how you teach it, this is how you plan a lesson, this is how you plan a scheme. That's taken away the freedom and for some, the enjoyment".*

These Headteachers, without exception, perceived the increasingly prescriptive nature of teaching had demotivated teachers, removing their autonomy within the classroom, stifling their creativity and capacity for innovation. Underpinning responses was the sense that Heads had little control of prescriptive government policies, which had impacted directly on their teachers, inhibiting their freedom to teach and challenging their professional identity. As HT D implied, this has reduced teachers to 'deliverers', with a loss of independence and limiting capacity for decision-making, a view supported and well established in literature (Tomlinson,

2001; Smithers and Robinson, 2003; Gewirtz et al, 2009; Gallant and Riley, 2014; Hargreaves, 2021).

Collectively, the responses detailed much of the prescription referenced above, including implementation of curriculum, the escalating central government control around assessment and the pedagogical discourse around the 'best practice' in teaching (Didau, 2021). How teachers feel about the level of personal control over their work is critical to their core values, idealism and commitment (Day et al, 2007; Hilton, 2017; Allen and Sims, 2018; Doherty, 2020). Such ontological challenges, as these Heads pointed out, are ingrained within education structures, legitimised by policy and unacknowledged by government as an exacerbating force in retention.

4.3.8 Performance management

Another factor raised with some frequency by Heads, was the detrimental effect on teachers of performance management; summarized succinctly by HT Q:

> *"I think it's the imposition of performance management. It's the fear by [sic] teachers that they can work their socks off, but if the kids don't succeed due to a myriad of other variables, they are going to be financially and career-wise worse off. That doesn't incentivise them to get better, work harder and stay in teaching, it doesn't help retention"*.

The understanding from participants was that the multiple variables inherent within these annual assessment regimes had created an unjust system. Measuring teachers 'output' based on national data had become "*the be all and end all of assessing teacher performance*" (HT C), with examination results the key factor, whilst taking little account of other important contributions teachers make.

Conspicuously, Heads offered no apologies during interview as to their total compliance with this particular national policy, even though they acknowledged its pervasive impact on some teachers. "*You don't meddle with things like that, just follow the guidelines"* HT O responded. School leaders agreed they had seen this procedure evolve, becoming more structured and increasingly focussed on examination results. Embedded at the core of managerialism to evaluate capability, this process has impacted with some force on teachers. As HT Q commented above, a system which has a direct influence on teachers' pay and their promotional and career development opportunities, is a very powerful instrument of accountability. This not only undermines teacher professionalism but as Ball and Youdell (2007) suggest, considerably adds to their "*ontological insecurity*" (p 209) within the profession, 'scored' as to their 'productivity' and 'value-adding' capacity.

This is a calculation which challenges teachers idealism and commitment, as noted by HT I:

> *"They come into teaching for all the right reasons, but then the reality kicks in … they have to get the results if they want to progress"*.

This is a good example of the pressures being exerted on school leaders at the macro level, as they have to translate government policy into the context of their school, whilst being seen to be supporting their teachers. School leader responses show they attempt to resolve such dilemmas with passive ambivalence (Greany and Higham, 2018) but in actuality Heads "*didn't want to rock the boat*" (HT H). Without exception, although they expressed concerns around performance management, they assimilated national policy into their

school policies, following procedures to fulfil their legislative responsibilities because as HT H put it "*we have little choice but to do so*".

4.3.9 Wider responsibilities

A strong theme throughout interviews was how the 'wider responsibilities' expected and imposed on teachers, had damaged retention. The notion that teachers are responsible for solving some of wider societal problems elicited strong opinions.

HT K said:

> *"I'm constantly feeling that teachers are being asked to do a lot more than teach … it's always been part of the job but I think it's gained emphasis … we see it daily in the news, that teachers 'can solve' some of bigger issues such as anti-social behaviour … extremism … crime … domestic family problems … it all gets too much and that's when they begin to question, is it worth it?"*.

Heads consistently referred to how teachers 'work' had become more onerous as they were being increasingly directed towards "*personal, social and society's problems*" (HT B). They agreed as to the importance and integral pastoral role teachers have but objected to the concept *"that societal ills can be solved by teachers alone*" (HT C).

Collectively, Heads suggested that teachers enforced role combinations had affected motivation, self-efficacy and job commitment, challenging even the most able, experienced and talented teachers. Some of them attributed this to the diversity and inclusive policy agenda, the demise of special school provision and diminishing social service infrastructure. Many of them lamented that the pressure on teachers to be the

superhuman ‘catch all’ of education was: “*for some it’s just too hard a role to fulfil effectively”* (HT U).

4.3.10 The role of the media

Headteachers’ perceptions on the effect of mainstream and social media was a topic that found a broad consensus as to the damaging effect on retention. Typical of responses was HT K:

> *“Politicians haven’t helped with how they portray teachers. We are constantly being told we are not good enough and that’s really disheartening for teachers. Just today in the papers, there’s more ‘public shaming’ ‘It’s teachers who are at fault’ says the Secretary for Education. That’s made a huge difference in how we are seen and labelled, it’s made a difference to morale … and what happens … teachers leave!”*.

The “*public shaming”*, “*labelling”* and “*not being good enough*” described by HT K does indeed present a negative and unsympathetic portrayal of teachers and is an image difficult to dislodge or refute when senior politicians of the country are messaging it. It sets the tone for criticism from others, the press, the media and parents and at times pupils, as the narratives trickle down. A perception and experience recognised in literature (Woods’, 2001; Day et al, 2007; Beck 2008; Burrow et al, 2020). Headteachers collectively said they had limited options to counter such discourse, which they perceived had affected their teachers’ sense of worth and added considerably to stress levels.

Noticeably, some of these school leaders, in very different contexts, said they considered this public de-valuation had tarnished the image of the profession as a

whole. As HT L explained "*it's a broad brush … high on criticism and low on praise";* a portrayal of one lacking respect and trust with unfair criticism. Underpinning responses was the real fear of adverse publicity on whatever 'platform', even the most experienced Headteachers expressed their significant concerns surrounding their school's public image. This exemplifies how market reforms have affected school leaders and the power and fear of criticism, which would affect their reputation. The competitive nature of education was never more obvious than in this part of the interview. As observed by HT I:

> "*a school's reputation can be easily lost and once that happens, it has serious consequences for the school and for retaining teachers".*

As to the effect of social media, HT G said:

> *"The use of social media to criticise schools and sometimes individual teachers, has become an increasing problem. It's a one-way street … you can't defend yourself and the unfairness of it all, you just lose heart. In my experience social media is damaging teachers, its damaging the profession, its damaging retention".*

A commonly held perception in some literature is that social media has considerably increased in power to influence societal opinions (Fox and Bird, 2017; Kim et al, 2020). As HT G emphasised, it's impossible to counter accusations once in the public domain, as it is largely unregulated and once published it takes on a 'life of its own' and as Ball says (2019) it effectively silences the teacher. These Heads cited the most damaging criticism was in 'posts' by parents which at times were hurtful, untrue and discriminatory, affecting the job satisfaction and morale of their teachers. This

they perceived further lowered the status of teachers in the eyes of the wider public, but also in the eyes of their pupils.

HT B exemplifies:

> "*I've seen the effect that can have … pupils feel they have the upper hand and that's when it gets out of hand … that's so destructive to* [teachers] *confidence and well-being*".

The impact of social media on retention is recognised in recent literature (NEU, 2022) and my data includes some compelling experiences from Headteachers as to its destructive powers on teachers' self-worth. A further development in wider societal trends, which Headteachers imply have engendered further ontological insecurity (Ball, 2006) associated with changing attitudes and constructions of what teachers are and how they are valued. Inevitably, the fermentation of such attitudes (Stevenson et al, 2017) and the perceived lack of control, as these Heads articulated, make this a significant factor suitable for further analysis.

4.3.11 Summary

The responses from Headteachers were notably similar as to their views on recruitment and their questioning as to whether 'the right people' are coming into teaching. Likewise, their negative reflections on bursaries, their concerns as to the quality of routes to train and the gaps in subject knowledge by some recruits. A further consistency was in the impact of constant policy change and the associated increase in teacher workload. Similarly, agreement was evident throughout as to the damage inflicted by the negative portrayal of the profession and the changing nature of teaching. So too their perceptions with regard to changing societal attitudes to

career mobility and its consequent impact on retention. Pay and money incentivisation highlighted the sharp contrast as to the differing ‘positions’ of participant Headteachers, but not of their views. The ‘well-positioned’ academies used their enhanced funding position to prioritize and support retention, however, those with limited resources faced profound challenges.

They differed in their views on surveillance, with only one supportive participant. However, all of them implemented wide-ranging, in-school self-evaluations and ‘mocksteds’, whilst simultaneously acknowledging that such practices added significantly to the pressures on their teachers.

Overall their responses exemplified that retention is a multi-faceted, complex issue and is not a phenomenon with simple causes and solutions.

4.4 Interview question 3: What strategies ‘will work’ to retain teachers?

In this third section of the interview, participants presented their strategies, firstly, for retaining teachers within their own schools and secondly, the profession as a whole.

4.4.1 Meso level strategies

Headteachers described in their responses, their use of many of the strategies already identified and established in literature (for instance: Allen and Sims, 2018; See et al, 2019; Andrews, 2019; Gorard et al, 2022). However, Headteachers also added some further important evolving solutions to retention.

4.4.2 Pay and monetary incentives

On pay and monetary incentives, HT I had this to say:

> "*I really try to keep the teachers we've got. I am often able to promote internally, creating roles and responsibilities that will benefit the children and the teachers. I've also put together some pay initiatives that teachers can apply for, one off payments or longer-term, depending on the project. All of this has made a real difference to retaining our teachers*".

The very positive sense in HT I's account was one almost exclusively reiterated in interview by Headteachers of well positioned academies. Collectively, they described a significant level of initiatives to retain their teachers, based almost exclusively on monetary incentivization. This should come as no surprise, considering these Heads receive some of the highest per-pupil funding allocations in England, benefitting from new building programmes and numerous other funding streams within academization. Two schools benefitted even further as they were sponsored by multi-national businesses. These two Headteachers explained in some detail the retention policies they had developed, with a frank openness as to "*the business we are in"* (HT E) and their success in "*keeping <u>their</u> teachers*" (HT C). From my perspective, these school leaders exuded confidence and were clearly highly motivated to promoting their own schools' self-interest. Undoubtedly, their organisational and advantageous financial capacity has enabled them to adopt such strategies.

Schools with limited financial resources also utilised monetary incentives, but in very different ways. As HT O explained:

> "*We target monetary incentives at the teachers most at risk of leaving us. It's the reality of what we are up against, if you want to keep high quality teachers you have to do something, especially in STEM subjects*".

This response illustrates the viewpoint of several Heads in challenging budgetary circumstances, even though some are academized, they 'struggle' to retain their best teachers, particularly in shortage subjects. This group expressed genuine concerns regarding money "*because we have very little of that*" (HT H). Being acutely aware of competition from other schools and high-paying alternative occupations, they have to "*think creatively"* explained HT D. In contrast, these Heads had a more selective tone to incentivisation, choosing to reward their best teachers and shortage subject teachers. As discussed previously, the consequences were not lost on Headteachers, as HT B explained:

> "*you work with what you have … it may upset people but it's sometimes what you have to do".*

Participants in this study are united in their use of monetary incentives; only their implementation and the amount of money differs. Notably, money incentivisation is a contentious issue in literature, being seen as an ad hoc, informal and an unregulated pay structure (Day et al, 2014; Doherty, 2020) and teacher unions have been highly critical of it (NEU, 2022). In their responses these Heads recognised the inequity, yet many of them resolutely rejected the concept that such incentives were divisive or unprincipled. In their view, it encompassed encouragement and motivation, citing the benefits to their schools and in sustaining growth of the workforce in the profession as a whole.

Conspicuously, these Headteachers have embraced market principles within their retention strategies, aligning themselves to promoting, paying and incentivising, to retain teachers. Such strategies underpin how those in education leadership have

absorbed "*the culture of managerialism*" (Beckmann et al, 2009, p 40), framing their thoughts and actions with a shift in organizational strategies to align with a competitive business model.

4.4.3 Filtering policy

Moving on to a further school based strategy, HT E added:

> *"We know the amount of change has an impact on teachers … we filter a lot of the stuff coming from the DfE, we take time to properly introduce new initiatives and give people the time and the support to embed them. That's made a difference to their workload and if it doesn't work for us and the children, then it goes"*.

Without exception, all participants echoed the sentiments included in HT E's response. They all attempted to filter policy (but not ignore it), to implement initiatives in a timely fashion, trying to keep workload manageable and to do this for the wellbeing and job satisfaction of their teachers. Many of them perceived their 'filtering' role as a key priority in their leadership and recognised the obvious tensions of their 'middle' position. Reading between the lines, Headteachers attempt here to meld two potentially incompatible forces, government policy reform and teacher workload. As HT C reflected:

> "*you have to work at it, keep up the praise and build trust … make sure you are making an impact that teachers can see is supporting them*".

As this recognises, building trust and meaningful relationships with their teachers, *seen* to be supporting them actively, prioritising what was important, was key to their strategies to retain teachers.

As HT E implied this is a challenge which requires considerable skill in compromise and at times, measured resistance. This was most obvious when school leaders talked about re-appropriating and repackaging policy reforms to "*make them manageable … and acceptable to staff*" (HT P). I suggest this serves to illustrate the challenges for school leaders as they seek to balance their teachers' well-being and workload within the macro context of policy. It is questionable as to how much 'filtering' can be realistically enacted, when Heads are under intense pressure to improve Ofsted judgements, examination results and their schools' status and financial standing, in addition to their legislative responsibility to implement the policies. A challenge, as Gunter (2016) found, which can *"create personal, professional and ethical dilemmas*" (p 127) for school leaders; a perception that underpinned responses of a majority of Headteachers in this case study.

4.4.4 High quality CPD

A further strategy was the benefits of high quality CPD, HT U said:

> *"It's crucial that teachers get high quality CPD … if you don't support and train them, they'll fall behind and that leads to low job satisfaction. In my school it's an entitlement at all stages of their careers ... it's planned to add new skills and knowledge. Retaining teachers is about training them"*.

Typically, the emphasis from most participants, as HT U exemplifies, is the importance of CPD, which keeps teachers developing and improving "*their skills and knowledge"* (HT U). Some Headteachers enthusiastically described the CPD implemented in their schools to raise self-confidence and self-esteem of their teachers, albeit within a framework of training to meet individual and whole school

needs. The "*entitlement*" as HT B termed it, included such things as coaching, mentoring, reflection and communities of good practice, all of which receive ample praise in effective leadership literature (Fuller, 2019; Doherty, 2020).

Underpinning their positivity around CPD, was also the need to focus on improving teachers' examination results; the pressure for improving standards, never far away, which cannot be separated from the CPD implemented in these schools. As Ball (2003) notes, the continuous training model of teachers is part of the impact of managerialism on education practice, encompassing performance and improvement. The overall discourse is teachers (and Headteachers) have to perform better, to improve, to invest in themselves, to develop their job expertise. The pros of CPD and its impact on retention was evident in participants' responses but literature suggests this can be a negative, if not genuinely tied to supporting professional growth (for instance: Hargreaves, 2012; Allen and Sims, 2019). As Headteachers in this study argued, meeting standards and encouraging commitment and ownership of expertise and knowledge "*was entirely possible"* (HT K) whilst serving the needs of the school as a whole.

4.4.5 The benefits of multi-academy trusts

Headteachers of academies within MATs commented on the varied benefits of their collaborative structures. HT I:

> *"I think the benefits of working with several schools in our MAT has helped retention, we can see opportunities for teachers to move in within our schools. That offers them different opportunities"*.

As cited by HT I and reiterated by three other participants, all in different MATs and locations, a key goal for all of them was to affect the longer-term retention of teachers, to "*stabilise their schools*" (HT P). They formalised this through a series of inter-school and MAT-wide policies on monetary incentives, training for succession, mentoring and shared resource development. They typically partnered teachers across their schools' network to enhance 'community and MAT solidarity' and deliberately included a weekly "*review of retention"* (HT L) within leadership meetings. It came across strongly from these four Headteachers, that retention was a key focus for them and their respective CEO's; a purposefully driven agenda, conspicuously absent from discussion with other participant Headteachers in this study. The agency of individual Headteachers and their capacity to make an impact, their 'can do' attitude is clearly of some pertinence to retention.

These four Heads perceived such strategic direction had "*paid dividends*" (HT K) encouraging individuals to stay in their wider MAT organisation. As numbers reported in their questionnaire evidence, their strategies have met with success in comparison with others in this study. They have reduced the mobility of teachers to other professions and to other schools outside of their MAT.

Collectively they implied it 'muted' the competitive elements between schools, as they worked for the "*good of the whole*" (HT P) and the language used by these four Heads was markedly devoid of references to the competitive elements referred to in previous questions. Instead, they suggested considerable cohesion within their academy chains, readily acknowledging they were "*protecting their own patch*" (HT L), effectively making 'gated communities'. Arguably, when centres of power are distributed through multiple different institutions, the more 'well positioned' sections

will fight their corner (Gray, 2023). These particular Heads in MATs have used their collaborative ethos to benefit themselves, a perspective encouraged and nurtured within managerialism, as schools and MATs are in competition for teachers with others. The MAT approaches to include "*shared improvement*" (DfE, 2010, p 3) mean some individual MATs have developed formal policies to enhance their staffing positions and in doing so, have moved 'competition' to another level. With considerable "*freedoms*" (DfE, 2016, p 40) such groupings, as the four participants evidenced, have benefitted from their collective strength.

4.4.6 Macro level strategies

Moving on to wider perceptions within the national context, HT C had this to say:

> "*I think government have to change their attitude to how policy is implemented. As governments change, their priorities change, they have to make an impact, decisions made, then reversed, it's all a bit shambolic. Government also have to include educationalists in policy making … that doesn't seem to happen much"*.

The response above illustrates the views of many Heads in this study, expressing in strong terms the need for a change in attitude of government, away from a model of constant change, towards one which offers continuity and stability. The political time span HT C emphasises is an important point; policies made within a tenure of government with pressure to be *seen* to be reforming, is arguably counterproductive to the strategic long-term plans envisioned as important by school leaders in this study.

The overriding sense from participants was they were in constant policy response mode, modelling and remodelling strategies and priorities from central government. There was little doubt that these have placed great strain on Headteachers, especially those in challenging circumstances, those with less experience, or with limited senior management support. Their responses illustrated the tensions around who makes policy, who is consulted and who actually has to do the implementation. On this point, HT L added:

"*I've never once been asked for my views on retaining teachers".*

Given that this Head is held in very high esteem within the educational community as a whole, I found this statement astonishing and particularly illuminating as to governmental attitude. Participants in this study felt they had little influence in the creation or maintenance of policy, although several of them wanted to be engaged with policy formation, even at a local level. Whilst it is true that the DfE have hosted symposia to elicit views of Headteachers, the uptake of their ideas appears, from their perspective of these participants, to be very limited. Interestingly, all of the Heads involved in this study said that one of the main reasons they were so enthusiastic to 'enrol' in this research was their lack of 'presence' in policy discussion.

Their perceptions as to the 'communication void' with government, can perhaps be regarded as a confirmation of a marked lack of trust in school leaders, potentially as policy makers 'see' Headteachers as being part of the problem, not the solution. Certainly Heads in this case study felt their 'front line' knowledge and experience was undervalued. A 'government knows best' discourse has reduced meaningful consultative measures to often 'token gestures' of inclusion, backgrounded with

occasional public criticism of school leaders emanating from government e.g. "*not doing enough to retain our best teachers*" (McCarthy et al, 2022, no page).

Linked specifically with retention, was the view that a long-term strategic development plan was required. HT D:

> *"We need a long-term plan. Government really haven't addressed retention, its 'bracketed' it with recruitment but policy for retention just seems piecemeal and reactive. Too many pilots, projects, patching things up with monetary incentives … it's all got very difficult to navigate, even for people attuned to the system. We need a plan, with a co-ordinated and strategic focus on retention"*.

As this Head explained, much of the policy focus has centred on recruitment, only recognising retention as an issue in the *'Recruitment and Retention Policy'* (DfE, 2019). As HT D reflects, even those at the centre of it all have found it difficult to embrace and accommodate changes which 'patch things up' rather than build a co-ordinated plan.

Notably, the majority of participants expressed deep concerns about the "*Recruitment and Retention Policy"* (DfE, 2019) as to its quality, long-term effectiveness, being devoid of sustainable solutions and absence of practicalities, without any real intent to solve the issue. These Headteachers made a strong case, suggesting it was a document to transfer responsibilities for retention onto schools and Headteachers, rather than a policy plan for solving the problem.

The need to address retention through long-term policy planning is not a new idea (See et al, 2020) but is one that will require a response which only can be described

as a ‘leap of faith’. Given the discussion by Heads in this study and the actions seen to date, this is a highly optimistic view. A further thought from one of the most experienced Heads: HT K:

> *“It needs a separate body to government to review education and the issues like retaining teachers, it can be done, but it needs thinking about strategically, on another level to the current modus operandi”*.

An interesting element to their deliberations was the point made by this Headteacher, that a separate body would address the problems previously outlined. A development, I argue, that may be at risk of just another paper exercise, contributing to the problems rather than solving them. Certainly, Heads strongly suggested education policy needs to be separated from the politics, with a decoupling of education from the political cycle to enable continuity. A recurring perspective which is rooted arguably from the effects felt by Headteachers of the macro level government policy control; nevertheless, school leaders were adamant that a system wide change was necessary to combat the retention problem. One of the strongest and most illustrative responses was from HT L:

> *“The ‘business as usual’ will not do, we need a new approach to retaining teachers, we need to challenge the failings and we need to have the necessary reform to tackle it and achieve a sustainable workforce. That’s got to come from government, from Heads, from CEOs of MATs, from our unions and from individuals in the profession to actually drive a whole change agenda. Not as it is currently, piecemeal and reactive”*.

