

Extended Proposal:

“Leadership, school culture and staff turnover: an exploratory case study of an international school in UAE”

Word Count: 11,978

Abstract (99 words):

While literature on staff turnover in education often mentions school culture as a contributing factor, its precise meaning or impact is rarely interrogated, particularly in research regarding international schools. Through analysis of data from semi-structured interviews and the key documents using Schoen and Teddlie’s New Model for School Culture, it is hypothesised that emergent themes will help leaders in this context make informed decisions to help improve practice related to turnover. Moreover, this research would provide balance to existing literature by exploring these assumption-laden themes qualitatively within a less researched context of an international school in the Middle East.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	3
Chapter 2: Literature review - The Topic	5
Introduction	5
Educational Leadership and Management	5
School Culture: What is it and why is it important for leadership?	7
Teacher Turnover.....	9
The Relationship Between School Culture and Turnover	11
School Culture and Turnover in International Schools	12
Conclusion	14
Chapter 3: Literature review – Conceptual framework	14
Conceptualising School Culture for the Purpose of This Case Study.....	15
Framing the Analysis	17
Methodology	19
Chapter 4: The Research Proposal	21
Chapter 5: Research Design, Research Methods and Methods of analysis	22
Research Design	22
Research Methods	24
Practical Issues	24
Sampling for Interviews	24
Preliminary Interview.....	25
Data Collection for Document Analysis	26
Final Interview.....	26
Ethical Issues	27
Analysis	28
Postscript: Narrative Critical Reflection	30
References	31
Appendix 1:	36
Appendix 2	37

Chapter 1: Introduction

Staff turnover is important to all schools, with several studies associating higher rates with lower student achievement, poor staff morale, and can lead to schools falling into a cycle where it is difficult to attract effective staff, making it more likely that there will be further turnover (Nguyen et al., 2020, p. 2). Also, recruitment is expensive, particularly in international schools where not only the costs of recruitment fees and providing induction and training programmes need to be considered, but also air fare and settling in fees, which are typically needed to attract staff to distant locations.

Many countries only have a small number of international schools situated in a variety of contexts, making comparison across schools difficult. Western-based studies on turnover have associated positive organisational culture and strong induction programmes with longevity (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Gujarati, 2010). However, Schein (1992) claims that unspoken assumptions form the base of cultural norms, and Lumby and English (2013) have noted that Western studies are centred on the Western notions of self, which is not readily applicable in other parts of the world. They argue that leadership is the process of creating an identity, telling a story and acting it out. If this is the case, identity would be an amalgamation of, reaction to, or compromise between the local context and the cultural norms of international staff, making each case unique, necessitating careful exploration of the perceptions of school culture by leadership and staff.

In international schools, high turnover is often expected, with ‘change being the only constant’ (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018, p. 159). International staff often do not have ties to their local context and with one-to-three-year contracts being the norm and competitive recruitment, higher turnover is more common (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018). The UAE has over 430 international schools (KHDA, 2014), and although there is little variation in terms of pay and working conditions, where free accommodation and tax-free income is standard, some schools report turnover as high as 30-40% annually and some record much lower rates (Thacker, 2019). This case study is situated in a school where contracts are standardised and working conditions are comparable to those of local competitors. Several middle leaders and some senior staff left the school in the past two summers, with many joining different international schools in the same area, despite these competitors often performing demonstrably worse in exams and extracurricular activities.

The context of this investigation has several key markers of transformational leadership as it meets Bass and Riggio’s (2006, pp. 6-7) four key elements: *idealised influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individualised consideration*. The CEO is exalted for her work ethic and personalised treatment of employees, in which she operates an ‘open door’ policy and demonstrates action on concerns in staff

meetings, therefore meeting the markers of *idealised influence* and *individualised consideration*. She celebrates successes and moments of good practice publicly, paints a vision of the school's future and emphasises solution-oriented approaches by inviting in challenge-focused guest speakers and running innovative workshops, thus typifying *intellectual stimulation* and *inspirational motivation*. Staff are given monthly awards from polls taken by colleagues and students, and monthly faculty meetings start with leaders sharing what they are grateful for and then passing round a microphone for staff to do the same. In this way the leaders embody the culture of the school and the staff self-police, both typical traits of transformational leadership (Leithwood, 2013, p. 23). Transformational leadership is more commonly gravitated towards and accepted in the United States than the European context (Western, 2008). This school has mostly American staff, along with a significant minority of Europeans and some representation of Asian and Middle Eastern teachers. Given the similarities in salary, working hours and student demographics between this school and its competitors, and the emphasis on 'espoused values' (Schein, 1992) by leadership, an exploratory case study of school culture could help better understand the causes of turnover and improve practice as a result.