Headteachers were without exception ‘at one’ with HT L; to resolve retention, change and reform was crucial at all of the levels within education. This is not retention in isolation, but part of a cohesive system-wide resolution spanning different levels, from macro policy to the meso practice within schools and the micro level development of individuals. For such a transformation to occur, it will require government to considerably reassess their current direction on further market reforms and adopt a more inclusive and visionary stance; one I suggest not easily achieved within current conditions of marketization and managerialism.

4.4.7 Summary

Headteachers’ strategies were significantly influenced by their contexts and their financial resources. What came across powerfully was the advantageous position of some of the Headteachers of academies within MATs, which used their collective strength to facilitate greater retentive opportunities, reducing teacher mobility and effectively negating the competition for teachers from other schools and professions. Their testimony differed to that of the other Heads, as they combined their sheer determination with that of their beneficial funding in order to succeed.

The striking consistency within participant responses was their perceptions and experiences regarding monetary incentives. *All* of them suggested strategies using pay ‘worked’ in retention; the difference between them was only in the amounts of money they could offer. They also consistently discussed their attempts to filter policy initiatives and how in doing so, it helped retention. There was accord between all participants that a co-ordinated, national, long term-plan for retention needed to be developed. Unanimously they wanted to be involved at the policy-making level, to be part of the process not solely recipients of policy dictates.

Overall, Headteachers agreed that high-quality CPD was important for retention. However, it was some school leaders in academies within MATs that emphasised their ability to provide high-quality CPD provision and its tangible benefit to retention. It was again conspicuous that those in other schools were less ebullient in discussion about their strategic capacity to provide high quality CPD.

4.5 Interview question 4: What has been the impact of the pandemic on retention and what will the future hold?

In this, the final section of interview, participants gave their perceptions and experiences of the Coronavirus pandemic, its impact on retention and their views as to the future. Their circumstances at that time, living with and through such a virulent global contagion, are unprecedented in modern Britain and schools were faced with multiple challenges, operating throughout a long period of considerable uncertainty and instability (Fotheringham, 2021; Thomson et al, 2021). At the time of writing and to the best of my knowledge, very little research has been carried out as to the effects of the pandemic on Headteachers and retention, particularly as witnessed at such close quarters by school leaders in this study. Their responses reflect their dilemmas, the often daily and sometimes hourly decisions they had to make and the complexities their teachers faced, operating as they were within a learning resource duality, where schools were simultaneously required to provide continual tuition and pastoral care to pupils within both at-home and in-school settings.

4.5.1 Policy and decision making

From the outset, these Headteachers were overwhelmingly highly critical of government emergency policies, describing them as changeable, chaotic and incoherent. HT H had this to say:

"Government handling of this will not help retention, it's been shambolic decision making from the word go and that's had an effect on teachers at all levels. I've never heard so many teachers talk about going".

Throughout Heads' responses was a real sense of frustration as to the barrage of policy initiatives regarding closure, opening, testing, tracking and educative 'advice' on home and school learning. They cited these as being frequently contradictory and inconsistent, with often "*about-face*" (HT P) and last-minute instructions. School leaders perceived this had considerably added to central control by government with further layers of intervention, as HT D succinctly put it:

"*I'm on the 'front line' implementing decisions I've no control of … teachers don't feel control of … it's not good".*

The perception from Heads was that neither they, nor their teachers were trusted, they were not party to decisions, nor were they "*worthy to have a view*" (HT E). All of which they thought would have a forceful impact on retention. This was not the only layer of increasing intervention; as HT O explained:

"With all that's been happening, I just feel the MAT leadership haven't helped. I've been getting instructions from government, instructions from the MAT, too many instructions and not enough support … and that's affected the morale of teachers and it will affect retention".

Interestingly, the MAT structure had received some praise earlier in discussion by some Headteachers, yet a different group, strongly perceived their MATs as a hindrance, imposing a further layer of control, which they complied with, but were critical of. Contextually, in very different circumstances from the first 'well positioned'

group, they complained about the lack of tangible support "*it's just not there*" (HT B) and their perceived separation from MAT leadership decisions "*the CEO's only interested in data, not how the staff feel"* (HT H); an interesting correlation with their perceptions and experiences of Ofsted inspection. Some of this latter group also drew attention to their lack of financial freedoms to "*reward staff who had gone the extra mile*" (HT H) and "*just being able to act quickly to encourage teachers to stay has been lost*" (HT B). Collectively, they described a widening gap with their MAT management teams as "*they have just distanced themselves"* (HT O). This groups' responses show such measures had 'flowed down' to teachers, adding to their insecurities and their feelings of disconnect with the profession and ultimately, their potential retention, as different macro, meso and micro factors interconnected.

4.5.2 The mental health of teachers

Overall it appears from Heads' perspectives that they were most concerned about the mental health of teachers during this far from 'normal' period. As exemplified by HT G:

> *"This has probably been the worst experience for many teachers at all levels. I think mental health in teaching at the moment has never been so low, that's affected how they view teaching and their personal life priorities"*.

As HT G pointed out, teachers had been subjected to considerably heightened pressures, affecting their mental health. Collectively, Headteachers said significant proportions of their teachers struggled with "*work related stress and change fatigue"* (HT I) and reflected: "*the disruption, in school and in their home lives has been devastating for some"* (HT L). Almost two thirds of them described their teachers

were finding it difficult to think clearly and work through problems, with "*most just about surviving but some sinking*" (HT O). HT U had particular concerns:

> *"It's created extra pressures and concerns around illness. I've got about fifteen teachers who are off sick and some of that is around mental anxieties and the fear attached to Covid. Four of my most able teachers have refused to come back into school … they are terrified and who can blame them? … that's going to affect retention".*

As HT U recognised, teachers had become fraught with anxiety around personal health and so 'terrified' they refused to be in school. Such responses were repeatedly referenced as a common and recurring circumstance: *"I think the stress has increased for teachers … you can see it"* (HT O) and *"it's got too much for some"* (HT I). Headteachers also viewed the decision by government *not* to prioritise the vaccination of teachers as a clear signal of their low status, as other professions (or 'key workers') were selected. School leaders expressed little surprise that teachers were re-evaluating their life priorities and looking at their teaching career differently. Notably, little attention was paid to such difficulties, either in the press or by government sources, with no tangible support for the mental health issues affecting teachers. This 'well-being' issue as Heads intimated, was a perception noted in the work of Allen et al (2020), Brady and Wilson (2021) and Worth (2023) who all suggest the concerns around the mental health of teachers could be a future threat to retention.

4.5.3 Workload

A further negative effect on teachers was the considerable increase in their workloads due to the pandemic. HT Q stated:

> "*Teachers are struggling with the workload … the expansion of online learning has made a difference … teachers had already prepared but then had to start doing something different. It's been challenging for those already struggling with the amount to do … that's going to affect retention I think".*

The development of online tuition delivery, although not new, added to what Headteachers have already said around workload. They discussed its compound effect on their teachers, the speed with which the requisite preparatory work had to be completed and the sometimes incompatible nature of subject matter to online learning. This latter item particularly applies to 'practical' subjects, as one Head responded: HT O:

> "*teaching Design and Technology online, just does not work*".

Heads explained an added problem: HT P:

> *"some teachers haven't the skills … so lots of CPD has been done, all remotely, which hasn't always been successful*".

They perceived that online tuition was an anathema to many of their teachers, both philosophically and in practical terms, requiring *"a new skill-set that some teachers have no empathy with*" (HT K). A further impact was noted by HT C: "*This way of working has eroded the relationships in the classroom"* and as Thomson et al (2021) explained, has distanced teachers from the most rewarding part of the job. It also in a wider sense, as Heads implied, suggests that teachers have become technicians of

on-line lessons, devaluing their classroom presence; a factor written about extensively by Ball (2006 and 2008) although not in this particular context. As to the government initiative in the provision of a national data-base of some 40,000 online lessons as ready-made resources, Headteachers cynically thought these added to workload rather than helped it, HT K suggesting:

> "*someone in government thought this was a good idea … to put them in a good light … 'helping staff and students' … it hasn't*".

4.5.4 Impact on teachers

In the light of the responses above, Headteachers were most concerned about the impact of this situation on their experienced teachers. HT U reflected:

> "*In all of this, I've found some of my experienced teachers have been affected the most … it's really impacted on them … only yesterday in conversation, three middle leaders and one of my senior team have mentioned leaving".*

The perception of "*experienced teachers feeling the worst of the pandemic"* (HT C) came across strongly from Heads and their obvious concerns, goes back to the discussion earlier about the 'stability' that experienced teachers give a school and the Head. They added, such departures will increase the competition between schools for teachers at varying levels of responsibility and exacerbate the existing retention problems.

On early career stage teachers, HT H added a further perspective:

> *"Some of my youngest teachers … they're the ones who are staying because of the way things are currently … it's a convenient and a secure job … I*

question whether they will still be here in three to five years' time and that means we will be in the same position with retention".

Interestingly*, all* interview participants reported in their original questionnaire that significant numbers of early career teachers were already leaving pre-pandemic. One Head was particularly affected and reflected for some time in interview on this point, discussing misgivings regarding motivation, commitment and longevity of those who "*see it as a convenient career*" (HT H). The concerns around early career teachers leaving is well documented in literature (Sims et al, 2017; Doherty, 2020; Perryman and Calvert, 2020); thus, as HT H questioned, will these be the teachers who continue the leaving cycle of the past? In the light of HT H's questioning, data shows the number of early career stage teachers leaving slowed during the pandemic, with a slight improvement in those staying after two years in post (SWS, England, 2022).

4.5.5 The positives to retention

In the midst of the above concerns, Heads then talked about the positives for retention. They were palpably relieved around government's suspension of inspection and performance ranking protocols. HT D said:

"I am relieved government dropped inspection and league tables. I think for a lot of Heads and for teachers that would have just about put the lid on it. Imagine being inspected? That would have increased stress and pressure and affected retention, no doubt about it".

As HT D pointed out, the pressures of constant change, coupled with uncertainty and instability, inspection would indeed have "*put the lid on it"*. Given that inspection and results have been a constant part of education, the suspension of such measures,

particularly for the four whose scheduled inspections were due that term, was warmly welcomed: "*I've been able to concentrate on what matters most*" (HT E). It was obvious in interview that Heads felt at least this was a decision that helped them 'operationally' but they were under no illusions, this was a temporary reprieve only, a notional pause until "*normal service is resumed*" (HT H). They emphasised the positive reception such announcements had made to their teaches; an important "*boost to morale*" (HT K) enabling teachers to concentrate on "*their pupils, their lessons, their work without the fear of Ofsted looming over them*" (HT L). Interestingly, nearly all Heads followed this by suspending 'in school' monitoring, as HT E explained:

> "*we are focussing on the children, making sure they are ok, not ticking boxes … we all have more than enough to do … I know my teachers are doing everything they can … that's enough for me"*.

Headteachers perceptions on lockdown restrictions and employment uncertainty, addressed some interesting ideas about their 'positive' effect on retention: HT P:

> *"I think it* [the pandemic] *will help retention. People still see teaching as a secure job and with everything up in the air, I think job security and pay security will win out"*.

In the context of 'lockdown' uncertainty, the opportunities for teachers to be 'mobile' were significantly curtailed, with several Heads reporting a suspension of adverts and interviews and actively encouraging teachers to stay; HT G:

> "*within the stable environment, with students they know and staff they know … I've said to staff its not a good time to move"*.

As HT P said above, the majority of school leaders thought teacher job and pay security would have particular relevance in the pandemic and post pandemic, that is if recession resulted in less career opportunities available for teachers to pursue. Historically, teaching has been less prone to market fluctuations but clearly the possibility exists that teachers' pay and job security may not be as stable nor as secure as it used to be. As potentially, premises and utilities costs rise, this will impact on the fiscal resources available for Headteachers, for teachers pay and jobs.

Moving on to their daily experiences, HT B:

> "*I've seen a real change in attitude from some … it's been a real 'war time' effort. I've seen a lot more support for one another and that's been good to see. I must say as well, I've felt on a personal basis, that staff understand the pressures I'm under and have upped their support. That's been the upside of this awful time and that might make a difference to retention"*.

After only a term in post, before 'lockdown' commenced, HT B spoke with some emotion about the support referenced above with various examples of increased camaraderie and team-work. Other Heads also highlighted the importance they attached to their personal support; HT L:

> "*it's been rewarding to have the backing and trust of staff … sometimes that's been missing in the past*".

Drawing on their effective leadership training, Heads recognised the obvious advantages in their teachers re-energisation, team-building and *"the commitment of staff"* (HT C). They felt this change had renewed teachers' motivations, reverting back to the "*old values*" (Hargreaves, 2003, p 476) of working with others for the benefit of

their students, their colleagues and the school. A change of focus from measuring teachers' performance to recognising their wider importance.

In tandem with the above, Heads talked about the strengthening links with their community; HT E:

> *"I think the pandemic has had a big effect on how we work within our community, even today we're going out delivering food parcels. That's had a positive effect on teachers about what matters most … connecting with families and those positives will help retain teachers I think*".

The importance of connecting with a school's community has always been an important focus for all Headteachers. As indicated earlier, parents as the 'customer' in the business of schools are highly prized and this intervention from HT E in delivering food parcels, provided a strong connector to those who hold funding power. That said, the underlying sentiments from HT E were about helping those most in need in difficult times, certainly with altruistic and laudable intentions. Some Heads echoed again the return to 'what matters most' articulating the importance of teachers' relationships with families and its potentially positive effect on retention. Heads explained: "*parents have been a lot more positive towards us … they can see the efforts we are making"* (HT U) and "*teachers feel more appreciated … if that positivity remains, that will help retention"* (HT C).

A welcome change participants agreed, that in the highly charged circumstances of the pandemic, an increased public appreciation of teachers had positively affected their job satisfaction. This combined with an associated improvement in morale had potentially increased the likelihood of their teachers remaining in the profession in the

future. Underpinning their responses was the perception of what has been lost from teaching, including high status and respect within society, teachers sense of worth and their value and job satisfaction.

4.5.6 Summary

These Headteachers were unanimously critical of national policy interventions which they described as shambolic, last minute, chaotic and incoherent. This had created for all of them heightened tensions and a lack of clarity, considerably adding to their and their teachers' stress levels. Some Heads of academies were critical of the decisions made at MAT level, viewing it as just a further layer of control and constraint, also sensing a lack of support from management teams and CEOs.

A distinctly differing position was taken by some of the most experienced Heads in this study, who extolled the benefits of their MATs whilst actively supporting other Heads within their partnerships was a strong element in interview. Most consistent was the perception by all Headteachers of the declining mental health of their teachers aligned to stress, fatigue and family anxieties; a real concern for their future retention.

Regarding the positives, the majority of Headteachers expressed relief regarding the cessation of Ofsted inspection and league tables, saying this gave them and their teachers the opportunities to concentrate on what, in their words, was really important.

Perceptions as to whether the pandemic would help or hinder retention in the future, elicited some strong reactions and very different positions. Those Heads who thought it would help retention, were predominantly in well positioned schools with well-

established staffing cohorts. Those who thought it would exacerbate the retention problem were Heads across all contexts, pessimistically they suggested this would affect the wider profession in the long-term.

4.6 Discussion on the findings

This chapter has presented how retention is perceived and experienced by thirteen secondary Headteachers, through their responses to four main interview questions. The data, compiled from these participants, literature and other statistical sources, initially illustrated in my diagram '*Retention: untying the knot'* shows that Headteachers are being subjected to a myriad of factors, from different sources; permeating from policy to practice, some 'joined up', some separate, but all are part of an intertwined, sinuous and complex 'knot'. The diagram, by synchronising the components of marketization, managerialism and career mobility within the macro, meso and micro levels conceptualises how they all work together in multiple ways, an assemblage of factors impacting on retention. It has structured and justified my approach to analysing retention within the complex education system we have today in England.

This leads me to several discussion points around current policy, the practices of Headteachers and for future research.

The most dominant reason in responses from participants for retaining teachers, was that they provided 'added value' in achieving enhanced examination results. Yes, Headteachers discussed stability, experience and other unquantifiable influences, but never far away was the underpinning and fundamental benefits retention brings to a school's success. From my perspective, the Heads were all focussed on their

institutional betterment: one based on a cycle of retaining the best teachers, which aids higher pupil examination attainment, which ultimately equates to improved or higher Ofsted judgements. This in turn attracts parental selection, which increases or maintains pupil numbers and thus generates more income to retain the best teachers and completes the cycle, which then starts again. All of which makes complete sense if you have the wherewithal to support such a process, but as outlined above, not all schools are equal, having widely differing contextual circumstances and some having limited capacity to address retention; in these instances, the cycle described above breaks down.

My findings show that the majority of participant Headteachers ultimately believe that they have only limited control over retaining teachers. They talked extensively about policy impacting upon them and their staff; with teachers leaving because of constant policy change, workload, accountability, pay, status, lack of autonomy and surveillance. Headteachers imply in their perceptions and experiences, they themselves have lost some autonomy and have become ‘agents’ or ‘conduits’ (Ball, 2019) tasked with the implementation of government policy, but not its formation, content or direction and this is a significant factor in their capacity to retain teachers.

Headteachers, whilst critical of policy, conspicuously exhibited total compliance, being unwilling, or unable, to rebel against the directives. Instead, they brokered, mediated, reappropriated, buffered, filtered and ‘window dressed’ policies as, in their words, “*this is what we have to do*” (HT P). Examples of this are reiterated throughout responses, but their views surrounding Ofsted inspection were most prominent. To prepare for inspection these school leaders felt compelled to devise their own, often onerous, in-school monitoring practice runs to evidence performance, adding further

layers of surveillance and a never-ending programme of scrutiny of their teachers. In my view, a genuine problem for their retention, as they are studied from every angle, impinging on their self-esteem, confidence and job satisfaction. This embodies the pressures of a top-down surveillance regime and how government has used accountability to coerce school leaders into acting in a certain way. Conspicuously, during the pandemic, when inspections were paused, school leaders 'went back to basics' with many of them referring to renewed purpose, enthusiasm and professional and community values, away from their 'business' practice norms, towards the educational principles of, in their words, what matters most. From the data, the impact of reducing surveillance was a markedly positive change in the retention equation and should be an explicit consideration for future policy.

The findings further illustrate that school funding is a central dynamic in retaining teachers. All school leaders used money in their bid to keep their best teachers, but that is where the similarity ends. Those who were 'well positioned', benefitting from several funding streams, were markedly more successful in retaining teachers, using their greater resources to enhance working conditions and pay. The ethos and capacities of Headteachers within such contexts clearly further embraces the principles within managerialism, running their 'business' to maximum efficiency with the aim to improve the 'product' namely, strengthened pupil outcomes. They repeatedly emphasised 'protecting their own patch' with, in my view, the ultimate aim of maintaining or improving their 'position' in school hierarchy and league tables. Headteachers emphasised, *some* academies were also successfully collaborating within their individual MATs to retain their best teachers, most frequently those in smaller groups and close geographical proximity. Yet again 'protecting their own

patch' by overtly rewarding their teachers with money, particularly the shortage subjects, whilst also developing and enhancing career opportunities within their group. A point I argue, which may help retention in *some* schools but what of others and the profession as a whole?

Participants in other schools characteristically were less fortunate recipients within the funding formula and in locations with intense competition for teachers with other schools and / or other professions. These had few resources at their disposal to attract and retain teachers. What I did find significant, was that often these schools were located in suburbs on the fringes of, but outside the deprivation funding zones, with historically poor reputations (reinforced by prior Ofsted judgements) and with a high attrition rate of teachers leaving. These schools perceived they were essentially trapped, in their words, "*in a cycle we can't get out of*" (HT D) in retaining teachers; an inequity repeatedly substantiated in their responses. Arguably, this imbalance is inherent within and driven by the neo-liberal policies of market reforms within the educational system as whole. A circumstance that will surely only increase if current policy continues, leading to a widening of the gap between those who have the means to retain and those who do not, a situation conveniently overlooked by policy makers.

Regarding career mobility, Headteachers were clear on its impact on retention. They say teaching is not seen by some as a career for life and for many teaching provides an excellent grounding and accessibility to other careers. Influenced by the wider societal trends discussed previously, the variety of opportunities for graduates and the increasing demands exerted from 'market-forces' onto a limited resource of graduates, has amplified the problem. This arguably is something that will continue to

impinge upon the profession, until such time as either societal regard for teachers and that of their pay and working conditions markedly improves.

In terms of the changing *modus operandi* of teaching, the data suggests it is the very nature of the work itself that some find unpalatable. The prescriptive dictates of policy has deprived teachers of the creativity, spontaneity and ability to innovate, namely the facets of the role that attracted and motivated some to enter the profession in the first instance. From this, their diminished autonomy and limited input in the decision-making process, has resulted in little personal control over their day-to-day working life. Clearly linked to national policy, as argued by Ball (2019), the role of the teacher has undergone a massive transformation, with a shift from professionalisation to that of a low-status 'technocrat'. There were certainly instances in the data pointing to the mismatch of teachers' expectations of their role and the reality of teaching.

As stated previously, this study differs significantly from other research into retention by drawing on a relatively unexplored source, through Headteachers' perceptions and experiences of the problem. A lens which recognises the importance of seeing both sides of the issue, simultaneously engaging, as Heads do, with teachers on a personal level and yet arguably also as 'outsiders' observing the multiple factors involved. It also takes account of their pivotal role and their struggles, striving to retain a high quality workforce whilst having the responsibility to implement policy and 'balance the books'. They confirm that many of the factors identified in literature surrounding retention remain, however, they supplement these by giving further insight and broader perspectives as to the inherent problems following continual policy change.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented my conceptualisation of retention through my diagram '*Retention: untying the knot'* illustrating the substantial and important connections for the retention of teachers within marketization, managerialism and mobility and the interconnecting macro, meso and micro levels, inspired by the work of Peter Woods. I have presented Headteachers' perceptions and experiences through four main interview questions: what retention means to them, the challenges within working conditions and wider societal changes, the strategies and tactics they deploy to retain teachers and their views of the future.

Throughout the discussion this chapter has demonstrated the personal, professional and ethical dilemmas of school leaders as they seek to balance macro policy with the well-being and job satisfaction of their teachers. Embedded in responses is their overriding commitment to their own schools, their students and their teachers. Also embedded is the varying capacity of school leaders to respond to the retention challenges, inescapably linked to funding and context, which emphasise the inequities within which schools are operating.

It has presented a complex and multifaceted retention phenomenon, flowing from macro policy by successive governments, cascading to the meso level of institutional implementation and ultimately, the micro individual. It demonstrates the personal, idiosyncratic nature of retaining teachers and the ongoing failure to secure a stable and thriving workforce. The next chapter presents my conclusions in response to my three research questions. Its contribution to research, proportionate to the scale of the study and the qualitative focus on thirteen school leaders' experiences are

explored. Finally, it addresses how further future research would build on this specific study.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This thesis has explored the challenges of retaining teachers from the perspective of secondary school Headteachers within the West Midlands region of England, comprising a two-stage qualitative approach. Firstly, a brief online survey with twenty-five Headteachers to provide an overview of the problems. Secondly, the main focus of data collection, through semi-structured in-depth interviews with thirteen of these participants.

In this chapter I identify and discuss my key conclusions from the data and the implications that stem from these within my research questions. I address what significant contribution I believe my work makes to the current understanding in this field and based on the foundations of this study, identify potential areas for future research.

As a case study, it was built from the ‘bottom up’, emphasising the importance of local settings and differing school contexts. Throughout the research, my focus has been exploratory and concerned with the feelings, perceptions and the lived experiences of Headteachers; the word perception is crucial within the context of this case study. The value being in their perceptions, feelings and their experiences, which offer a better understanding and reflection upon the factors involved. What became clear during my research is that there is no single fixed view of the teacher ‘retention crisis’ by these Headteachers, no single ‘truth’ to publish, no easy panacea or ‘magic bullet’ to recommend as a solution within this complex and multifaceted phenomenon.

My background and understanding of the role and challenges of a secondary school Headteacher, enabled empathetic engagement with these school leaders on a personal basis. At the outset, I felt a strong commitment from them, they wanted to 'shine a light' on the problem with a collective and consistent determination to identify some answers and solutions. During our regular communications and throughout the interview process, their enthusiasm with the research topic was clearly evident. The data, illustrated in my diagram '*Retention: untying the knot*' (Figure 4.1), conceptualises the factors impacting on retention and its detail demonstrates the wide variety of views and differing perceptions and experiences. The formation and presentation of the diagram, inspired by Woods (2001), is an important and key element to this study.

Although the sample size of thirteen participants cannot be viewed as representative of Headteacher numbers nationally, I suggest that their breadth of experience cannot be discounted as being isolated. As such, I prefer to view them as a focussed snapshot of leadership and schools within secondary education as a whole. In nearly twenty-eight hours of interview time, my participants identified in excess of sixty factors as being 'at play' within the retention challenge; I present these in my diagram. Notably, some of these concur with aspects contained within the empirical and conceptual literature, as well as identifying some additional, significant and insightful elements.

5.2 Research question 1

My first research question was: '*In Headteachers' experience, what are the factors within the profession, impacting upon retention?'.* This was the most discussed topic in interview and elicited highly consistent responses from these Headteachers; their

replies were clear, unambiguous and easy to quantify. The main themes repeated throughout interviews that I feel answer this question, include those outlined below.

My findings show that the recruitment of teachers for ITE is an area of real concern for these Heads. Namely, the sheer number of training routes on offer, their varying quality, the questionable resilience of student teachers, the year-on-year missed DfE targets, the mismatch between 'supply and demand' in subject recruitment and those of curriculum requirements and with real concerns regarding the motivation of some training providers and student recruits themselves. As Gorard (2023) commented, there is greater media and political 'flutter' surrounding recruitment, as a means of solving the teacher 'numbers' problem, as distinct from retention. Personally, I find it interesting that these discourses around recruitment focus on the statistics, rather than of people. By focussing solely on the numbers of those coming in and out of teaching, some of the wider conversations about status and values is lost and as these Headteachers' perceived, 'the right' people are not coming into teaching.

At multiple levels, my findings show the impact of surveillance within teaching has a profound effect on retention. Throughout the data it is clear this is a profession under surveillance from every angle. Without exception, Headteachers in this case study said there was a palpable fear of failure within the systems that judged quality and performance. Ofsted, as the 'top level' of surveillance, has exerted downward pressures and a new quasi-tier of surveillance within Multi Academy Trusts has developed, which in turn, has created an almost continuous 'mocksted' monitoring regime within schools. As found in research by Greany and Waterhouse (2016) "*school leaders felt compelled to focus on the demands of the accountability regime*" (p 1202). My research shows that 'in school' surveillance appeared to be the most

intense of all the surveillance levels, somewhat irrespective of participants' current Ofsted 'judgement status'. All participants aimed to be in a state of constant readiness, highly compliant with policy, whilst recognising surveillance was a factor in the 'ballooning' retention crisis. The recurring theme was that surveillance involves multiple parties at multiple levels and that 'watching' schools and teachers has become habituated within the 'business' model of schooling. Conspicuously, the cessation of Ofsted inspections during the pandemic and consequent 'dialling down' at school level, was perceived by these Headteachers as positive for retention. This prompted several of them to call for a change, not to 'hide' but to recalibrate and think about what might be done differently to help and support teachers and their retention in the profession.

A further factor, identified by the majority of my participants was pay, these Headteachers were keen to stress that pay was not only about the material advantages of money. Pay was strongly linked to teachers' perceptions regarding their status, their wellbeing and their intrinsic and extrinsic value within society. At the meso level, my findings show pay has increasingly become an important factor in retaining teachers. What was interesting was the way *some* in this case study had adopted and adapted pay freedoms (DfE, 2013). My findings concur with those of Coldron et al (2014), namely, well positioned schools with well positioned Headteachers that have the funds and capacity to increase pay, had enacted considerable incentivisation within their schools. I also found in my study, that for *some* Heads, monetary reward tied to the 'bottom line' was not a contentious issue. They openly used it as a means to an end, providing significant advantages within their own schools and on a larger scale, within their MATs. Across all participants

what was clear, was the extent of and disparity between individual pay systems in their schools and how these Heads were negotiating and 'tussling' within market reforms; seeking to 'buy the best and keep the best' just like any other business.

This is a changing discourse to the national pay structure, historically associated within the performance management of teachers. Now it appears *some* teachers' salaries have become attached to different criteria, depending on their 'shortage' in their subject area and in some respects, their quality; this is now a strategy for teacher retention that *some* schools are using without restraint. This potentially raises some awkward questions about retaining teachers, are the market freedoms within education policy exacerbating existing inequalities in retention? As my research shows, driven by shortages, competition and the capacity of some to incentivise pay (but not others) this may well be a substantive issue, adding a further twist to the retention problem.

Not a new factor in either the conceptual or empirical literature (Ball, 2008; Lynch et al, 2012) school leaders emphasised that the prescriptive nature of policy was clearly impacting upon the curriculum and examination system and was an increasing factor within retention. My participants emphasised how teachers saw themselves as being part of a 'production-line' process, measured in success through their results and 'output'. My findings demonstrate Headteachers were aware of its gradual impact and how teachers' behaviours were being nudged and constrained by government policy. Woods found in his research (1997 et al, and 2001) how the prescription of teaching had amplified the feelings of disempowerment and disenfranchisement; my findings, over twenty years later, are disconcertingly similar. I conclude that those enacting education reforms have lost sight of the individual, so too of the impact that

their policies are having on teachers and in doing so, ignoring the inherent educative value of teachers. At the personal micro level, teachers need to feel valued, trusted, happy and fulfilled in their job. In return they accumulate expertise, confidence and capital to raise standards and improve outcomes for all. A key point I suggest, missing in current policy discourse.

As explored in the findings chapter and in great detail in literature, the almost constant, mandated government policy initiatives, have substantially added to the workload of teachers and despite the rhetoric from policy makers, appears to be as relentless as ever.

My case study of Headteachers perceive that in their experience, DfE workload agreements have had little impact, despite their high political profile. Ultimately, these leaders have navigated workload excesses within their individual schools through a variety of strategies, often bespoke and strongly linked to their funding capacity. Notably, this was the one area in interview which provoked responses of frustration and cynicism with regard to current and historical government intent and disconnect with what is happening on the ground. My data did not suggest that there were any easy answers to this but does confirm that this continues to be an inescapable factor in teachers' decisions to leave the profession.

5.3 Research question 2

My second research question: '*In Headteachers' experience what are the wider factors, outside of the profession, that have impacted on retention?*' was more difficult to address. Headteachers' perceptions and experiences included a wide variety of factors, often associated with teachers' idiosyncratic, personal and individual

circumstances. However, four main themes were repeated in the data, which I feel go some way to answering this question.

Societal trends have moved away from those of previous generations, in that a ‘mono-career’ or a ‘career-for-life’ is no longer applicable in today’s modern economy. Politically driven within the discourse of successive governments during the last four decades, job mobility and multiple careers have been encouraged, so as to facilitate the demands posed by fluctuating economic circumstances and as a solution to a working environment which has become less stable. My research demonstrates these Headteachers perceive this to be a developing trend, posing an increasing threat to retention, as some teachers no longer see their career as their sole and lifelong occupation. Interestingly, these Heads cited *some* of the career changers were neither disaffected nor disillusioned, nor lacking in commitment and effectiveness, but saw teaching as a ‘stepping stone’ or as part of a portfolio of experience. Ultimately, this raises questions about retention in an entirely different way, a changing discourse is becoming apparent, whereby those reasons traditionally associated with leaving are now linked to other, more nuanced factors. A distinction unconnected to adverse working conditions, but more a proactive attitude towards career mobility that my interviewees describe. This is in stark contrast to what is presented in much of the existing literature (for example: Skinner et al, 2018; Perryman and Calvert, 2020), wherein career change is often allied to the negative factors of the role.

Headteachers presented a further societal change in attitude, one aligned with increasing consumerism and aspirations as to material stability. Teachers are no different to others, they want a good standard of living and have, as presented by

these school leaders, increasing expectations. The pay restraints on public expenditure over many years has resulted in teachers' pay in England falling in real terms and is currently ranked in the bottom 3, out of 38 OECD countries (Gatsby Foundation, 2023). Heads perceive that this has, over time, become an increasingly significant factor in retention; particularly they emphasise, recently, due to cost of living pressures. As previously discussed, these Heads have now strategized pay within their schools, yet on the national scale, this could mean teaching may be a profession that some of today's graduates and present-day teachers can no longer 'afford' to remain within. An ironic consequence of the effect of market reform policies working against retention within education.

A further, wider influence was the shortage of well qualified graduates in some subjects. This has created intense competition both within the education sector itself and more widely with other professions (Sims et al, 2017). As my research shows, these Heads felt this was out of their control, with most expressing frustration at the lack of foresight by policy makers, as curriculum changes were enacted prior to the teaching workforce, or training infrastructure, being in place beforehand; a gap these Headteachers were continually struggling to fill.

Certainly amongst respondents, the prevailing view was that at times and recently increasingly so, that they had to fill vacancies no matter what, whatever the quality of applicants, from within a rapidly diminishing supply. Consequently, this had highlighted the quality of some recruits as resilience and commitment was tested early on and this led to lower rates of retention.

Typically, this shows the challenges for schools and Headteachers within a market driven economy and raises questions again, as discussed previously, around DfE recruitment policies and their fitness for purpose. A further factor that my participants questioned, in tune with much of the literature (Sims, et al 2017; Noyes et al, 2019) were the measures to improve the 'attractiveness' of a career in teaching by bursaries. My participants unanimously derided this 'solution', as in reality, in their experience, it was attracting entirely the wrong type of candidate, or, as they termed it 'bursary chasers' rather than those with a genuine interest in the profession with an intended longevity. This viewpoint is in direct contrast to that promoted within government discourse and some literature (see for example: DfE, 2016; Whitting et al, 2016; Griffiths, 2018).

Headteachers' perceived a further factor out of their control was the 'status' of teaching within wider society. Ball (2019) argues, this is made harder in England, by the way schools, teachers and Headteachers are positioned within education narratives, through a historical discourse of derision. A discourse which could have been reversed during the pandemic, in line with the 'promotion' of other key workers in the media and government discourse during this time. Yet instead, some of my interviewees implied that opportunities were missed, as they experienced increased criticism regarding school closures and the status of teachers from multiple sources. A growing feature in this discourse, as perceived by these Heads, is the increasing use and influence of social media, which had detrimental consequences to their teachers self-esteem and the profession generally, as parental and pupils 'platformed' critical opinions of teachers. To my knowledge, this is not a topic covered by existing literature relating to teacher retention.

5.4 Research question 3

My third research question '*In Headteachers' experience are some schools better at retaining teachers than others?'* Headteachers responses to this included factors strongly aligned to their differing funding, context and circumstances.

Looking at contemporary change and the reshaping of schools in England as different types of schools have emerged, I found Greany and Higham's (2018) 'two-tier system' a useful lens through which to view this question. My findings demonstrate that schools are separated into 'winners' and 'losers' in terms of retaining teachers. The winners in these findings are *some* academies in *some* MATs, the 'losers' being a mix of recently academized and LA maintained schools; my findings demonstrate this two-tier system has significant implications on retention. Several of my 'winner' participants were early adopters of academization, clearly enthusiastic to establish and occupy a key position in their 'local competitive arena' (Ball and Juneman, 2012). They were financially well positioned in this regard, as they benefitted from enhanced and multiple funding streams. They used these funds to retain teachers in their schools, to recruit the best and retain the best. Not only in terms of paying teachers more, these Headteachers used their enhanced funding to improve the quality of working conditions and environment, they facilitated lower workloads, lower PTRs[21] and teacher contact time. Flexible working and a focus on CPD opportunities through career 'packages' and fast track promotions were also prominently used. Overall, these Headteachers supported their academization and its benefits, "*aiming for the best possible position for themselves and their schools*"

[21] PTRs refers to Pupil Teacher Ratios, the national average ranging between 1:17 and 1:19. The schools referenced above in this context, were offering considerably lower PTRs to teachers, thus reducing workload.

(Coldron et al, 2014, p 397) openly strategizing such inducements as ‘a means to an end’. Certainly unregulated they may be, but as these particular Heads reported in their interview, with few vacancies and small numbers leaving for other occupations, they perceived these strategies were *very* effective in retaining teachers in their schools.

A further layer within this ‘well positioned’ context was the impact of collaboration within *some* Multi-Academy Trusts. My research found such networks proactively and systematically prioritised retaining teachers within their family of schools, developing and implementing formal retention policies through their alliances. The ethos and capacities of Headteachers within such contexts, was notably more embracing of the principles underpinning managerialism as they ‘protected their patch’ and businesses. Indeed, much of their narratives included their success in a high stakes performance environment and parental choice in quasi-market circumstances, similar to the findings of Tomlinson et al (2013). Within the culture of self-interest of education reforms, these Headteachers readily negotiated the ‘market’, exercising some ‘freedoms’ whilst operating within the umbrella of macro policy frameworks. Their narratives were centred on the business of education, the competitive market in which they were operating and the concerns of recruitment and retention within their local context.

My case study shows a distinct similarity to the research and findings analysed by Greany and Higham (2018) but adds to it a further dimension and connection with retention. All of these Headteachers were well aware of the existing inequalities within funding but how this has favoured MATs in retaining teachers is rarely itemised or discussed within literature and in my view, certainly without the honest

transparency vocalised by these participants. I suggest for some Headteachers this was an uncomfortable reality, a ‘feathering their own nest’ at the expense of others, but similarly, a feeling they dampened in order to maintain the success and survival of their school.

Whilst the ‘winners’ have benefitted in terms of opportunities and resources through policy reform, the ‘loser’ schools in this case study and the majority therein, faced a concentration of challenges, including a disproportionate number of teachers leaving and high vacancy rates (as reported in the questionnaire). They argued they had limited options for autonomous decision making and actions regarding retaining teachers. These schools, although located in diverse contexts with very different Ofsted judgements, had many things in common: tight budgets often hovering around deficit status, older buildings requiring maintenance and fierce local competition for teachers.

The perception of this ‘loser’ category of participants, about ‘what works to retain teachers’ is similar to that found by See et al (2020) and included monetary incentives, albeit on a small, very limited scale. Consequently, their focus for retaining teachers was constructed through relationships, their capacity and agency to harness the intrinsic values of teachers. Most prominently, they emphasised empathetic leadership as key to retention within their schools, with strategies to ‘keep the staff happy’, for example through their personal care and interest in their teachers. Their reflections were based upon their perceptions about the ‘anchors’ that keep teachers in the profession, emphasising workload manageability and strongly supporting teachers in the face of parent criticism. Clearly, they perceived some disadvantages in their funding situation and observed the no-cost or low cost strategies they had at

their disposal were limited. The prevailing view from them was that retaining teachers was increasingly difficult within current funding inequalities and competition with those who could tangibly 'add more'.

5.5 Summary

My research suggests that some schools are better at retaining teachers than others depending on their context and primarily on how they are funded, leading to 'winners' and 'losers'. The impact of academization and the strengthening of alliances through MATs and how Headteachers within these have embraced market mechanisms are important factors to retaining teachers, factors that are, to the best of my knowledge, not fully recognised in current literature. I conclude, reflecting on the above, that this has several implications, as a two-tier level of 'position' has developed in the retention challenge adding further complications to "*an incoherent school system"* (Ball, 2019, no page).

5.6 Contribution to existing research and areas for future research

I conclude by reflecting on the significance and contribution to knowledge of this research. Overall, the data exposes the complexities and interrelated factors involved in the retention of teachers, revealing some dominant factors within working conditions, as well as Headteachers' strategies to navigate the problem.

I contribute to existing research by developing Woods' (2001) theory of three levels of influence and interlinking impacts, overlapping them with the forces of marketization, managerialism and career mobility, to assemble my own conceptual framework. I am not the first to apply such concepts to education as a whole, as described in the review of literature, however, the combination presented in my diagram '*Retention: untying the Knot'* (Fig, 4.1) as a framework, takes the next step by providing empirical

evidence, combining the perspectives of Headteachers, in multiple secondary schools, within a defined location as part of a case study. Woods, in his extensive catalogue of works over three decades, contributed valuable insights on why teachers leave and now my research offers an in-depth examination of how Headteachers negotiate and understand retention within the present day, constantly evolving education system.

I also add a further dimension to '*the factors at three levels, working together'* (Woods, 2001). Based upon my findings, there are many instances where *all* three levels overlap in the conclusions above. Policy 'drives' what happens in schools and has an impact on individuals but my research has uncovered Headteachers' awareness of factors within retention which are personal and idiosyncratic to individual teachers, for instance the highly committed and successful 'career-changers' who leave, as identified by these Headteachers. These were not teachers challenged in their working conditions, which contradicts much of the literature. This, I suggest, adds a new dimension and nuanced view of retention, based on individual factors, which may be far more complicated to solve, capture and quantify, than purely by policy and practice.

I add to existing research by concentrating solely upon the perceptions and experiences of Headteachers in relation to the retention issue. Much of the prior research in this area and pertinently in Woods' work, has been based on data collected from individual teachers at all levels of responsibilities, focussing primarily on those leaving, or intending to leave the profession. In several respects, I feel this focus alters the kinds of findings produced within the research carried out to date, being more personal to individuals and potentially idiosyncratic as the thoughts,

feelings and activities of teachers and their daily work challenges are examined. Indeed, much of Woods' work concentrated on the stress and anxieties of individuals at resignation point.

This is where I diverge from Woods' work, as my research is distinctly different. As emphasised by participants in this study, Headteachers views are rarely sought on how to retain teachers and I argue, they are a key group with ideas that we need to uncover and take note of, if we wish to improve teacher retention. They offer findings with the potential to enhance retaining teachers, by pursuing fewer and less damaging forms of accountability and by lessening the prescriptive nature of teaching. They address pay and monetary incentivisation with refreshing candour and how the hierarchical segmentation amongst schools appears to be increasing (Higham and Earley, 2013). My research adds to knowledge about those who leave and why they leave and why this continues to be a perennial problem.

In thinking about the contribution this research makes, I suggest my diagram '*Retention: untying the knot*', is a crucial part of this study. It conceptualises retention in a novel way and illustrates the dynamics, fluidity and the complexities involved in the retention of teachers.

It draws upon the perceptions and viewpoints of Headteachers, capturing the intricate, interwoven and nuanced factors which are at play and is my attempt to display the forces these Headteachers say they must negotiate on a daily basis. On a purely practical level, it lays out the issues in a non-hierarchical way and offers those in education and indeed a wider public audience, the opportunity to visualize the interplay of the multiple causal factors and hopefully, facilitate a more informed and

critical debate on retention. For school leaders I think the diagram presents a succinct model, an overview as it were, not seen before in empirical literature and as such, paving the way to better-informed discussions with colleagues and individual teachers to seek solutions at the local level. For an academic audience, it offers a greater understanding of the interrelationship between many of the factors in retention; showing the particular impact surrounding marketization, managerialism and career mobility and the 'top-down' dictates and intractability of policy makers. It has the potential for further academic application, providing a starting point for others to utilise, adopt and adapt its structure to generate further knowledge. At a national and political level it could support opportunities for critique and reflection, potentially laying the foundations for a new starting point in education policy and direction.

Whilst I acknowledge that my case study findings are with a select number of participants and not fully representative of other schools and Headteachers, the data analysis is potentially useful and transferable for others and in retention studies as a whole. The way I view my study and findings, is encapsulated in the work of Stake (1995). He refers to the contribution some research makes as a 'modified generalisation', adding value through its "*refinement of understanding"* (p 7) in offering a different perspective, adding to experience and improving understanding. My research does not include *entirely* new understandings; it includes elements which have developed, circumstances which have changed and factors which have accelerated. Ultimately, I seek to improve understanding and knowledge surrounding the retention of teachers.

Looking to how further future research would build on this specific study; I note three areas referred to in the data, but not developed, as potential future projects within the

field of teacher retention. The first, is regarding the current national career structure of teachers, closely tied to responsibilities and pay progression through performance management. My Headteachers perceived this structure inhibited professional opportunities for those neither seeking nor aspiring to leadership and teachers 'who got stuck' in a constrained pay grade were less likely to remain in teaching. Although, cited as a potential issue in the RETAIN project (Ovenden-Hope et al, 2018) and raised as a concern at the recent BERA conference (Tereshchenko, 2023) this factor appears to have little recognition within accredited four star research (Research Excellence Framework, 2021).

Secondly, school leaders raised the increasingly invasive and detrimental role of social media on teachers' job satisfaction. Although the use of social media platforms within teaching has attracted publications (for instance: Carpenter, 2023) I have seen little qualitative research undertaken as to its impact upon teacher retention.

Thirdly, a point only alluded to by two Headteachers, was the particular problem of retaining ethnic minority teachers. UCL Institute of Education (2020) found there remains a gap in research on successful retention practices of BAME teachers in specific schools. Initial findings of a longitudinal study, still in process, led by Durham University (2023), indicates recruitment of ethnic minority teachers is quantifiably low, in proportion to the student ethnicity of our schools and that retaining them presents several challenges. Worth (2022) also undertook research with ethnic minority teachers and called for further research as a consequence of the findings. An opportunity to gather Headteacher perceptions may add interesting insights of the factors that work together "*to encourage BAME teachers to stay*" (Tereshchenko,

2020, p 22); as they are at the focal point of the translation of policy into practice (Grace, 1995).

5.7 Final thoughts

It seems obvious to me from the data that fundamentally a system-wide reform is needed to address retention.

My findings show that a difficult challenge lies ahead, albeit one essential to the long term sustainability of the profession as a whole. In that a fundamental change to the current direction of policy is required, to avert what appears to be an escalating retention crisis. It is my recommendation that policy makers take a long hard look at the impacts of their policies implemented to date on retention and what, if any, successes have been made and what lessons can be learned for developing future strategies. I include here not only policy makers within government, but also policy makers within schools, MATs and at Regional School Commissioner[22] (RSC) level. As the school leaders in this case study emphasised, there is a basic need to reinvigorate the creativity, well-being and enthusiasm of teachers, detaching them from the current overwhelming focus of measured 'output' and rebuild trust in teachers and our schools. An improvement in the status of the profession will require a considerable change at multiple levels, commencing with a more positive tone, including a change to the undermining political discourse, in the media a change of language and throughout, a real effort made to celebrate and extol the considerable work done by teachers.

[22]Eight RSCs operate across regions in England. The RSC is responsible for holding Multi-Academy Trusts to account. If required, RSCs will take action to address underperformance and 'bring about rapid improvement'.

My findings regarding recruitment are especially apposite, particularly in relation to ITE, as based upon the testimony of my participant Headteachers. It is clear that some 'joined up thinking' within government regarding recruitment could prove beneficial to retention in the short to medium term. I argue that a relatively straight-forward, cost effective solution, would be to address the 'recruitment' issues in the first instance, in order to recruit the 'right people' to use my participant Headteachers' terminology; a departure from the current 'numbers game' of fulfilling targets to solve the issue of teacher supply, which is effectively 'leaving everything to the market'.

Regarding the funding of schools and inequalities within the system, my findings demonstrate that the well positioned schools, the 'winners' in retaining teachers, may well come to dominate the 'market' of teacher supply, leaving others in unfavourable and even untenable circumstances. This could make teacher retention a further factor driving the inequalities within our schools and ultimately, society. I find it ironic that government's talk of 'levelling up' (SMC, 2021) appears *not* to recognise the benefits of retaining teachers to help social mobility as a whole. I suggest as schools retrench and 'ring fence' their teachers, as best they can, this may well encourage further division and conflicts of interest, making matters worse rather than better.

This case study reinforces the arguments for decreasing the evident 'stranglehold' imposed through choice and competition, Ofsted inspection and league tables, by acknowledging how these have detrimentally affected teachers in our schools. Only by creating an environment for a thriving, happy and fulfilled teaching workforce, giving teachers and schools a higher degree of professional autonomy, will we sustain highly motived people, who wish to stay and grow within the profession and reverse the current employment trends. Sadly, I cannot find any indication that the

current incumbents of the Palace of Westminster have either the will or appetite to tackle this properly and thus, I foresee that the present situation is unlikely to change and will continue to have a negative impact on our schools and children. A good starting point would be for the policy makers to talk *directly* to Headteachers, involve *them* in the decision making process, listen to *their* voice and perhaps most importantly, trust in *their* expertise and professionalism as to what is needed.

REFERENCES

Abreu, M., Faggian, A. and McCann, P. (2015) 'Migration and inter-industry mobility of UK graduates'. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 15(2), pp. 353-385.

Adams, P. (2014) *Policy and Education Foundation of Education Studies.* Routledge

Ainsworth, S. and Oldfield, J. (2019) 'Quantifying teacher resilience: Context matters'. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 82, pp. 117-128.

Alderman, C. (2015) 'Teacher Shortage? Blame the Economy', *Education Next*. October 8.

Allen, B., Hannay, T. and McInerney, L. (2020) *Understanding and tackling COVID-19 disruption to the teacher recruitment market*, Gatsby Foundation

Allen, B., Ford, I. and Hannay, T (2023) *Teacher Recruitment and Retention in 2023 Teacher views on coping with shortages, job attachment and flexible working*, Gatsby Foundation

Allen, R. (2019) *Improving teachers' instructional practice: Critically important, but incredibly hard to do, in Scutt, C. and Harrison, S. (eds) Teacher CPD: International trends, opportunities and challenges*, London: Chartered College of Teaching.

Allen, R., Belfield, C., Greaves, E., Sharp, C. and Walker, M., (2016) *The longer-term costs and benefits of different initial teacher training routes (No. R118).* London: Institute for Fiscal Studies

Allen, R., Burgess, S. and Mayo, J. (2017) 'The teacher labour market, teacher turnover and disadvantaged schools: new evidence for England', *Education Economics*, 26 (1), pp. 1–20.

Allen, R. and Sims, S. (2018) *The teacher gap*, Routledge.

Allen, R. and Sims, S. (2017) *Improving Science Teacher Retention: do National STEM Learning Network professional development courses keep science teachers in the classroom?* Education Data lab.

Allen, R. and Sims, S. (2018) 'Do Pupils from Low-Income Families Get Low-Quality Teachers? Indirect Evidence from English Schools', *Oxford Review of Education* 44 (4), (4 July 2018): pp. 441–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2017.1421152;

Allen, R., Benhenda, A., Jerrim, J. and Sims, S. (2021) 'New evidence on teachers' working hours in England. An empirical analysis of four datasets', *Research Papers in Education*.

Allen, R. (2023) Evidence given to H.o.C Select Education Committee Inquiry Recruitment and Retention of Teachers (London, House of Commons). *Live transmission.*

Anderson, G. and Cohen, M. I. (2015) ‘Redesigning the identities of teachers and leaders: A framework for studying new professionalism and educator resistance’. *Education policy analysis archives*, 23 (85), p. 85.

Andrade, J., Hillary, J., Worth, J. (2018) *Teacher Retention and Turnover Research: How Do Teachers Compare To Nurses And Police Officers?* NFER: Nuffield Foundation

Andrews, J. (2019) *Teacher Recruitment, Progression and Retention in Multi-Academy Trusts*. London, UK: Education Policy Institute, Ambition Institute, and Cambridge Assessment, (2019) Online. Available at: https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/teacher-recruitment-progression-and-retention-inmulti-academy-trusts/

Anstead, P. House of Commons Education Committee (2017) *Recruitment and Retention of Teachers,* London: House of Commons.

Appleton, S. Morgan, W.J. Sives, A. (2006) ‘Should teachers stay at home? The impact of international teacher mobility’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education; Wiley*

Arrowsmith, T. (2007) ‘Distributed leadership in secondary schools in England: the impact on the role of the Headteacher and other issues’, *Management in Education*, 21(2), pp. 21-27.

Arthur, L. and Bradley, S. (2023) ‘Teacher retention in challenging schools: please don’t say goodbye!’ *Teachers and Teaching*, pp. 1-19

Asada, Y., Turner, L., Schwartz, M. and Chriqui, J. F. (2020) ‘Bridging, brokering and buffering. A theoretical exploration of school leaders engagement with local wellness policy implementation’, *Advance online publication Science Communications* 1 (1) p. 44.

Association of School and College Leaders (2015) *Pay recommendations. Report* www.ascl.org.uk

Association of School and College Leaders (2019) *Workload and Workload agreements. Report* www.ascl.org.uk.

Association of School and College Leaders (2020) *Numbers enrolling for ITT. Report* www.ascl.org.uk.

Association of School and College Leaders (2021) *Increasing concerns about pay. Report* www.ascl.org.uk

Association of School and College Leaders (2021) *Survey on school inspection. Report* www.ascl.org.uk

Association of School and College Leaders (2024) *Numbers enrolling for ITT, unvalidated data. Report* www.ascl.org.uk

Ball, S. J. (2003) ‘The teacher’s soul and the terrors of performativity’, *Journal of Education Policy*, 18 (2), pp. 215-228

Ball, S. J. (2004) ‘Education for sale! The commodification of everything?’ King’s Annual Education Lecture, 2004: University of London.

Ball, S. J. (2006) *Education Policy and Social Class: The Selected Works of Stephen J. Ball.* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

Ball, S. J and Youdell, D. (2007) ‘Hidden Privatisation in Public Education’, *Education International*

Ball, S. J. (2008) *The Education Debate*, Bristol: Policy Press.

Ball, S. J. (2009) ‘Privatising education, privatising education policy, privatising educational research: network governance and the competition state’, *Journal of Education Policy*. 24 (1), pp. 83-100.

Ball, S. J. and Junemann, C. (2012) *Networks, New Governance and Education*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Ball, S. J. (2019) Presentation lecture, revisiting ‘Stephen Ball: The Micro-Politics of the School, 32 years after’. University College London, Institute of Education on YouTube, Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaHopNWZTCQ Accessed: December 2023

Bamford, S. and Worth, J. (2017) ‘Teacher Retention and Turnover Research. Research Update 3: Is the Grass Greener Beyond Teaching?’ National Foundation for Educational Research.

Barber, M., Moffit, A. and Kihn, P. (2010) ‘*Deliverology 101: A field guide for educational leaders’.* Corwin Press.

Barmby P. (2006) *Improving teacher recruitment and retention: the importance of workload and pupil behaviour.* Taylor Francis online.

Bartlett L. and Vavrus, F. (2017) *Rethinking Case Study Research: A Comparative Approach*, London: Routledge

Barton, G. (2023) ‘Heads under extreme pressure again as ITT targets missed’ *T.E.S.*

Barton, L., Barrett, E., Whitty, G., Miles, S. and Furlong, J. (1994) ‘Teacher education and teacher professionalism in England: Some emerging issues. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 15(4), pp. 529-543.

Bassey, M. (1999) *Case Study Research in Educational Settings.* Open University Press.

Baxter, J. and Floyd, A. (2019) ‘Strategic narrative in multi-academy trusts in England: Principal drivers for expansion. *British Educational Research Journal*, 45(5), pp. 1050-1071.

Beauchamp, C. and Thomas, L. (2009) ‘Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39(2), pp. 175-189.

Beck, J. (2008) ‘Government professionalism: re-professionalising or deprofessionalising teacher in England’, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 56(2) pp. 119-143.

Beckmann, A. Cooper, C. Hill, D. (2009) ‘Neo liberalization and managerialization of ‘education’ in England and Wales – a case for reconstructing education’ *Journal of Critical Education*.

Bell, J. (1993) *Doing your Research Project (4th edition.)* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Berger, R. (2015) ‘Now I see it, now I don’t: researcher’s position and reflexivity in qualitative research’ *Qualitative research*, 15(2), pp. 219-234.

Bilton, R., Jackson, A. and Hymer, B. (2018) Cooperation, conflict and control: Parent–teacher relationships in an English secondary school. *Educational Review*, 70(4), pp. 510-526.

Bilton, R. (2017) *Communication, collaboration and control: investigating conversations between parents and teachers in an English secondary school* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cumbria (awarded by Lancaster University)).

Bloor, M. (1997) *Techniques of validation in qualitative research: a critical commentary.* London: Sage.

Boffey, D. and Helm, T.(2015) ‘Shortage of Teachers Set to Spark New School Crisis’, *The Guardian*, 29 August Online

Bousted, M. (2022) *Support Not Surveillance: How to solve the teacher retention crisis.* John Catt.

Brady, J. and Wilson, E. (2021) ‘Teacher wellbeing in England: Teacher responses to school-level initiatives. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 51(1), pp. 45-63.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) ‘Using thematic analysis in psychology’, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2), pp. 77-101.

Britton, J. and Propper, C. (2016) ‘Teacher Pay and School Productivity: Exploiting Wage Regulation’, *Journal of Public Economics,*133 (January 2016): pp. 75–89.

Brooks, J. Horrocks, C. King, N. (2018) *Interviews in qualitative research.* Torrossa.com

Bruce-Golding, J (2018) *Career Trajectories of Deputy and Assistant Headteachers and their perceptions of secondary Headship.* Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham. http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/8486

Bryan, H. and Burstow, B. (2018) ‘Understanding ethics in school-based research’, *Professional Development in Education*, 44 (1), pp. 107-119.

Bryman, A. (2012) *Social Research Methods (4th edition),* Oxford University Press

Bucknell, R. (2014) ‘Your dissertation in education’. *Sage Study Skills*. p.76

Burdett, N. and Donnell, S (2016) ‘Lost in translation? The challenges of educational policy borrowing’ *Educational Research*, 58(2), pp. 113-120 DOI:10.1080/00131881.2016.1168678.

Burgess, S. M (2014) *Understanding the Success of London’s Schools.* CMPO Working Paper Series. Bristol, UK: The Centre for Market and Public Organisation, October 2014. http://www.bristol.ac.uk/medialibrary/sites/cmpo/migrated/documents/wp333.pdf.

Burgess, S. M., Greaves, E. and Murphy, R. (2022) ‘Deregulating Teacher Labour Markets’, *Economics and Education Review* 88

Burghes, D., Howson, J. O’Leary, J. and Woodhead, C. (2009) ‘Teachers Matter: Recruitment, Employment and Retention at Home and Abroad’, *The Report of the Politeia Education Commission* (London. Politeia).

Burrow, R., Williams, R. and Thomas, D. (2020) ‘Stressed, depressed and exhausted: Six years as a teacher in UK state education. *Work, Employment and Society,* 34(5), pp. 949-958.

Burton, N., Brundrett, M. and Jones, M. (2008) *Doing Your Education Research Project,* London: SAGE

Busby, E. (2016) ‘Recruitment fears worsen as teacher pay gap grows’. London: *TES Insight*, February 6th.

Bush, T. (2013) ‘Preparing headteachers in England: Professional certification, not academic learning. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 41(4), pp. 453-465.

Caldwell, B. and Spinks, J. (2013) *The Self-Transforming School* DOI:10.4324/9780203387986.

Carpenter, J. P. (2023) ‘Social media: friend or foe?’ *TES Insight*, no date

Carter, A. (2015) *Carter review of initial teacher training (ITT).* London: Department for Education.

Chiong, C., Menzies, L. and Parameshwaran, M. (2017) ‘Why do long-serving teachers stay in the teaching profession? Analysing the motivations of teachers with 10 or more years’ experience in England’, *British Educational Research Journal,* 43(6), pp. 1083-1110.

Clarke, M. (2020) ‘Eyes wide shut: the fantasies and disavowals of education policy’, *Journal of Education Policy*, 35(2), pp. 151-167.

Clarke, J.H. and Newman, J. (1997) *The Managerial State.* London: Sage.

Clough P. and Nutbrown, C. (2014) *A Student's Guide to Methodology (Third edition)* Sage Publications.

Coates, S., Adcock, S. and Ribton, M. (2015) *Headstrong: 11 lessons of school leadership.* Woodbridge: John Catt Educational Ltd

Cohen L. Manion L Morrison K (2011) *Research methods in education.* London Routledge.

Coldron, J., Crawford, M., Jones, S. and Simkins, T. (2014) 'The restructuring of schooling in England: the responses of well positioned headteachers', *Educational Management, Administration and Leadership*. 42(3): pp. 387-403

Colman, A. (2021) 'School leadership, school inspection and the micropolitics of compliance and resistance: Examining the hyper-enactment of policy in an area of deprivation', *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49(2), pp. 268-283.

Connell, R. (2013) 'The neoliberal cascade and education: An essay on the market agenda and its consequences', *Critical Studies in Education*, 54(2), pp. 99-112.

Connell, R. W. (2020) *Teachers' work*. Routledge.

Cooper, C., Tweedie, J., Andrew, J. and Baker, M. (2022) 'From "business-like" to businesses: Agencification, corporatization, and civil service reform under the Thatcher administration. *Public Administration*, 100(2), pp. 193-215.

Cordingley, P. (2015) 'The contribution of research to teachers' professional learning and development. *Oxford review of education*, 41(2), pp. 234-252.

Cordingly, P. and Buckler, N. (2012) 'Mentoring and coaching for teachers' continuing professional development'. *SAGE handbook of mentoring and coaching in education*, pp. 215-227.

Cotterill, T. (2017) *The marketization of education. In Contemporary debates in education studies (pp. 52-62).* Routledge.

Coughlan, S.J (2018) 'Cut Workload to Tackle Teacher Shortage', Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-43345857 (accessed 24 March 2019).

Court, D. (2013) 'What is Truth in Qualitative Research? Why is this Important for Education?' *Educational Practice and Theory*, 32 (2), pp. 5-14.

Courtney, S.J. (2013) *Headteachers experiences of school inspection under Ofsted's January 2012 framework. Management in Education.* Sage Publications

Courtney, S.J. and McGinity (2022) 'System leadership as depoliticization. Reconceptualising educational leadership in a new multi academy trust', *Management Administration Journal*. Sagepub.com.

Creswell, J. (2013*) Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches.* Sage Publications.

Cribb, A (2009) Chapter 3 in Gewirtz, S., Mahony, P., Hextall, I., *Policy, professionalism, and practice. Changing teacher professionalism: International trends, challenges, and ways forward.*

Currie, G., Lockett, A. and Suhomlinova, O. (2009) 'Leadership and institutional change in the public sector: The case of secondary schools in England', *The Leadership Quarterly,* 20(5), pp. 664-679.

Daly, C., Glegg, P., Stiasny, B., Hardman, M., Taylor, B., Pillinger, C. and Gandolfi, H. (2023) ‘Mentors as instructional coaches for new teachers: lessons learnt from the early career framework in England’, *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 12(4), pp. 350-365.

Day, C. (2004) ‘*A passion for teaching’.* Routledge.

Day, C., Elliot, B. and Kington, A. (2005) ‘Reform, standards and teacher identity: Challenges of sustaining commitment’, *Teaching and teacher Education*, 21(5), pp. 563-577.

Day, C., Simmons, P., Stobart, G., Kington, A., Gu, Q. (2007) *Teachers matter. Connecting work, lives and effectiveness.* University Press.

Day, C. and Gu, Q. (2013) *Veteran teachers: Commitment, resilience and quality retention. In International Perspectives on Veteran Teachers* (pp. 38-54). Routledge.

Day, C. and Gu Q. (2014) *Resilient Teachers, Resilient Schools. Building and sustaining quality in testing times.* Routledge.

Day, C. and Armstrong, P. (2016) ‘*A decade of research on school principals: Cases from 24 countries*,’ *England: School leadership research in England.* pp. 245-268.

Day, C. and Gu, Q. (2018) ‘How successful secondary school principals in England respond to policy reforms: The influence of biography’, *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 17(3), pp. 332-344.

Day, C., Sammons, P. and Gorgen, K. (2020) *Successful School Leadership.* Education Development Trust.

Day, C. (2021) ‘Developing, sustaining and retaining teacher quality: Factors that count’. *Envisioning Teaching and Learning of Teachers for Excellence and Equity in Education,* pp. 171-187.

Dean, C., (2016, September) ‘Seeking Educational Excellence Everywhere: an exploration into the impact of academisation on alternative education provision in England’, *In FORUM: for Promoting 3–19 Comprehensive Education* 58(3), pp. 355-63.

Denholm, J. and Lee-Davies, L. (2017) *Enhancing education and training initiatives through serious games.* University of Manchester publications.

Denscombe M. (2003) *The Good Research Guide.* Open University Press.

Department for Education (2010) *White Paper: The Importance of Teaching*. London. England. www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2011) *School Workforce Statistics*. www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2013) *Teachers pay, support and guidance.* www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2015) *School Workforce Statistics*. www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2015) *Teacher Supply Model: England.* www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2015) *Multi-Academy Trusts. Good practice Guidance and Expectations for Growth.* London, England. www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2016) *White Paper: Educational Excellence Everywhere.* London, England. www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2018) *Ofsted myths and Inspection fallacies* www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2018) *Factors Affecting Teacher Retention: Qualitative Investigation Research Report.* London, England.. www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2019) *Teacher Supply Model:* England. www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2019) *Schools, pupils and their characteristics*. www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2019) *White Paper: Recruitment and Retention Strategy.* London, England. www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2020) *£30,000 Starting Salaries Proposed for Teachers.* England: www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2020) *School Workforce in England: November 2020*. London, England. www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2020) *Analysis of Teacher Supply, Retention and Mobility.* London, England:www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2021) *Schools, pupils and their characteristics.* www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2021) *School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 2020 and Guidance on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions.* London, England.www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2023) *School Workforce Statistics.* www.gov.uk.

Department for Education (2023) *Workload reduction in schools. Research report,*www.gov.uk.

Department for Education, Education Select Committee (2017) *Report on Teacher Supply*. London. HMSO.

Department for Education, Education Select Committee (2023) *Inquiry: Teacher Supply.* London. Report pending.

Department for Work and Pensions (2011) *Report: Teachers leaving secondary education* (England). www.gov.uk.

Department for Work and Pensions (2016) *Report: Teachers leaving secondary education* (England). www.gov.uk.

Department for Work and Pensions (2020) *Report: Teachers leaving secondary education* (England). www.gov.uk.

Department for Work and Pensions (2023) *Report: Teachers leaving secondary education* (England). www.gov.uk.

Didau, D. (2015) *What if everything you knew about education was wrong?* Crown House Publishing.

Didau, D. (2021) 'Intelligent Accountability'. *Journal of Education for Teaching*.

Doherty, J. (2020) 'A systematic review of literature on teacher attrition and school-related factors that affect it', *Teacher Education Advancement Network Journal,* 12 (1), pp. 75-84.

Education Policy Institute (2023) *Comparison of teachers pay in the UK and OECD countries.*

Edwards, R. and Holland, J. (2013) *What is qualitative interviewing?* London: Bloomsbury

Ehren, M. and Baxter, J (2021) *Trust Accountability and Capacity in Education Reform.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Eisner, E. W. (1997) 'The New Frontier in Qualitative Research Methodology' Volume 3, Issue 3 Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/107780049700300301.

Elliott, J. and Lukeš, D. (2008) 'Epistemology as ethics in research and policy: The Use of Case Studies', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 42(1).

Elton, J. and Male, T. (2015) 'The impact on a primary school community in England of failed inspection and subsequent academisation', *School Leadership & Management*, 35(4), pp. 408-421.

Enser, M. and Enser, Z. (2021) *The CPD Curriculum: Creating conditions for growth.* Crown House Publishing Ltd.

Evans, L. (2011) 'The 'shape' of teacher professionalism in England: Professional standards, performance management, professional development and the changes proposed in the 2010 White Paper. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(5), pp. 851-870.

Fairclough, N. (2013) *Critical discourse analysis.* In The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis (pp. 9-20). Routledge.

Flick, U. (2012) *The SAGE Handbook of qualitative data analysis.* SAGE, London

Foster, D. (2016) *Briefing Paper: Teachers: Supply, retention and workload.* London, UK, House of Commons Library.

Foster, D. (2018) *Briefing Paper: Teacher Recruitment and Retention in England*. London, England: House of Commons Library.

Foster, D and Roberts, N. (2018) *Briefing paper: Initial Teacher Training in England* 6710 10/01/2018 House of Commons Library.

Foster, D. (2019) *Briefing Paper: Teacher recruitment and retention in England*. London UK Parliament, House of Commons Library.

Foster, D. (2020) *Briefing Paper: Teacher recruitment and retention in England.* London UK Parliament, House of Commons Library.

Fotheringham, P., Harriot, T., Healy, G., Arenge, G. and Wilson, E. (2021) 'Pressures and Influences on school leaders navigating policy development during the COVID-19 Pandemic'. *British Educational Research Journal* 3760.

Fox, A. and Bird, T. (2017) 'The challenge to professionals of using social media: Teachers in England negotiating personal-professional identities. *Education and Information Technologies*, 22, pp. 647-675.

Fullard, J., (2023) *Labour market expectations and occupational choice: evidence from teaching*. Available at SSRN 4384928.

Fuller, K. (2013) *Gender, identity and educational leadership.* A and C Black.

Fuller, K. (2019) 'That would be my red line: an analysis of headteachers' resistance of neoliberal education reforms', *Educational Review*

Furlong, J. (2005) 'New Labour and teacher education: the end of an era', *Oxford Review of Education*, 31(1), pp. 119-134

Furlong, J. (2013) *Globalisation, Neoliberalism and the reform of teacher education in England.* The education forum Oxford University Press.

Gager, A. and Percival, J. (2022) 'More than just workload: factors influencing the success and retention of new teachers. *Teacher Education Advancement Network (TEAN) Journal,* 14(1), pp. 120-131.

Gale, T. (2001) 'Critical policy sociology: historiography, archaeology and genealogy as methods of policy analysis' *Journal of Education Policy*, 16:5, pp. 379-393.

Gale, T. and Parker, S. (2015) 'Calculating student aspiration', *Cambridge Journal of Education*.

Gallant, A., Riley, P. (2014) 'Early career attrition: New thoughts on an intractable problem'. *Teacher Development*, 18, pp. 562–580.

Galton, M., MacBeath, J. M. J. and Lambert, T. W. (2008) *Teachers under pressure* London: Sage.

Gatsby Foundation report, (2023) 'Teachers pay in England: a review and comparison within OECD', *TES online.*

Gerwirtz S.(1995) *Markets, Choice and Equity in Education.* Online, University Press.

Gewirtz, S. and Ball, S. (2000) 'From 'Welfarism' to 'New Managerialism': shifting discourses of school headship in the education marketplace. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education,* 21(3), pp. 253-268.

Gewirtz, S., Mahony, P., Hextall, I., Cribb, A., Gewirtz, S., Mahony, P. and Cribb, A. (2009) '*Policy, professionalism, and practice. Changing teacher professionalism: International trends, challenges, and ways forward',* pp. 3-16.

Gewirtz, S., Maguire, M., Neumann, E. and Towers, E. (2021) ‘What’s wrong with ‘deliverology’? Performance measurement, accountability and quality improvement in English secondary education. *Journal of Education Policy,* 36(4), pp. 504-529.

Gewirtz, S. and Maguire, M. (2022) *Choice, pathways and transitions 20 years on.* In *Thinking with Stephen J. Ball: Lines of flight in education,* pp. 55-77.

Gibson, M.T. and Outhwaite, D. (2022) ‘MATification: Plurality, turbulence and effective school governance in England’, *Management in Education,* 36(1), pp. 42-46.

Gillborn, D. and Youdell, D. (1999) *Rationing education: Policy, practice, reform, and equity.* McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Gillham, B. (2000) *The Research Interview.* London: Continuum.

Glatter, R. (2003) *Governance, autonomy and accountability in education. Strategic leadership and educational improvement,* pp. 44-59.

Glatter, R. (2021) ‘The ‘independent state school’ and its aftermath: implications for the processes and structures surrounding school leadership. *School Leadership & Management,* 41(1-2), pp. 93-116.

Godfrey, D. and Ehren, M. (2020) ‘Case Study of a Cluster in the National Association of Head Teachers’ ‘Instead’ Peer Review in England’, *School Peer Review for Educational Improvement and Accountability: Theory, practice and policy implications,* pp. 95-115.

Goodall, J. (2018) ‘Learning-centred parental engagement’ *Educational Review*, 70(5), pp. 603-621.

Goodwyn, A. (2012) ‘One Size Fits All: The Increasing Standardisation of English Teachers' Work in England. *English teaching: Practice and critique,* 11(4), pp. 36-53.

Gorard, S., Ventista, O., Morris, R., and See, B.H. (2020) ‘Who wants to be a teacher? Findings from a survey of undergraduates in England. *Project Report*. Durham University Evidence Centre for Education, Durham.

Gorard, S., See, B. H. and Morris, R. (2022) ‘How to Get More People into Teaching? Comparing Undergraduates’ and Teacher Trainees’ Motivation and Perceptions of a Teaching Career’ *Education Sciences.*

Gorard, S. (2023) *Live video footage from the BERA* conference, Aston University, 12-14 September 2023.

Gordon, A.L. (2020) ‘Educate–mentor–nurture: Improving the transition from initial teacher education to qualified teacher status and beyond’. *Journal of Education for Teaching,* 46(5), pp. 664-675.

Greany, T. and Waterhouse, J. (2016) ‘Rebels against the system. Leadership agency and curriculum innovation in the context of school autonomy in England’. *International Journal of Educational Management,* 30, pp. 1188-1206.

Greany, T. and Higham, R. (2018) *Hierarchy, Markets and Networks. Analysing the Self-improving School system Agenda in England and the Implications for Schools.* London: UCL Institute of Education Press.

Grey, I. and Arora, T. (2020) 'Health behaviour changes during COVID-19 and the potential consequences: A mini-review', *Sage Journals.*

Griffiths, J. (2018) 'Initial teacher education without a bursary: what is the cost for student teachers? '*Teacher Education Advancement Network Journal,* 11 (1). pp. 84-94.

Gronn, P. (1999) *The Making of Educational Leaders.* Cassell.

Gu, Q. and Day, C. (2007) 'Teachers resilience: A necessary condition for effectiveness' *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 23(8), pp. 1302-1316.

Gu, Q. (2018) *(Re)conceptualising teacher resilience: A social-ecological approach to understanding teachers' professional worlds. Resilience in education: Concepts, contexts and connections,* pp.13-33.

Gunter H. M. and Ribbins, P. (2002) 'Leadership Studies in Education Towards a Map of the Field', *Educational Management & Administration, 30(4), pp. 387-416.*

Gunter, H. M, (2004) 'Labels and labelling in the field of educational leadership' *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education,* 25(1), pp. 21-41.

Gunter, H., Rayner, S., Thomas, H., Fielding, A., Butt, G. and Lance, A. (2004) 'Remodelling the school workforce: developing perspectives on headteacher workload. *Management in Education',* 18(3), pp. 6-11.

Gunter, H. M, and Rayner, S. (2007) 'Modernizing the school workforce in England: challenging transformation and leadership?' *Leadership,* 3(1), pp. 47-64.

Gunter, H. M, and Forrester, G. (2008) '*School leaders: Meeting the challenge of change'. In Radical Reforms* (pp. 83-95). Routledge.

Gunter, H. M. (2010) *The state and education policy: The academies programme torrossa.com*

Gunter, H.M. (2016) *An Intellectual history of school leadership and practice research.* Bloomsbury.

Gunter, H. M., Courtney, S.J., Hall, D. and McGinity, R. (2018) 'School principals in neoliberal times: A case of luxury leadership?' *The Wiley handbook of global educational reform*, pp. 113-130.

Hall, D. J, Gunter, H. M. and Bragg, J. (2011) 'The discursive performance of leadership in schools'. *Management in Education,* 25(1), pp. 32-36.

Hall, D.J. (2013) 'The strange case of the emergence of distributed leadership in schools in England' *Educational Review,* 65(4), pp. 467-487.

Hallinger, P. (2018) 'Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership' *Educational Management Administration & Leadership,* 46(1), pp. 5-24.

Hamilton, L. and Corbett-Whittier, C. (2013) *Using Case Study in Education Research SAGE Publications*.

Hammersley, M. (2006) 'Ethnography: problems and prospects', *Ethnography and Education*, 1(1), pp. 3-14.

Hammersley-Fletcher, L. (2015) 'Value(s)-driven decision-making: The ethics work of English headteachers within discourses of constraint' *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 43(2), pp. 198-213.

Hargreaves, D. H. (2003) 'A Future for the School Curriculum' *Volume 17, Issue 3* https://doi.org/10.1177/0261429403017003006

Hargreaves, L., Cunningham, M., Hansen, A., McIntyre, D., Oliver, C. and Pell, T. (2007) 'The status of teachers and the teaching profession in England: Views from inside and outside the profession' *Final Report of the Teacher Status Project.* The Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Cambridge.

Hargreaves, D. H. (2010) *Creating a self-improving school system,* Nottingham: National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Service.

Hargreaves, A. (2021) 'Teacher collaboration: 30 years of research on its nature, forms, limitations and effects' *Policy, Teacher Education and the Quality of Teachers and Teaching,* pp. 103-121.

Harmsen, R., Helms-Lorenz, M., Maulana, R. and van Veen, K. (2019) 'The longitudinal effects of induction on beginning teachers' stress' *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 89(2), pp. 259-287.

Herbert, I. P., Rothwell, A. T., Glover, J. L. and Lambert, S. A. (2020) 'Graduate employability, employment prospects and work-readiness in the changing field of professional work'. *The International Journal of Management Education,* 18(2), p.100378.

Higham, R, Earley, P (2013) 'School autonomy and government control: school leaders' views on a changing policy landscape in England'. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership* 41 (6) pp. 701-717.

Hill, R., Dunford, J., Parish, N., Rea, S. and Sandals, L. (2012) *The growth of academy chains: implications for leaders and leadership.* Nottingham: National College for School Leadership.

Hilton, G. L. S. (2017) 'Disappearing Teachers: An Exploration of a Variety of Views as to the Causes of the Problems Affecting Teacher Recruitment and Retention in England', *Education Policy, Reforms & School Leadership*

Hollis, C. (2017) *A study of George Orwell: The man and his works.* Skyhorse.

Honingh, M., Bondarouk, E. and Brandsen, T. (2020) 'Co-production in primary schools: A systematic literature review'. *International Review of Administrative Sciences,* 86(2), pp. 222-239.

Hornby, G. and Blackwell, I. (2018) ‘Barriers to parental involvement in education: An update’. *Educational Review*, 70(1), pp. 109-119.

House of Commons (2018) ‘Training new teachers’. *Report of Session 2018-2019*. London, England: House of Commons.

House of Commons (2019) ‘Recruitment and Retention of Teachers’. *Report of Session 2019-20.* London, England: House of Commons.

Hughes, G. D. (2012) ‘Teacher retention: Teacher characteristics, school characteristics, organizational characteristics, and teacher efficacy’. *The Journal of Educational Research,* 105(4), pp. 245-255.

Hulme, M., Beauchamp, G., Clarke, L. and Hamilton, L. (2021) ‘Collaboration in times of crisis: Leading UK schools in the early stages of a pandemic’. Leadership and policy in Schools.

Hutchings, M. (2011) ‘What Impact Does the Wider Economic Situation Have on Teachers’ Career Decisions?’ *A Literature Review. DfE Research Report* DfE-RR136. London, England: DfE.

Hyatt, D., La Velle, L., Montgomery, C., Newman, S. (2020) ‘Initial teacher education in England and the COVID-19 pandemic: challenges and opportunities’, *Journal of Education for Teaching*

Johnson, M. and Coleman, V. (2023) ‘Teaching in uncertain times: Exploring links between the pandemic, assessment workload, and teacher wellbeing in England’. *Research in Education*, p.00345237231195270.

Jones K. and Tymms, P. (2014) ‘Ofsted's role in promoting school improvement: the mechanisms of the school inspection system in England. *Oxford Review of Education* 40(3) (June 2014), pp. 315-330 Published By: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

Jones, K. (2020) ‘Notes on a crisis: the pandemic and English schools’ *The Times*, December 2020.

Joseph, K. (1984) Speech at Conservative Party Conference ‘Commanding Heights’ *The Guardian*, archive online.

Keddie, A. (2017) ‘Primary school leadership in England: performativity and matters of professionalism’. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 38(8). pp. 1245–1257.

Kelchtermans, G., (2017) ‘Should I stay or should I go?: Unpacking teacher attrition/retention as an educational issue’. *Teachers and Teaching,* 23(8), pp. 961-977.

Kim, E.J. and Park, S. (2020) ‘Transformational leadership, knowledge sharing, organizational climate and learning: an empirical study’. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 41(6), pp. 761-775.

King, N. and Horrocks, C. (2010) *Interviews in Qualitative Research,* London: SAGE

Kvale, S. (1994) *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Sage Publications.

La Velle, L., Newman, S., Montgomery, C. and Hyatt, D. (2020) ‘Initial teacher education in England and the COVID-19 pandemic: challenges and opportunities’, *Journal of Education for teaching.*

La Velle, L. and Reynolds, K. (2020) *Reframing the professionalism of teachers. Education System Design.* Routledge: London, UK, pp. 213-223.

Langbein, L. and Roberts, F. (2023) ‘Money matters: teachers in the public and private sectors’. *Public Management Review*, 25(10), pp. 1958-1981.

Leckie, G. and Goldstein, H. (2017) ‘The evolution of school league tables in England 1992–2016: ‘Contextual value-added’, ‘expected progress’ and ‘progress 8’. *British Educational Research Journal,* 43(2), pp. 193-212

Leithwood, K., Harris, A. and Hopkins, D. (2020) ‘Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited’. *School leadership & management,* 40(1), pp. 5-22.

Lightfoot, L. (2016) ‘Nearly Half of England’s Teachers Plan to Leave in Next Five Years’, *The Guardian*.

Lowrie, A. and Hemsley-Brown, J. (2011) ‘This thing called marketisation’. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(11-12), pp. 1081-1086.

Luff, I. *(2021) The impacts of Ofsted inspection on secondary schools and their teachers between 1993 and 2018: a study of the perceptions of teachers with multiple experiences of school inspection.* (Doctoral dissertation, University of East Anglia).

Lundie, D. (2022) *School Leadership and the Market. In School Leadership between Community and the State: The Changing Civic Role of Schooling* pp. 173-202. Springer International Publishing.

Lynch, K., Grummell, B. and Devine, D. (2012) *New managerialism in education. Commercialisation, carelessness and gender.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Lynch, K. (2015) ‘*New managerialism: The impact on Education’*. http/concept.lib.ed.ac.uk Concept online.

Lynch, S., Worth, J., Bamford, S., Wespieser, K. (2016) ‘Engaging teachers: NFER analysis of teacher retention’. Slough, UK: *National Foundation for Educational Research*. [Online] Available at: https://nfer.ac.uk/publications/LFSB01/LFSB01.pdf.

MacBeath, J.(2007) ‘Leadership as a subversive activity’, *Journal of Educational Administration*, 45(3), pp. 242-264.

MacBeath, J.(2012) *Future of teaching profession* (pp. 1-112). Brussels: Education International.

Macfarlane, B. (2010) *Values and virtues in qualitative research.* Research Gate, UK.

Maguire, M., Gewirtz, S., Towers, E. and Neumann, E. (2020) ‘Contextualising policy work: Policy enactment and the specificities of English secondary schools’. *Research papers in education,* 35(4), pp. 488-509.

Mahon, R. (2011) ‘The Jobs Strategy: From neo-to inclusive liberalism?’ *Review of International Political Economy*, 18(5), pp. 570-591.

Mahony, P., Menter, I. and Hextall, I. (2004) ‘The emotional impact of performance-related pay on teachers in England’. *British Educational Research Journal,* 30(3), pp. 435-456.

Male, T. (2022) ‘The rise and rise of academy trusts: continuing changes to the state-funded school system in England’. *School Leadership & Management,* 42(4), pp. 313-333.

Mason, J. (1996) *Qualitative researching.* Sage London.

Matthias, C. (2014) ‘Qualitative Research with Shortage Subject Teaching Candidates: The Journey to Teacher Training’. *Report for the National College for Teaching and Leadership.* London, England: DfE.

Matthijs Bal, P. and Visser, M. S. (2011) ‘When are teachers motivated to work beyond retirement age? The importance of support, change of work role and money’. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership,* 39(5), pp. 590-602.

McCarthy, C.J., Blaydes, M., Weppner, C.H. and Lambert, R.G. (2022) ‘Teacher stress and COVID-19: Where do we go from here?’ *Phi Delta Kappan,* 104(1), pp. 12-17.

McIntyre, J. and Hobson, A.J. (2016) ‘Supporting beginner teacher identity development: External mentors and the third space’. *Research Papers in Education,* 31(2), pp. 133-158.

McLaughlin S (2022) ‘Reflections on the challenges of Headship’, *Journal of Education*

McMillen, J, Shumaker, S. (1993) *Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction*, Harper Collins College Publishers.

Menter, I. and Murray, J. (2013) *Developing research in teacher education.* Routledge.

Menzies, L. (2023) ‘Continuity and churn: understanding and responding to the impact of teacher turnover’. *London Review of Education*, 21(1).

Merendino, A., Dibb, S., Meadows, M., Quinn, L., Wilson, D., Simkin, L. and Canhoto, A. (2018) ‘Big data, big decisions: The impact of big data on board level decision-making’. *Journal of Business Research*, 93, pp .67-78.

Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An expanded sourcebook.* Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Miles, M. B. Huberman, A. M. and Saldana, J. (2014) *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Morris, P (2011) Pick ’n’ mix, select and project; policy borrowing and the quest for ‘world class’ schooling: an analysis of the 2010 Schools White Paper, pp. 89-107.

Morrison, J. (2012) ‘The principal’s role in teacher retention: Keeping new teachers’. *A white paper produced for the RETAIN Centre of Excellence Newberry College.*

Murtagh, L., Dawes, L., Rushton, E. A. and Ball-Smith, C. (2024) ‘Early career teacher mentoring in England: a case study of compliance and mediation’. *Professional Development in Education,* pp. 1-14.

National Audit Office (2017) *Retaining and developing the teaching workforce*. HC 307. NAO: London.

National College for Teaching and Leadership (2016) *The Allocation of Initial Teacher Training Places: Methodology for the 2017/18 Academic Year.* London, England: DfE.

National Education Union (2018) *Teachers workload survey,* Available at:neu.org.uk

National Education Union (2019) *Teachers workload survey,* Available at:neu.org.uk

National Education Union (2020) *Teachers workload survey,* Available at :neu.org.uk

National Education Union (2020) *Teachers: opportunities in a widening career choice,* Available at:neu.org.uk

National Education Union (2021) *Teacher recruitment and retention,* Available at:neu.org.uk

National Education Union (2022) *The impact of social media within our schools T.E.S.* Online, December, 2022.

Nelson, E. and Charteris, J. (2021) ‘Student voice research as a technology of reform in neoliberal times’. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society,* 29(2), pp. 213-230.

Nias, J. (2014) *Changing times, changing identities: Grieving for a lost self. In Education Research and Evaluation: For Policy and Practice.* pp. 139-156. Routledge.

Nias, J. (2017) *A more distant drummer: teacher development as the development of self. In Education and social change.* pp. 3-28. Routledge.

Norman, P. S. (2019) *Headteacher experiences and perceptions of standards-led reform in English secondary schools.* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Plymouth).

Noyes, A, Geppert, C, McIntyre, J. (2019) *Teacher training bursaries in England An analysis of their impact on the quantity and quality of trainees.* University of Nottingham.

O'Connor, A. (2013) ‘A conceptual framework for entrepreneurship education policy: Meeting government and economic purposes’. *Journal of Business Venturing,* 28(4), pp. 546-563.

Ovenden-Hope, T., Blandford, S., Cain, T. and Maxwell, B. (2018) ‘‘RETAIN’ Early Career Teacher Retention Programme: Evaluating the role of research informed continuing professional development for a high quality, sustainable 21st century teaching profession’, *Journal of Education for Teaching.* ISSN 0260-7

Ovenden-Hope, T., Passy, R. and Iglehart, P. (2022) *Educational Isolation and the Challenge of "Place" for Securing and Sustaining a Quality Teacher Supply. In The Palgrave Handbook of Teacher Education Research* (pp. 1-22). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Ovenden-Hope, T. and Passy, R. (2019) *Educational Isolation: A challenge for schools in England.*

Page, D. (2017) 'The surveillance of teachers and the simulation of teaching'. *Journal of Education Policy*, 32(1), pp. 1-13.

Pascal, C. and Ribbins, P. (1998) *Understanding primary headteachers conversations on characters, careers and* characteristics. Burns & Oates.

Patton, M. Q. (2002) 'Two Decades of Developments in Qualitative Inquiry: A Personal, Experiential Perspective'. *Qualitative Social Work*,1(3), pp. 261-283.

Patton, W. and McMahon, M. (2021) *Career development and systems theory: Connecting theory and practice. In Career Development and Systems Theory. Brill.*

Percival, A. and Tranter, S. (2004) *How to run your school successfully.* A&C Black.

Perrone, F. (2022) 'Leadership and teacher retention'. *Leadership and Teacher Retention.*

Perry, E., Halliday, J., Higginson, J. and Patel, S. (2022) 'Meeting the challenge of providing high-quality continuing professional development for teachers' *The Wellcome CPD Challenge Pilot Delivery Report.*

Perryman, J. (2009) 'Inspection and the fabrication of professional and performative processes', *Journal of Education Policy*, 24(5), pp. 611–631.

Perryman, J., Ball, S., Maguire and M., Braun, A. (2011) 'Life in the pressure cooker—school league tables and English and mathematics teachers' responses to accountability in a results driven era'. *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 59(2), pp. 179-195.

Perryman, J. and Calvert, G. (2020) 'What motivates people to teach, and why do they leave? Accountability, performativity and teacher retention', *British Journal of Educational Studies*.

Perryman, J., Bradbury, A., Calvert, G. and Kilian, K. (2023) 'An inquiry into the future of school inspection'. London: NEU

Phillips, D. and Ochs, K. (2004) 'Researching policy borrowing: Some methodological challenges in comparative education' *British Educational Research Journal*, 30(6), pp. 773-784.

Poole, A., (2023) *Teachers' and leaders' lived experiences of the school inspection system in England. A case study of two secondary schools serving disadvantaged communities* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Sussex).

Powney, J. and Watts, M. (2018) *Interviewing in Educational Research.* Taylor and Francis.

Proctor, H., Roch, A., Breidenstein, G. and Forsey, M. (2020) ‘Parents, schools and the twenty-first-century state: comparative perspectives’. *Comparative Education*, 56(3), pp. 317-330.

Propper, C. (2006) ‘Are public sector workers motivated by money?’ *CHERE Distinguished Lecture Bristol*.

Proudfoot, K. (2021) ‘Panopticism, teacher surveillance and the ‘unseen’. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 42(5-6), pp. 812-827.

Research Excellence Framework (2021) Research England.

Ribbins, P. (1999) ‘Understanding leadership: Developing headteachers’. *Educational management: Redefining theory, policy, practice,* pp. 77-89.

Ribbins, P. (2008) ‘History and the study of ‘administration’ (LAMPS) in education: a reflection on an editorial for a special issue’. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 40(1), pp. 61-74.

Richards, K. A., Hemphill, M. A. and Templin, T. J. (2018) ‘Personal and contextual factors related to teachers’ experience with stress and burnout’. *Teachers and Teaching,* 24(7), pp. 768-787.

Richards, G. and Richardson, R. eds. (2019) *Reducing Teachers' Marking Workload and Developing Pupils' Learning: How to Create More Impact with Less Marking.* Routledge.

Ritchie, J. Lewis, J. McNaughton-Nicholls, C., Ormston, R. (2003) *Qualitative Research Practice.* Sage London.

Rizvi, F. and Lingard, B. (2009) *Globalizing education policy.* Routledge.

Robertson-Smith, G. and Markwick, C. (2009) ‘Employee engagement: A review of current thinking’. *Brighton: Institute for Employment studies.*

Robson, C. (2011) *Real World Research: a resource for users of social research methods in applied settings.* Wiley UK

Ross, A. and Hutchings, M. (2003) ‘Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland’. *OECD Country Background Report.* Available at: http://www. OECD. org/data OECD.

Rubin, H. and Rubin, I. (2012) *Qualitative Interviewing (2nd ed): The Art of Hearing Data.* Sage Research Methods.

Ryan, W. and Bernard, R. (2003) *Techniques to Identify Themes.* SAGE

Saldaña, J. (2009) *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*, London: Sage Publications Ltd

Saldaña, J. (2014) *Fundamentals of qualitative research,* Oxford University Press

Savage, M. (2017) ‘Almost a Quarter of Teachers who have Qualified Since 2011 have left Profession’. *The Guardian* May 2017

School Teacher Review Body (2022) ‘Teacher pay and comparison with the private sector’. *Report by the Gatsby Foundation.*

Scutt, K. (2019) ‘Don’t underestimate the importance of school culture for retaining teachers!’ [Online] Available at: www.schoolsweek.co.uk (accessed, September 2020).

See, B.H., Gorard, S., Morris, R. and El Soufi, N. (2019) ‘Attracting and retaining teachers in hard to staff areas: What does the evidence say?’ *Durham University Evidence Centre for Education.*(Updated in 2020, below).

See, B. H., Morris, R., Gorard, S. and El Soufi, N. (2020) ‘What works in attracting and retaining teachers in challenging schools and areas?’ *Oxford Review of Education*, 46(6), pp. 678-697

See, B.H. and Gorard, S. (2020) ‘Why don’t we have enough teachers?: A reconsideration of the available evidence’. *Research papers in education*, 35(4), pp. 416-442.

See, B. H., Morris, R., Gorard, S., Kokotsaki, D. and Abdi, S. (2020) ‘Teacher recruitment and retention: A critical review of international evidence of most promising interventions’. *Education Sciences,* 10(10), p.262.

See, B. H., Gorard, S., Morris, R. and El-Soufi, N., (2020) ‘How to recruit and retain teachers in hard-to-staff areas: A systematic review of the empirical evidence’. *Exploring Teacher Recruitment and Retention, pp.148-162.*

See, B. H., Morris, R., Gorard, S. and El Soufi, N. (2021) ‘Recruiting and retaining teachers: what works?’ *Researching Education,* 1(2).

See, B. H., Gorard, S., Morris, R. and Ventista, O. (2022) *Rethinking the complex determinants of teacher shortages.* The Palgrave Handbook of Teacher Education Research, pp.1-28.

Sellen, P (2018) *Teacher workload and professional development in England’s secondary schools: insights from TALIS.* Education policy institute.

Sharp, C., Smith, R., Worth, J. and Van den Brande, J. (2019) *Part-Time Teaching and Flexible Working in Secondary Schools.* National Foundation for Educational Research. The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 2DQ, UK.

She, P. (2017) *Essays on career mobility in the UK labour market.* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Essex).

Shelton, A. A. and Flint, M. (2020) ‘Dichotomies of method and practice: a review of literature on transcription’, *Qualitative Research Journal*.

Shine, K. (2020) ‘Everything is negative’: Schoolteachers’ perceptions of news coverage of education. *Journalism*, 21(11), pp. 1694-1709.

Sibieta, L. (2018) ‘The Teacher Labour Market in England: Shortages, Subject Expertise and Incentives’, ONS.

Sibieta, L. (2018) ‘Nearly Half of England’s Teachers Plan to Leave in Next Five Years’, *The Guardian*,[Online]. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/mar/22/teachers-plan-leave-five-years-survey-workload-england (Accessed: 28 November 2018).

Sibieta, L. (2020) *Teacher shortages in England. Analysis and pay options*, Education Policy Institute

Silverman, D. (2013) *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook, 4th ed.* London: Sage.

Simon, C., James, C. and Simon, A. (2021) ‘The growth of multi academy trusts in England: Emergent structures’. *Educational management and Leadership* Vol 49 pp. 112-127.

Sims, D., Grayson, H. and Wespieser, K. (2015) ‘*A Guide to the Evidence on Academies’.* National Foundation for Educational Research. The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 2DQ, UK.

Sims, S. (2016) *High-Stakes Accountability and Teacher Turnover: how do different school inspection judgements affect teachers' decisions to leave their school?* Institute of Education, University College London.

Sims, S. (2017) ‘*TALIS 2013: Working Conditions, Teacher Job Satisfaction and Retention’. Statistical Working Paper.* UK Department for Education. Castle View House East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2GJ, UK.

Sims, S. (2017) *What Happens When You Pay Shortage-Subject Teachers More Money? Simulating the Effects of Early-Career Salary Supplements on Teacher Supply in England.* London: The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, November 2017.

Sims, S. (2020) ‘Modelling the relationships between teacher working conditions, job satisfaction and workplace mobility’ *British Educational Research Journal*; Wiley online

Sims, S. and Jerrim, J. (2020) ‘TALIS 2018: Teacher Working Conditions, Turnover and Attrition’. *Statistical Working Paper*. UK Department for Education. Castle View House East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2GJ, UK.

Skerritt, C. (2023) ‘School autonomy and the surveillance of teachers’. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 26(4), pp. 553-580.

Skilbeck, M., Connell, H. (2004) *Teachers for the future: The changing nature of society and related issues for the teaching workforce.* [Online]. Available at: http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED534330.pdf.

Skinner, B., Leavey, G. and Rothi, D. (2021) ‘Managerialism and teacher professional identity: Impact on well-being among teachers in the UK’. *Educational Review,* 73(1), pp. 1-16.

Skinner, B., Leavey, G. and Rothi, D. (2018) 'Managerialism and teacher professional identity: impact on the well-being of teachers in the UK', *Educational Review*, 2021 73(1) pp. 1-16.

Smethem, L. (2007) 'Retention and intention in teaching careers: will the new generation stay?' *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice,* 13(5), 465-480

Smithers, A., Robinson, P. (2003) *Factors affecting teachers' decisions to leave the profession*. London, UK: Department for Education and Skills. [Online]. Available at: http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/4759/1/RR430.pdf.

Smithers, A., Robinson, P. (2005) *Teacher turnover, wastage and movements between schools*. London, UK: Department for Education and Skills. [Online]. Available at: http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5625/1/RR640.pdf.

Social Mobility Commission (2021) Report: 'Aims to improve social mobility'. *The Guardian* March 2021.

Spence, A. (2011) *Labour market. Social Trends.* pp.212-236.

Springer, S. (2016) *The discourse of neoliberalism: An anatomy of a powerful idea*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Stake, R. E. (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.

Stevenson, H. (2007) 'Restructuring teachers' work and trade union responses in England: Bargaining for change?' *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(2), pp. 224-251.

Stevenson, H. and Wood, P. (2013) 'Markets, managerialism and teachers' work: the invisible hand of high stakes testing in England'. *International Education Journal: comparative perspectives.* 12(2).

Stevenson, R.B., Lasen, M., Ferreira, J.A. and Davis, J. (2017) 'Approaches to embedding sustainability in teacher education: A synthesis of the literature', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 63, pp. 405-417.

Strike, T. (2009) *Evolving academic career pathways in England. Academic and professional identities in higher education* (pp. *95-116).* Routledge.

Sturrock, S. (2022) 'Primary teachers' experiences of neo-liberal education reform in England: 'Nothing is ever good enough''. *Research Papers in Education,* 37(6), pp. 1214-1240.

Sullivan, A., Johnson, B., Simons, M. and Tippett, N. (2021) 'When performativity meets agency: How early career teachers struggle to reconcile competing agendas to become 'quality teachers'', *Teachers and teaching,* 27(5), pp. 388-403.

Tereshchenko, A., Mills, M. and Bradbury, A. (2020) Making progress? Employment and retention of BAME teachers in England.UCL.uk

Tereshchenko, A. (2023) Presentation at the BERA conference, 2023. Aston University, 12th-14th September, 2023. Access through BERA website.

Thomas, G. (2013) ‘How to do your research project’ *Journal of Education for Teaching,* Sage Publications.

Thomas, G (2016) *How to do your case study.* Sage Publications.

Thompson, G., Lingard, B. and Ball, S.J. (2021) ‘Indentured autonomy’: Headteachers and academisation policy in Northern England’. *Journal of Educational Administration and History,* 53(3-4), pp. 215-232.

Thomson, P. (2008) ‘Headteacher critique and resistance: a challenge for policy and for leadership/management scholars’. *Journal of Educational Administration and History,* 40(2), pp. 85-100.

Thomson, P. (2009) *School Leadership-Heads on the Block?* Routledge.

Thomson, P. (2011) ‘Creative leadership: a new category or more of the same?’ *Journal of Educational Administration and History,* 43(3), pp. 249-272.

Thomson, P. and Heffernan, A. (2021) ‘Using theory in educational leadership, management and administration research’. *Understanding Educational Leadership: Critical Perspectives and Approaches,* pp. 155-170.

Thomson, P., Greany, T. and Martindale, N. (2021) ‘The trust deficit in England: emerging research evidence about school leaders and the pandemic’. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 53(3-4), pp. 296-300.

Tian, M. (2023) ‘A critical friend or the sword of Damocles: Headteachers’ use of micropolitical strategies in inspection’. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, p.17411432231222719.

Tomlinson, S. (2001) ‘Education Policy, 1997-2000: the effects on top, bottom and middle England’. *International studies in sociology of education,* 11(3), pp. 261-278.

Tomlinson, M. (2012) ‘Graduate employability: A review of conceptual and empirical themes’. *Higher Education Policy*, 25, pp. 407-431.

Tomlinson, H. (2013) *‘Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders’* (pp. 225-246). Routledge.

Towers, E., Gewirtz, S., Maguire, M. and Neumann, E. (2022) ‘A profession in crisis? Teachers' responses to England's high-stakes accountability reforms in secondary education’. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 117, p.103778.

Travers, C.J. and Cooper, C.L. (2018) ‘Mental health, job satisfaction and occupational stress among UK teachers’*. In Managerial, occupational and organizational stress research* (pp. 291-307). Routledge.

Troman, G. and Woods, P. (2001) *Primary teachers' stress.* Psychology Press.

University of Birmingham, ‘Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research’, *UoB*

Unsworth-Hughes, C.E. (2022) *Perceptions and experiences of teacher surveillance: a case study of an independent school.* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).

Valtierra, K.M. and Michalec, P., 2017. Deep curriculum: Guiding the inner lives of early career teachers. '*Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*,'*19* (1/2), pp.19-171.

Walker, M., Worth, J., Van den Brande, J.(2019) 'Teacher Workload Survey 2019'. *National Foundation for Educational Research.*

Walker, M., Sharp, C. and Sims, D. (2020) 'Job satisfaction and workload of teachers and senior leaders Responses to COVID-19', Slough: *National Foundation for Educational Research.*

Ward, H. (2016) 'Unqualified teachers drafted in amid maths staffing crises'. London: *TES,* July 29th and 'Teachers taking support roles to sidestep workload'. London: *TES Insight,* July 15th.

Waters, M. and Brighouse, T. (2022) *About our schools: Improving on previous best.* Crown House Publishing Ltd.

Watt, H. and Richardson, P. (2012) 'Motivational factors influencing teaching as a career choice: Development and validation of the FIT-choice scale'. *Journal of Experimental Education,* 75, pp. 167–202.

Whiting, C., Black, P., Hordern, J., Parfitt, A., Reynolds, K., Sorensen, N. and Whitty, G. (2016) 'Towards a new topography of ITT: a profile of Initial Teacher Training in England 2015-16', *Paper from the IFE No. 1.*

Whittaker.F. (2020) 'DfE Slashes ITT Bursaries as COVID Causes Supply Rises', [Online]. Available at:https://schoolsweek.co.uk/dfe-wields-axe-on-teacher-training-bursaries-as-covid-causes-supplyrises13 October 2020.

Whitty, G.(2016) *Research and Policy in Education: Evidence, Ideology and Impact*. Trentham Books.

Whitty, G. and Wisby, E. (2016) *Education in England – a testbed for network governance?* pp. 316-329 Published online: 16 May 2016. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2016.1184873

Wilkins, C., Busher, H., Kakos, M., Mohamed, C. and Smith, J. (2012) 'Crossing borders: new teachers co-constructing professional identity in performative times'. *Professional Development in Education*, 38(1), pp. 65-77.

Wilkins, A. (2017) 'Rescaling the local: Multi-academy trusts, private monopoly and statecraft in England'. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 49(2), pp. 171-185.

Wilkins, C. (2020) *Professional identity in teaching. In 'Professional identity in the caring professions'* (pp. 78-88). Routledge.

Williams, M. and Grayson, H., (2018) '*School Funding in England Since 2010 - What the Key Evidence Tells Us'.* National Foundation for Educational Research. The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 2DQ, UK.

Wilson, T. and Muir, D. (2022) *Employment and Opportunity in the UK*.

Wood, P. (2019) ‘Rethinking time in the workload debate’. *Management in Education,* 33(2), pp. 86-90.

Woods, P. and Jeffrey, B. (1996) *Teachable Moments: The Art of Teaching in Primary Schools.* Buckingham: The Open University Press.

Woods, P., Jeffrey, B., Troman, G. and Boyle, M. (1997) ‘*Restructuring Schools: Reconstructing Teachers: responding to Change in the primary School.* Buckingham: The Open University Press.

Woods, P. (2001) ‘*Intensification and stress in teaching. Understanding and preventing teacher burnout’. In a sourcebook of international research and practice,* (pp. 115-138).

Woods, P. (2004) *Teaching and learning in the new millennium. In Developing teachers and teaching practice* (pp. 97-116). Routledge.

Woods, P., Roberts, A., Jarvis, J. and Culshaw, S. (2020) *School leadership preparation and development in England.* Oxford encyclopaedia of educational administration.

Woods, P. and Sikes, P. (2022) *Successful writing for qualitative researchers* Updated edition. Routledge.

Worth, J., Bamford, S. and Durbin, B. (2015) ‘Should I Stay or Should I Go? NFER Analysis of Teachers Joining and Leaving the Profession’. Slough, England: *National Foundation for Educational Research.*

Worth, J. (2017) ‘Teacher Retention and Turnover Research. Research Update 2: Teacher Dynamics in Multi-Academy Trusts’, Slough: *National Foundation for Educational Research.* [Online]. Available at: https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/NUFS02/ [10 October 2017].

Worth, J. and De Lazzari, G. (2017) ‘Teacher Retention and Turnover Research, Update 1: Teacher Retention by Subject. Slough, England: *National Foundation for Educational Research.*

Worth, J., Lynch, S., Hilary, J., Rennie, C. and Andrade, J. (2018) ‘Teacher Workforce Dynamics in England: Nurturing, Supporting and Valuing Teachers’. National Foundation for Educational Research.

Worth, J. and Faulkner-Ellis, H. (2019) ‘Teacher labour market in England’. *Annual Report.*

Worth, J. and McLean, D. (2020) ‘The Impact of COVID-19 on Initial Teacher Training. Implications for Teacher Supply in England’. *National Foundation for Educational Research.*

Worth, J. and Van den Brande, J. (2020) ‘Teacher autonomy: how does it relate to job satisfaction and retention?’ *National Foundation for Educational Research.*

Worth, J. and Faulkner-Ellis, H. (2021) ‘Teacher Labour Market in England: Annual Report 2021’. *National Foundation for Educational Research.*

Worth, J. (2022) ‘Ethnic diversity in the teaching workforce’. *National Foundation for Educational Research.*

Worth, J. (2023) ‘Short Supply: Addressing the Post-Pandemic Teacher Supply Challenge in England’. *National Foundation for Educational Research.*

Yin, R. K.(2003) *Applications of Case Study Research Thousand Oaks.* Sage.

Zuccollo, J. (2024) ‘Performance-related pay is ending - but what comes next?’ *TES* Available at: https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/performance-related-pay-ends-schools-teacher-pay-rises (Accessed 18th Jan

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1a
PARTICIPANT SELECTION CRITERIA AND TARGET QUOTA

Selection criteria for participants	**Quota**
Serving Headteachers of Secondary Schools	Target: 25
Location West Midland region of England across Local Authorities Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Staffordshire, Solihull, Warwickshire, Walsall, Worcestershire.	Target: 2 from each.
Representative of male and female in line with national data: 64% of Secondary Headteachers are male, 36% are female in England.	Target: 7 female 18 male
Varying in Headship experience: early up to 4 years; middle 5-7 years; late 8 years plus; second Headship.	At least 2 per career stage.
Varying in age in line with range of national data where youngest Headteacher is 30, oldest 69.	At least 2 per decade.
Range of types of school: Academies including stand alone and those in Multi Academy Trusts, Local Authority Maintained, other. Take account of national proportions, 75% Academies. Consider others. Schools mixed/single sex match national data.	At least 15 Academies. Mainly mixed.
Range of inner city and suburban schools. Range of budgets and resources.	A range per classification
Schools of varying student age ranges match national data ages: 11-16; 11-18; 14-19. Consider others.	Mainly 11-16/18
Schools with varying student characteristics in proportions of ethnicity, disadvantage, Special Educational needs.	Full range
Schools of varying student roll size: from small/medium >1000; large >1000. Varying in numbers of teachers and support staff.	Full range
Schools with different Ofsted judgements.	Full range

APPENDIX 1b
PROFILE OF CONFIRMED PARTICIPANTS

Profile of Participants					
Participants	25 all located in West Midland region.				
Position	All Headteachers in Secondary schools.				
Gender	Female		Male		
	7		18		
Years of Headship Experience	Less than three years:	Four to seven years:	Eight years and over		
	9	13	3		
Age (Median 46)	33-39	40-45	46-50	51 and over	
	2	8	7	8	
Institution Type	Maintained	Academies	Selective	Gender	Other/org
	6	19	2	4 Single sex	6
Institution Phase	11-18	11-16	All through	Other	
	10	12	1	2	
Location	Inner city	Suburban	Town	Rural	
	13	12	0	0	
Surrounding community	High deprivation	Mix affluent/deprived	Affluent		
	9	13	3		
Ofsted Judgement	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate	
	5	14	5	1	

APPENDIX 1c
THE FOLLOWING TABLE PROVIDES DETAILS OF QUESTIONS AND THE REASONS FOR ASKING THOSE QUESTIONS IN SECTION A AND SECTION B OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions	**Reasons for asking those questions**
Section A. Background Information	To provide background and context to understand their perspectives
How many years' experience do you have?	
Number of years working as a Headteacher at this school	Insight into previous experience
Number of years working as a Headteacher in total	Whether in early, middle, or extensive career phase.
Number of years in other management roles	Career journey and breadth of responsibilities
Number of years working as a teacher in total	Policy changes they have experienced shaping their perspectives.
Number of years working in other jobs	Background before teaching or within a career break.
Location and type of school	Possible exploration: Are these factors which affect retention?
How would you describe the location of your school	To understand their working landscape and provides context useful to compare with national profile.
Current numbers of teaching and support staff	Provides context. Useful to compare with national profile.
Current student numbers	Provides context to the research. Useful to compare with national profile.
Student characteristics	
Percentage of students whose first language is not English	Current research is unclear whether these factors influence retention.
Percentage of students with special needs	Provides context to a schools particular teaching environment.
Percentage of students from socio disadvantaged homes (FSM).	Ditto

Section B perspectives on the retention of teachers	Reasons for asking those questions
Q1 What are your views and opinions on the current situation regarding the retention of teachers?	Designed to encourage openness to capture their perspectives and wide-ranging views but their unguided responses may be difficult to code.
Q2. What factors have contributed to teachers leaving the profession?	Responses provide opportunity for emerging patterns and themes.
Q3. In the last 3 years how many teachers have left your school to pursue other careers?	
The number of teachers leaving	What is the reality? Provides current numbers of leavers.
At what stage in their teaching career they left	When are teachers leaving? Provides a snapshot of numbers for exploration.
What was their subject specialism	Have different subjects, different leaving rates?
What did they move on to do	Where are they going when they leave?
Q4. What from your perspective are the key barriers to retaining teachers?	Professionally researched in literature. Provides new and evolving challenges/reasons as to why teachers are continuing to leave.
Q5. What strategies have you been able to implement to retain teachers and which have been successful? Please list in order of success.	To understand their practice and its conceptual basis. A compendium “good practice” will provide advice to others.
Q6. The 2016 and 2019 legislation placed the sole responsibility to resolve teacher retention on Headteachers; how has this impacted on you personally and your school?	Recent legislation has little research in literature. Their perspective on responsibility is important and if their practices have changed.
Q7. What further support and/or policy initiatives from Government would you like?	To ascertain what support outside of the school context they want.
Q8. Given current Government policies, what do you think will improve retention in the short to medium term (2 to 5 years)?	To find out their views in resolving the issue. Little research previously undertaken in looking forward.
Q9. Are there any other points you wish to make?	A question to enable participants exploration and identification of other factors.

APPENDIX 1d
HEADTEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

The challenge of retaining teachers: evidence from the perspective of secondary Headteachers in England.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire as part of my doctoral thesis. As you may be aware, Government statistics (School Workforce Statistics 2018) report the highest teacher leaving rate in a decade, thus my research aims to shed light on the issue from your perspective. I take this opportunity to again stress that your responses are confidential and will remain anonymous throughout, so too your school. Within the scope of this research, the term "retention" relates to all teachers who have left the profession in England to pursue other careers. Should the space provided be insufficient for your answers, please feel free to provide additional/continuation sheets.

A. Background information

1. How many years' experience do you have?

Please write a number in each row. Count part of a year as 1 year.

a. ____ Year(s) working as a Headteacher at this school;
b. ____ Year(s) working as a Headteacher including all years;
c. ____ Year(s) working in other school management roles (do not include years working as headteacher);
d. ____ Year(s) working as a teacher in total (include all years of teaching);
e. ____ Year(s) working in other jobs.

2. Location and type of school:
   a) Location: How would you describe the location of your school? (e.g. Rural/inner city/urban, the local environment, socio economic factors).

   _____

   _____

   _____

   b) The current size of the school (staff numbers): teaching staff_____; support staff_____;
   c) Current student numbers_____;

3. Student characteristics:

a) Percentage of students whose first language is not English_____;
b) Percentage of students with special needs (formally identified as mentally, physically or emotionally disadvantaged) _____;
c) Percentage of students from socio economically disadvantaged homes (eligible for free school meals) _____;

B. Your perspective on the retention of teachers

1. What are your views and opinions on the current situation regarding the retention of teachers?

_____

_____

_____

2. What factors have contributed to teachers leaving the profession? (e.g. Government policy, institutional policy, individual factors, geographical/socio economic factors). Please list in order of priority

_____

_____

_____

3. In the last three years how many teachers have left your school to pursue other careers? How long had they been in teaching? What have they moved on to do? Do some subjects have particular retention issues?

_____

_____

_____

4 What, from your perspective, are the key barriers to retaining teachers?

_____

_____

_____

5. What strategies have you been able to implement to retain teachers and which have been successful? Please list in order of success.

_____

_____

_____

6. The 2016 and 2019 legislation placed the sole responsibility to resolve teacher retention on Headteachers; how has this impacted on you personally and your school?

_____

_____

_____

7. What further support and/or policy initiatives from Government would you like?

_____

_____

_____

8. Given current Government policies, what do you think will improve retention in the short to medium term (2 to 5 years)?

_____

_____

_____

9. Are there any other points you wish to make?

_____

_____

_____

Please email this questionnaire back to me and thank you again for your time and support; it is much appreciated. After analysis of all the completed questionnaires, a short summary will be sent to you, which I hope you will find useful.

APPENDIX 1e
EXAMPLE OF QUESTIONNAIRE CODING DATA RESPONSES

SCHOOL RESPONSES – Q2: What factors contribute to teachers leaving?		
ScA	Workload Parents Scrutiny Behaviour Scrutiny Funding Funding Scrutiny Funding Funding Alternative careers Government policy	1. Long hours marking-unmanageable workload. 2. Lack of parental support. 3. Ofsted. 4. Behaviour of students and lack of engagement. 5. Classroom data being used for Performance Management 6. Lack of promotion opportunities- TLR positions already filled. 7. Lack of funding-redundancy. 8. League tables. 9. Lack of SEND support. 10. Lack of mental health support for students and adults. 11. Certain routes into teaching e.g. Teach First providing opportunities with high profile companies that offer more than schools can. 12. Academy chains forcing their ethos onto schools that have failed due to poor results, that have not been from leadership, but lack of investment in deprived areas.
ScB	Workload Scrutiny Alternative careers Behaviour Parents	1. An increased desire for work life balance. 2. Increased accountability due to concerns over Ofsted accountability. 3. Increased options for alternative careers 4. Poor behaviour of students. Lack of respect from parents
ScC	Government policy Government policy Scrutiny	1. Constant Govt policy shift; 2. Instability in curriculum and qualifications; 3. Accountability-Ofsted and performance tables; 4. Resources and funding in schools; 5. Teachers pay compared to private sector;

	Funding Workload Individual	6. Workload and work life balance; 7. Individual/personal factors.
ScD	Alternative careers Pay Funding Workload Behaviour Leadership Leadership Scrutiny Scrutiny Teaching Parents Individual Individual Individual Individual	1. Enticing opportunities outside of the profession as a result of the following: - 2. Pay 3. Austerity in school resulting in lack of Career professional Dev/progression 4. Workload; 5. Threats to safety/poor behaviour of students; 6. A lack of principled leadership. 7. A lack of vision, ethos and feelings in schools; 8. External accountability pressures and Inspection; 9. Internal accountability pressures and monitoring; 10. A prescribed method of teaching which restricts the chance to be individual and to show genuine passion for subject/children or both; 11. A culture which empowers parents to criticise without any real justification either through the Inspectorate or the press; 12. Mental health 13. Other health concerns; 14. Other individual factors (childcare being a key example); 15. Socio-economic/geographical factors.
ScE	Funding Government policy Workload Workload Behaviour Funding Teaching Alternative careers	1. Pay 2. Government policy-high stakes 3. Long hours lots of research linking 50 hours plus is. 4. Workload-too much individual responsibility on teachers to plan in silos. Changes to specifications etc 5. Behaviour-in some schools it is impossible to teach. 6. Lack of external support for children/families that need it most leading to poor behaviour/lack of provision. 7. Changing workforce patterns 8. Hard to attract right candidates e.g. Science teachers-can earn far greater money in other professions-therefore we get poor quality graduates in some cases. Not necessarily the same in humanities subjects etc.

ScF	Government policy Government policy Individual	1. Government policy-the way that this is implemented in schools leading to huge amount of pressure on staff. 2. Institutional policy-informed by Government policy. 3. Individual factors-staff wanting a better work life balance when they are planning to start a family etc.
ScG	Government policy Funding Individual Q5	1. Govt policy on pay-means teaching is not attractive profession for new teachers-socio-economic factors are at play here. 2. Individual factors, a congruence of a number of individual stories has led to considerable staff movement in the last few years-this has at times included geographical factors and for a number of young staff a desire to work abroad for a period of time. 3. Institutional factors-our school works very hard to recruit and retain staff. We provide strong support to NQTs and RQTs employing a part time mentor to work with these staff.
ScH	Government policy Scrutiny Government policy Funding Parents Behaviour Social media Government policy Funding Workload Individual Parents Scrutiny	1. Govt policy, 2. Ofsted 3. LA policy 4. School funding 5. How the profession is seen by parents and their demands 6. Behaviour of difficult students through Fair Access Panel (FAP). 7. Social media. Govt policy, workload, lack of investment from the LA in social services and a break down in CAMHS, mental health services and LA policy and practices in reintegration of difficult students through FAP. Slashing of SEN funding bands from 7k to 3k impact on support staff and then workload. Parental power-increased demands for instant feedback-can turn up unannounced and demand to see people-they then write all over social media. The impact of social media on staff should not be underestimated-it can cause a lot of distress. The impact of Ofsted judgements is massive continual framework changes and demands-Ofsted judgements varies within teams-this has caused a lot of leavers to the profession.
ScI	Leadership Scrutiny Leadership Workload	I genuinely believe some schools are badly led and managed. 1. High accountability culture-particularly pressured if you are a teacher of a core subject, a subject leader or SLT. 2. Poor leadership and management culture. Blame high accountability.

	Leadership Funding	3. Work-life balance-and increasing awareness of the scale of the workload. Especially if schools are badly managed. 4. Budget cuts-this has put pressure on schools and resources and therefore has increased the impact of the reasons above.
ScJ	Funding Workload Individual	1. Staff salary-pay increases have not kept up with inflation for many years. 2. Workload-safeguarding responsibilities have increased significantly, and this coincides with large cuts to local council budgets. 3. House prices-a teaching salary is not sufficient to purchase an average priced house in the UK (£240,000 this is-more than 6x average teaching salary and over 10x starting salary.
ScK	Scrutiny Scrutiny Leadership Funding Workload Leadership Alternative careers	1. Raising of standards expected nationally: the increased focus on student attainment and progress with greater school and individual accountability for this has increased the pressures on staff and raised "risk" level of what was traditionally a secure job. By pressuring schools and staff to perform at levels typically above the national average, we have created a situation in which 50% of schools and staff "fail" to meet their standards by default. This pressure and risk leads to uncertainty and stress which in turn lead to departure. 2. Increased accountability at school level: quite rightly schools are more heavily focussed on student outcomes and have recognised that in order to meet that standard, excellent staff need to be in front of children. Whilst that has created a heavy focus on CPD in schools, it is clear that for schools who are able to recruit well, the easiest and most effective way to improve teaching quality is to move on weaker staff and replace with stronger staff. This in turn leads to higher turnover of staff. 3. Financial pressure: school finances are such that there is increased pressure to control staffing costs as costs continue to rise faster than funding. It is no longer possible to effectively manage finances without a planned turnover year on year with an expectation that some more experienced staff will leave and be replaced by less experienced staff with lower cost. Furthermore, class sizes, course numbers and teaching allocations have adapted to generate a more financially efficient teaching model. By increasing class size, cancelling smaller courses and reducing PPA or Leadership and Management allocations, we are effectively increasing the pressure and workload on teachers and thus adding to the workload, stress and pressure challenge they face. In fact, the financial challenge in some schools is such that they effectively target more experienced teachers, who have higher expectations of performance in any case, for capability processes as part of the financial planning on an annual basis and conduct those processes with financial necessity. This exacerbates the pressure on headteachers to seek an exit strategy for an underperforming member of staff

	Teaching Leadership Government policy Funding	who is more experienced, rather than a staff development approach. As this becomes the norm, the role of a teacher becomes less secure and less experienced teachers start considering alternate career options as they no longer consider teaching a job for life. 4. Enjoyment: When I started teaching the job and community were fun. Schools had staff events; staff committees arranged evenings out; staff would socialise both in the staff room and outside the school. The job was fun. In many schools, in part due to the pressures described above, this no longer happens. Indeed, for many teachers, especially new teachers, the role can be isolated. When this happens, teachers are less attached to the role or the school and more likely to leave. The ability to socialise is critical to the success of a staff community and the impact of failing to promote this is that staff are more willing to leave. 5. Financial: Unfortunately, the significant recruitment grants offered to teachers in shortage subjects present a false impression of the pay that teachers receive. Student teachers can receive quite significantly more funding whilst training than they do within their first few years of employment (especially when taxation, national insurance and pension contributions are factored in). This results in many staff going into teaching and immediately struggling to cope with their finances and/or refusing to accept roles at the bottom of the pay scale on the basis that they are already in receipt of greater renumeration.
ScL	Workload Teaching Individual Individual	1. Geographical factors has been a problem for us but a key one is family and those wanting to start families, flexible to go part-time and workload and work-life balance. 2. Being able to leave the job at work when go home. 3. Distance and ease of travel to work is becoming an increasing problem particularly for those with families and wanting to get home and spend quality time at home. 4. Increasing numbers of schools doing Saturday interventions exhausting staff despite the additional income.
ScM	 Individual Alternative careers	1. Very few leave the profession at this academy. 2. The largest factor is reducing hours-the return from maternity leave. 3. Other than that Teach first staff finish the course and go into industry.
ScN	 Individual Workload Individual	1. See Q1. 2. One factor that can have an impact on retention is when a teacher's partner is not a teacher. 2. We have lost a couple of teachers at our primary school in the early stages of their careers and this has been down to workload. And often working long into the evening. 3. This has been compounded when partners do not work in the teaching profession and resent that their

	Scrutiny	partners in teaching do have to work in the evenings. 4. High levels of accountability will have had an impact in some schools but as it stands our levels of retention are high.
ScO	Workload Individual Individual Individual	1. Workload (both-classroom teachers and those with management responsibility) 2. Work related stress 3. Work life balance 4. Lifestyle (early retirement)
ScP	Government policy Workload Funding Alternative careers Workload	1. Govt policy- constant changing examination regimes, constant changes in accountability with the impact on teachers through performance management around data. This has been addressed by DfE in managing workload but not all schools are adopting these approaches. 2. Economic factors-the desire for promotion is the greatest factor why teachers leave our school. The vast majority have gone onto promoted positions-a small number have left to start their own businesses. 3. Workload/performance- a small number predominantly NQTs have not been able to cope with the workload and have left. Two of these re-joined the profession through agencies.
ScQ	Government policy Funding Alternative careers Leadership Q5	1. Non-standard recruitment initiatives. 2. In this school-our size and slower movement of middle and senior leaders (who are effective and comfortable in their roles) thus reducing the internal opportunities for 3rd& 4th year teachers who are ambitious. 3. In the last 5 years only 4 teachers have left the school and profession. 4. I believe this is testament to our vision- creating a stimulating, rewarding and common-sense environment where teachers can be successful in doing the job they were trained to do.
ScR	Individual Individual	1. Individual factors relating to family and partners. 2. Relocating
ScS	Workload Scrutiny Individual Individual	1. The biggest factor to consider for those leaving the profession is work life balance. 2. This is valid for teachers who leave challenging schools. 3. Constant scrutiny and perceived pressure of work in schools-good or better. 4. Staff want a better life for themselves and their families-less commute. 5. Perception by teachers that a job in a good or outstanding school less pressured and more desirable than a job in a difficult school with uncertainty, constant change and scrutiny.
ScT	Individual	1. Difficult to say as we haven't had many staff leave the profession.

	Government policy Funding Leadership	2. We have had staff retire early, one on critical health grounds-from condition he suffered from. 3. A significant factor in this is the Govt Policy-deliberately running down the budget in schools. 4. This has meant reducing staff levels (and support staff). 5. Thus, increased pressures on senior leaders to supervisory duties- reduction in staff numbers has placed greater strain on teachers which in turn places strain on senior team.
ScU	Workload Scrutiny Behaviour Parents	There are a number of factors that are affecting retention. 1. Workload is significant, changes to league tables and accountability measures have led to highly stressful circumstances for the profession. 2. Ofsted and the associated development of curriculum/quality education, whilst broadly welcomed has added a time pressure to get things sorted before inspection. 3. Behaviour of some students and some parents adds significantly to the stress of teachers.
ScV	Government policy Scrutiny Behaviour Parents	1. Increased pressure and scrutiny from Government policy. 2. Increased fear at all levels from Ofsted, DfE. Institutional Academy Hierarchy and senior leaders. 3. Poor behaviour and lack of engagement from-parents.
ScW		See question 1 and 4.
ScX	Workload Individual	1. In recent years, the only one who left the profession left after his NQT year because he wasn't very good, he struggled to get a job in the sort of school he wanted, and he was happy to switch to a different profession. 2. Going back further (15 years perhaps) a member of staff left because she decided it was too hard, so she left teaching. She was a perfectionist and seemed unable to cut corners in order to survive. She had the makings of an outstanding teacher.
ScY	Government policy Scrutiny Behaviour Funding Scrutiny Workload	1. Changes to exams and specifications-removal of key subjects from qualifications. 2. Priorities over EBacc which has seen the narrowing and reduction of other foundation subjects. 3. Changes to Ofsted frameworks. 4. Challenges of different school contexts-mix of students, behaviour of students, mobility issues. 5. Budgetary restrictions and finance cuts. 6. Pressure over exam results. 7. Staff work-load expectations

APPENDIX 1f
SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Section A	**Background Information.**
Participants	All twenty-five invited Headteachers, comprising seven female and eighteen male, returned fully completed questionnaires.
Location	All participants are from schools located within the Midlands region, one of the most densely populated areas in England. They are from the following locations, with a combined population of 5.9 million (ONS 2019):- • Birmingham, • Wolverhampton, • Dudley, • Sandwell, • Solihull, • Staffordshire, • Walsall, • Warwickshire and • Worcestershire.
School Type / Age Range / Student Gender	• Academies: 19; • Maintained: 6; • 11 to 16: 12; • 11 to 18: 10; • 14 to 18: 1; • 10 to 18: 1; • All Through Ages: 1; • Mixed Pupils: 19; • All Girls: 3; • All Boys: 3
Section A. Question 1: How many years' experience do you have?	
Career Stage / Experience as a Headteacher (Total).	The data shows a full spectrum of career experience:- • Early career (0 to 3 years): 9 Headteachers; • Mid-career (4 to 7 years) 13 Headteachers; and • Extensive experience (8 years or above): 3 Headteachers
Other School Management Roles.	• All Headteachers have had prior school management roles.
All Years Working as a Teacher.	• The most experienced Headteacher has forty-five years in teaching; and • The least experienced has twelve years.
Working in Other Jobs.	• Fifteen participants had experience of other occupations; • Thirteen participants worked in other jobs (mainly business and industry prior to entering teaching; • One completed a PhD prior to teaching; and • One had a mid-career break between Headships to be an Ofsted Inspector.

Section A. Question 2: Location, Staff Numbers and Students on Roll.	
Location	• Thirteen Headteachers described their location as city; • Twelve Headteachers described their location as urban, (either large towns or "between" cities). • Descriptions of the surrounding communities range from schools in high or above average deprivation, to affluent residential locations.
Teaching Staff Number	• The smallest school: 4, • The largest: 120; • Total number (all schools): 1,496.
Support Staff Numbers	• The smallest school: 2; • The largest: 104; • Total number (all schools): 1,167.
Student Numbers	• The smallest school: 22; • The largest: 1,800 (one of the largest in England); • Total number (all schools): 22,011.
Section A. Question 3: Student Characteristics	
No. of Schools with Students Whose First Language is not English.	• **>** National Average: 14 (7 having **>**50% of students whose first language is not English) • **<** National Average: 11 (5 having **≤** 1% of students whose first language is not English)
No. of Schools with Students Having Special Needs.	• **>** National Average: 14 (5 having significantly high numbers); • **≤** National Average: 11.
No. of Schools with Students Eligible for FSMs (from Socio - Economically Disadvantaged Homes).	• **>**National Average: 20 (7 having **>**50% of students eligible); • **<**National Average: 5.
Section B. Perspectives on Retention.	
Question 1. What are your views and opinions on the current situation regarding the retention of teachers?	• All stated that retaining quality teachers was crucial to the success of their schools. • Eight stated their schools were currently in fortunate circumstances, having few retention issues. • Seventeen had retention issues. • Several themes emerged from their answers as to "*the problem*" including: o the changing role of teachers; o the inequalities of the funding policy for different schools/ localities; o newer ***and*** more experienced teachers are leaving; o concerns around bursaries; and o the recruitment and quality of entrants to the profession.

Question 2. In Order of Priority, What Factors have Contributed to Teachers Leaving the Profession?	Many Headteachers responded to this question honestly, at length and in detail; several consistent contributory factors were identified, comprising: • Workload; • Lack of resources and funding (as noted above) of schools • Ofsted inspection and league tables; • Government policy and practice (historic and current); • Behaviour of students; • Lack of respect and/or support from parents and their use of social media to criticize schools and/or individual teachers; • Expansion of the role of teachers; • The modern prescriptive / formulaic teaching methods; • The variable quality of leadership in schools; • Competition from other graduate professions; • Individual personal factors.
Question 3. • In the Last Three Years (2016-2019) How Many Teachers Have Left Your School to Pursue Other Careers? • At What Stage in Their Career They Left? • Their Subject Specialism? • What Careers Did They Move To?	• Twenty-one Headteachers reported 72 teachers in total had left their schools in the last three years; • Four Headteachers reported no loss of teachers to pursue other careers. • 42 left within the first five years of teaching (The largest proportion of teachers leaving participant schools); • 30 teachers left with six or more years' experience (25 having ten or more years in teaching). • EBacc subjects: 49 (41 from Maths, Science and MFL); • Other subjects: 23 (mainly from Technology subjects including IT). • Career destinations of 14 teachers were unknown; • The remaining 58 teachers had moved to a variety of careers including: o Industry / business; o Allied roles within education; o Work abroad; o The police; o The health service; and o Research and post graduate qualifications.
Question 4. What, From Your Perspective, Are the Key Barriers to Retaining Teachers?	Six main themes emerged in their responses: • Workload; • Scrutiny, particularly Ofsted; • Graduate quality decline and low resilience; • School funding, the squeeze on pay and the financial advantages of other professions; • The status of the profession; • Government policy and practice and constant change.

Question 5. What Strategies Have You Implemented to Retain Teachers?	As noted previously, irrespective of whether they were affected by retention issues or not, all responded to this question in detail with either strategies they had in place, or ones they intended to implement soon. Six main themes emerged in their responses: • The importance of strong leadership, both from themselves and throughout all other management levels; • The importance of consistent policy and practice within their schools; • The care and wellbeing of teachers, professional development opportunities, career progression and promotional prospects. These strategies, as part of whole school planning, were cited as some of the most effective at retaining teachers; • Empowering teachers and their "voice" with decision making and contributing to the vision and ethos of the school; • Monetary rewards to retain teachers such as payment for projects and research; and • The physical environment of the school and working conditions for teachers.
Question 6. The 2016 And 2019 Legislation Placed Responsibility to Resolve Teacher Retention on Headteachers; How Has This Impacted on You?	• Headteachers responded this had made little impact on them personally or within their school, as retaining teachers has always been integral with the role of Headteacher; • Some questioned their capacity to fulfil it with cuts to funding; and • Some recognised the legislative responsibility could add further pressures to their role.
Question 7. What Further Support and/or Policy Initiatives from Government Would You Like?	• Increase overall funding to schools to retain teachers; • Shift the budgetary emphasis from recruitment, to better incentivise the retention of teachers; • Review and evaluation of teacher training programmes, qualifications on entry, the number and complexity of training routes and particularly, the use of bursaries; • More devolved power to be given schools and Headteachers; • Fewer and less frequent Government initiatives; • Change the inspection system of schools to one of school monitoring, with facility to develop and share good practice; and • Promote teaching as a career and profession that is valued and respected;
Question 8. Given current Government policies, what do you think will improve retention?	• Develop incentives to stay in teaching; • Reviewing the pace of change and implementation of Government policy; and • Review and evaluate how schools are "judged".
Question 9. Are there any other points you wish to make?	Comments centred around five main topics: • Funding; • The status of the profession; • Initial Teacher Training; • Ofsted; and • Leadership.

APPENDIX 1g
A STORYBOARD OF IDEAS AND QUESTIONS: THE INFLUENCING FACTORS ON TEACHER RETENTION ARISING AT THREE LEVELS: MACRO, MESO AND MICRO

Macro: Government Policy factors	Meso: Institutional school specific factors.	Micro: personal and individual factors.
• Significant Government intervention through policies in the last 30 years: Has the incessant litany of new policies based on authoritative imposition and standardisation, eroded the "professional status" of teachers? • Extending the role of teachers beyond the class room as a solution to a better fairer society: Better teachers, in latter day Government terms, are the answer to the ills of modern society. Has their current ideology for teachers to be the solution to society's problems e.g. responsible for providing a "world class education system", supporting the knowledge economy and improving social mobility, improving society - namely, all things to all people; is this seemingly limitless role too extensive for teachers? Has it made the role untenable? • Bursaries and financial incentives to train have promoted recruitment, but is this a strategy essentially counterproductive to retention? Recent evidence on the success of bursaries implies they have had only limited impact on retaining teachers beyond the first three years post qualification. • Withdrawal of financial support for teachers in high quality professional training i.e. masters, doctoral etc: Has this contributed to	• The relationship between young teachers and the Head, senior leadership, middle leaders, and mentors. How important are these in teachers' lives? What are the effects of poor or remote leadership? How important are they to teachers' feelings of "belonging"? How important are they to "fitting in or standing out"? • Are schools equipped to cope with the increasing time pressures of mentoring and training in the light of "real" cuts to their budgets? (Reduction in real terms by 15% since 2010). • Are school systems and structures working against teachers? Are relentless assessment, recording and reporting processes wearing teachers down? • What is in place in schools to support "building the self"? How are teachers supported, in terms of resilience, tenacity, longevity? • Is the psychology of wellbeing and happiness part of the school's remit? How are teachers supported in coping with stress? • Is there a palpable lack of collaboration, sharing and support for teachers in schools? • Are schools equipped to manage difficult student behaviour? Is there sufficient support for new teachers in dealing with poor	• How do teachers, especially those in the first five years of teaching, view their identity? Not just in their descriptions but rather a deeper more reflective understanding. Has their "identity" altered during the transition from being a trainee to that of a fully qualified, responsible teacher? • The well-publicised workload of teachers, a curriculum narrowly based on academia, difficult student behaviour, demanding or absent parents, lack of resources, large class sizes, relentless assessment, recording and reporting processes. Are the systems and structures working against individuals? • What impression has the visible work load issues of more experienced/senior staff had on "early career" teachers? • What emphasis do teachers place on emotional resilience and physical stamina to do the job and stay in the profession? Is the low morale and dissatisfaction of some spreading to others? • In the atmosphere of continuous change, has teachers' self-esteem been affected detrimentally? • The values on entry to teaching i.e. wanting to teach whatever the reasons: making a difference, enhancing lives, promoting

teachers feeling the poor relation in professional development terms? • The expansion of different training routes into teaching with the emphasis on school-based provision (currently 33 alternative routes): Has this complex system spread over diverse providers created more issues or enhanced it? Has this multiplicity of training options diluted standards and ethics and thus failed to prepare teachers for their ultimate role and responsibilities? • Does the training itself, based as it is on instrumental measures and standards, lack criticality on political and social awareness? • With a public sector pay freeze in place from 2010, teachers have in "real" terms had a pay cut. Has this contributed to teachers feeling undervalued? • Government policy on Governing Bodies of schools. Has this contributed to teachers feeling they are mistrusted? Does this undermine the leadership of the school?	behaviour? • Performance: are teachers finding performance management procedures onerous and worrying? Are frequent observations adding further pressure to teach to a "formula"? Constant restructuring of their role, through targets, tests and tables, increasing accountability and performativity regimes. Is "change" a factor? Has the individual been lost in the accountability and the hyper competitiveness of schools? Is there a palpable lack of collaboration, sharing and support work for and between teachers? • Do they feel disempowered by a curriculum narrowly based on academia with little room for innovation? • Teachers' professional learning, their continuous development in the scholarship of teaching and learning are essential to the role. Budgetary cuts have meant more in-house training and the withdrawal of financial support for personal career development/progression (Masters etc). Has this contributed to teachers feeling a poor relation in professional development terms? • In the intensification of teachers' daily work, has a realistic "work-life balance" become impossible? Has this caused them to seek alternative careers?	standards being part of a community. Are these undermined in the day to day routine and the practicalities of the role? Has reflection and wider spirituality been lost? • Are teachers initially attracted to teaching through their "lens" of being a successful pupil? An idealised vision not sustained once engaged in the reality. • Are the current regimes of Ofsted Inspection ultimately counterproductive? • Has the recent rise of employing unqualified teachers, made professional teachers question their own worth? • The austerity measures imposed since 2008 caused a prolonged reduction in graduate job opportunities within the overall job market. Were graduates attracted to teaching as a way of making a living? The public sector salary cap has resulted in a "real" pay decrease, in addition to increases in N.I. and changes to pensions. Thus, are other graduate occupations now seen as more attractive, with better working conditions, rewards / career progression and less responsibility? • Do the current performance management procedures provide teachers with a clear model of career progression? Or is it a barrier? Are they encouraged to have career aspirations and provided with a structured pathway for promotion?

APPENDIX 1h
DESIGNING THE INTERVIEW

Questions	Reasons for asking those questions
Question 1.	
Examining the questionnaire summary and individual responses.	An introductory to link the questionnaire with the interview; part of the methodological "interplay".
What did you think about the collective responses?	To review with participants the collective data and obtain their reactions.
What resonates with you?	To reflect on the items important to them.
I would like re-visit three comments you made in the questionnaire to obtain greater clarity.	I selected three of their comments, based on either the lack of detail given by the participants within the questionnaire or to obtain additional depth and detail, looking beneath their comments. Reinforces importance of their responses in the questionnaire and potentially provides additional data.
Have you previously been approached/ asked by anyone for your views on retention?	Provides insights into engagement with policy makers and others.
Are there any other points you want to add to this section?	A review of each section affords the opportunity for some reflection and to develop the original comments should they so wish.
Question 2.	
What is your perspective on the challenges of retaining teachers?	Reflects upon the sequence of questions in the questionnaire: their past experiences.
What does retention mean to you?	A deliberately open question to tap into knowledge, perspectives, presumptions and their philosophy on retention. To provide views and opinions on this complex issue.
Why is it important?	A question to elaborate on the importance of retention from their personal experience. Potential to explore who or what has created the issue.

What is its purpose?	Responses provide opportunity for discussion around quality, experience, stability and explore the real purpose of retention.
What effect has it had on you and the school?	Insight into their individual experience of retention; potential to explore their own pressures and whole school systems such as Multi Academy Trust or L.A. support.
What, from your perspective, are the top three (or more if you wish) reasons teachers leave the profession?	Three is deliberate to identify and prioritise the causes identified and facilitate deeper discussion on each.
What do you think is the "gap in knowledge" about retention?	Exploring their knowledge and "gap" perspectives. Potentially a cornerstone of discussion in the thesis.
Are there any other points you want to add to this section?	A review of each section affords the opportunity for some reflection and any additional comments they wish to make.
Question 3.	
What are your top three (or as many as you wish) strategies you have implemented to retain teachers?	Three (again) is a deliberate prompt to focus participant responses on their successful strategies and facilitate deeper discussion on each. Phrased such as to ascertain their strategy(s), implementation and evaluation of success. These will inform "compendium" of retention strategies in the thesis.
Why do you think they have worked?	Examine philosophical and practical elements of implementation, providing the potential to explore effectuality (e.g. leadership, management, learning from others).
What do you think will keep teachers in the profession nationally?	Discussing further, the wider and generalised reasons teachers leave and stay in the profession.
Are your strategies different now to those in the past?	Reflection on changing times and circumstances in the teaching profession.
Are they any other points you want to add to this section?	A review of each section affords the opportunity for some reflection and any additional comments they wish to make.

Question 4.	
What are your thoughts on the future?	Opportunity to talk about current issues and the future.
What do you perceive to be the main challenges currently in retaining teachers?	Discussion around the current challenges in schools and teachers during the pandemic.
Has the current pandemic changed things?	Consideration of the positives and negatives in the wider context .
Are you experiencing fewer people leaving the profession?	What practical ramifications has Covid 19 had on retaining or losing teachers in their school. To enable comparisons between participants to be made.
Will fewer (other)career opportunities entice more graduates into teaching? What is your view of this?	Exploring possible recessionary effects on teacher mobility into and out of the profession and effect on teacher quality.
What do you consider are the main challenges for the future?	Exploring Government Policy in implementing the “Recruitment and Retention Strategy”
Are they any other points you want to add to this section?	A review of each section affords the opportunity for some reflection and any additional comments they wish to make.
Conclusion.	
Any final thoughts or comments you wish to add or emphasise? Have you any questions or points for clarification?	Opportunity to add to or emphasise any points. To provide them with the opportunity to ask for clarity on any item
How have you found the online process?	Feedback regarding the online process.
Any comments on the interview procedure or process from your perspective?	Feedback regarding the interview.

APPENDIX 1i
THE CHALLENGE OF RETAINING TEACHERS: EVIDENCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SECONDARY HEADTEACHERS IN ENGLAND

Interview schedule: Headteacher Q.

Thank you very much for taking part in phase two of this research study. As in phase one, the questionnaire, all responses will be confidential and anonymised.

I am interested in your perspective on the challenges of retaining teachers, the strategies you have or intend to implement to retain teachers and your thoughts on the future. The interview will be semi structured to include four main areas for discussion. The wide-ranging nature of each area is deliberate to enable you the freedom to talk about what is important to you.

Question 1.
Examining the questionnaire summary and your individual responses.
What did you think about the collective responses?
What resonates with you?
I would like re-visit three items in your questionnaire to obtain greater clarity. • Recruitment routes are detrimental to retention-can you expand on this? Is teaching seen as a short-term profession? • Reduced internal opportunities for 3rd and 4th year teachers. • What has caused teachers to leave your school?
Have you previously been approached/asked by anyone for your views on retention?
Are there any other points you want to add to this section?
Question 2.
What is your perspective on the challenges of retaining teachers?
What does retention mean to you?
Why is it important?
What is its purpose?
What effect has it had on you and the school?
What, from your perspective, are the top three (or more if you wish) reasons teachers leave the profession?
What do you think is the “gap in knowledge” about retention?
Are there any other points you want to add to this section?

Question 3. Strategies
What are your top three (or as many as you wish) strategies you have implemented to retain teachers?
Why do you think they have worked?
What do you think will keep teachers in the profession nationally?
Are your strategies different now to those in the past?
Are they any other points you want to add to this section?
Question 4.
What are your thoughts on the future?
What do you perceive to be the main challenges currently in retaining teachers?
Has the current pandemic changed things?
Are you experiencing fewer people leaving the profession?
Will fewer (other)career opportunities entice more graduates into teaching? What is your view of this?
What do you consider are the main challenges for the future?
Are they any other points you want to add to this section?
Conclusion.
Any final thoughts or comments you wish to add or emphasise? Have you any questions or points for clarification?
How have you found the online process?
Any comments on the interview procedure or process from your perspective?

I will endeavour to have the transcript ready for you to review within two weeks of the interview; this will have an additional box for you to add any comments you may think of later. A full summary will be sent on completion of all interviews.

I will of course be always happy for any additional thoughts or comments you wish to make via email contact and very much appreciate your time and support. Thankyou.

APPENDIX 1j
EXAMPLE OF FIRST STAGE TRANSCRIPT REVIEW

Responses	**Themes/links to literature.**
So examining the questionnaire summary that I sent you, what did you think about the collective responses?	
No, I think there was some that maybe I hadn't written myself that I would have agreed with, but no I think there is quite a common theme across them.	Some common themes
It's clearly something that every school's facing, I noticed, there were 8 schools having less retention issues, but I think that is very much to do with your personal circumstances, where you school is.	Recognising the circumstances of schools is different.
Was there one thing that resonated with you from the questionnaire?	
I think it for me, it is the quality of entrance to the profession and the way schools are funded.	Lower quality of entrants to the profession. School funding.
Because my local authority is massively underfunded, bear in mind I am a mile and a half down the road from /////////////// they've probably got £800 more per child. That's a significant difference to the budget we're on. They are running the same size school and they've got £900,000 more. That's a lot in terms of staffing, a lot in terms of what you can pay staff and retain staff. I regularly lose staff to /////////////// because why wouldn't you, you do the same job and get more money.	Unfair funding. Teachers to neighbouring authority.
I'd like to revisit three items on your questionnaire. The first one is that retention problems aren't new; it's been developing over the last 10 to 15 years, can you tell me more about that and can you give me some examples of how it's developed?	
I think, I'm in a good position because I joined the leadership team in 2007, so only 7 years into teaching, and whilst I have not been a headteacher that long I have been on the senior leadership team a long time and have been involved in lots of interviews for teaching posts. I have seen a significant decline in the quality of applicants and the numbers of applicants and particularly around the more academic subjects, the ones that government target. Maths and English, I think a lot of that is to do with schools overstaffing in those subject areas, because obviously with the performance tables they put such emphasis on English and Maths, lots of schools are overstaffing and I've seen huge decline in specialist subjects like physics, chemistry, and computer science.	Significant decline in quality of applicants. Overstaffing to ensure results. Maths a concern

It's interesting, how you used to get as many as 40 English applications and then you'd shortlist about 8. We're lucky if we get 8 applications now and we're shortlisting now 2 or 3. The amount of times now we have to re advertise because there's not the quality there. What's concerning is we're seeing it now it's spreading, and the subjects you were guaranteed to get a good field, like English, you used to get lots of teachers, you don't now. Technology you get barely any. So we are retraining within school, I've had to convert one of my ICT teachers into an RE teacher because ICT doesn't really exist now because it's computing, but I don't currently have an RE teacher, so we've had to retrain. There's just not the people out there anymore.	Other subjects now a concern. Retraining issues to meet the needs of the curriculum.
When did retention become more difficult?	
I don't know, it probably fell around 2010, where some subjects are valued more than others, lots of schools cut some of their creative arts, they've cut their technology subjects. When the schools are cutting them we don't have the need for those teachers so therefore universities cut their places as well. Maths has always been difficult to recruit but English you used to have a rafts of English teachers but now they're just not there, they're few and far between and I think the quality is more concerning that is coming through. With the recruitment drive, universities have lowered their expectations and not an emphasis on subject knowledge on conversion training courses. Physics for example, even though if you don't have a physics degree, you can have a very tenuously linked degree as long as you do a subject enhancement you can be a physics teacher. You don't have that depth of knowledge and it's impossible to teach top set GCSE or A level without that degree background and yet you are expecting teachers to do that, and I think that lowering of expectations has massively lowered the quality.	Cutting subjects. ITT targets changed. Concerning quality. Lower expectations. Conversion issues. Depth of knowledge. Lower expectations.

APPENDIX 1k
HT C QUESTION 2. WHAT IS YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON THE CHALLENGES OF RETAINING TEACHERS?

What does retention mean to you? • An ideal world to retain high quality staff as a team. • Distinct difference here, have been able to retain high quality staff. • A lot of time put into CPD; reward teachers in the right way-that doesn't always mean money. Sometimes its career opportunities. You come into teaching to develop young people and your career. • What retention is it's about keeping that fabulous team around me.
Why is it important? • Unstable -huge issues with consistency and staff turnover. That makes a big difference to the quality of learning. Stark contrast in department which are stable; quality of teaching is significant. • A lot of time put into training; every time a member of staff goes that dilutes the expertise. Often don't want to go over the same training. • You lose the consistency, you lose the drive, you lose that expertise. • That's when you see it in isolated departments.
What is its purpose? • It's very much linked to consistency and core business. You do want new staff-its developing everyone to a high level. • You guarantee the same experience for all children. • How can you educate young people better if you can't retain the same teachers? • It doesn't have to retained in your own school-that's where MATs work well retain them in the group of schools. A single academy finds that difficult. • High quality and consistency-that's its purpose.
What effect has it had on you and the school? • Stable strong departments in Science for example have made a real difference. • Seeing more turnover in MFL and technology difficult to appoint. We have tried to keep a broad balanced curriculum. • Sometimes schools under pressure from league tables have made cuts (to some subjects). We will be in trouble again if a government change and it goes back to more vocational. There just won't be the staff. • Schools are staffed for an academic curriculum-a shift to vocational and we won't have the right staff.
Why are teachers leaving the profession? (Priority order) • Workload and work life balance. Change happens on a month by month basis; the massive shift in curriculum for example.. • Endless amount of change-you can never become an expert because the goal posts change constantly. You're not talking evolution here-its massive swings in what schools are expected to do • It's another initiative, another change. There is more stability in other professions. • Accountability but not in terms of just league tables-they have their purpose but it's how leadership teams interpret them and how they respond to them-that's the accountability link with leadership. If leadership lead in the wrong way, that has a huge impact on teachers and on the school as a whole. Ofsted has become a stick to beat schools with massive pressure to initiate change. Schools just jump through the hoops. We were accused of cheating and gaming because of English and maths, but if that's the focus, more time on the timetable will be given to it. • Are leaders brave enough to shield their staff from it?
What do you think is the "gap in knowledge" about retention? • They know what the issues are but do not want to address them.

APPENDIX 1I
EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT CODING

Question		Responses	Stage one. Familiarisation notes.
Q1 What did you think about the responses? Were you surprised by any?	HT Q	I could pick up a spectrum of responses, some of them where I think where people had genuinely stopped and thought about the elements of the retention challenge that they could genuinely have an influence on. Then other people, for whatever reason, must have come across a little bit jaded by an inspection or felt that the systemic things, that are never going to go away, we are never not going to have an inspectorate, and therefore yes it might have acted as a bit of therapy for them to get it off their chest to tell you this is the reason why school teachers are not retained in schools. I don't agree with that, I looked at that and thought that there were some statements in here where you are just fundamentally saying the problem is the British education system and the way it's Q/A'd and I don't think there's a problem with that, I think it's down to the culture that's set by the Leadership team in the school to be able to build the resilience in their staff. To be able to navigate their way through those difficult moments in a school's journey like Ofsted inspections, like changes to the curriculum. So I don't agree with that narrative that some people have given that the pressure is externally set. I think the Headteacher's job is to be the filter of all of that, to be resistant to the things they know they need to be resistant to and to be very accepting in the implementation of the things they know is right by their children.	Two types of responses: Heads can influence retention. Retention is caused by system wide factors such as inspection. A view that those systems are never going to change or go away. Getting it off their chest. Saying it's a system wide issue in education and the way its quality assured. Retention is about the culture of the school, the role of leadership in creating resilience. Leadership responsible for navigation, for filtering initiatives, inspections. Leadership role and responsibility to resist or implement what is best for children.