The literature review was initially framed as a search of databases using the key words *leadership and management, turnover* and *school culture*. These search terms yielded few initial matches, as focused discussion of all three of these factors proved to be uncommon. Another difficulty was that *culture* is often referred to in passing, with no explicit exploration of *organisational culture*, and even when it is used in the context of leadership and management, its meaning is assumption-laden and often unexamined. Even so, authors such as Ingersoll (2001) led to the discovery of more literature through the process of 'snowballing,' where citations within texts were used to locate further relevant texts (Wohlin, 2014). This, along with use of citation searches through Google Scholar and the 'search within citing articles' feature, using combinations of the key words again brought together a broad and relevant base of literature. Schoen and Teddlie's (2008) and Van Houtte's (2005) formed an important base for searches, because they are both widely cited and their focused exploration on the conceptual underpinnings of *school culture* is central to this investigation, meaning that citing articles were also more relevant. The assumption-laden terminology within empirical literature required repeated reconsideration of the context in which 'school culture' is discussed. Many articles were driven by quantitative data, suggesting some level of uniformity, but 'school culture' was conceptualised in different ways, again emphasising the validity of an interpretive approach to this case study to better understand the subjective perceptions of the participants in this context.

Transformational leadership is dependent on a keen understanding of organisational culture and the context within which it operates (Keung and Rockingson-Szapkiw, 2013; Hartnell and Walumbwa, 2011).

Transformational leaders consciously seek to accentuate positive traits in school culture and those who are successful embody the core values of the school and employ them to bring about change. To explore turnover effectively in this context, a qualitative investigation into school culture is likely to provide valuable insight due to its explicit emphasis by leaders, the importance of contextual details and subjectivity of perceptions.

Therefore, this case study aims to explore the following research questions:

1. What are the cultural factors which are perceived to impact staff turnover?
2. How consistent are perceptions of these factors among the participants?
3. How can leaders foster a culture which helps maintain low staff turnover?

Chapter 2: Literature review - The Topic

Introduction

Transformational leadership adapt to and utilise school culture in order to bring about their vision of success, but precisely to what degree they have influence is difficult to determine because it is dependent on both theirs and their subordinates' perceptions. Similarly, school culture is widely considered to be an important and quantitative studies associate a stronger or more positive culture with healthier rates of staff turnover. However, precisely what this means is often ambiguous because the terminology used is assumption-laden and often not given much attention. While there is a growing body of quantitative literature on turnover in international schools, the inherent difficulties in sampling and the sparseness of peer-reviewed papers make it difficult to discern its utility in the context of this study. In the Middle East this problem is more acute, as there is very limited literature and there is no significant qualitative literature on school culture in this context at all.

Educational Leadership and Management

Leadership and management is a rapidly expanding field of study. Storey (2009, p. 4) notes that in 1970-1971 there were 136 published academic articles on leadership, but by 2009 this had increased to an average of 172 per day. Despite this increased attention and exponential rises in funding, there is still a lack of clarity on what makes effective leaders (Middlehurst, 2008). The importance of context in determining leaders' outlook and the impact of their actions helps explain why it proves evasive (Kezar et al., 2006). Definitions of leadership may

differ in the inclusion of, and emphasis placed on factors such as agency of those being led and communication between parties, but a common thread across them is influence on others. Gardner and Laskin (1995, p. 8) claim leaders are those who ‘markedly influence the behaviours’ of others. Chemers (2000, p. 27) describes it as ‘social influence’ and focuses on how leaders gain support to achieve common goals, while Bush and Glover describe it as ‘a process of influence’ to get stakeholders to share their vision (2003, p. 5). Swaffield and Macbeath (2013, p. 10) note that despite differences in definitions of leadership in education, they share a concern for learning of pupils, teaching staff and other members of the community whose continuous learning is ‘in the service of student learning.’

Transformational leadership focuses on building collegiality, loyalty, and the sharing of a vision to bring about change (Leithwood, 2013). Western (2008, p. 12) describes the most obvious form of this as the *Messiah discourse*, which sees the leader at the heart of transformational leadership, focusing on changing cultural norms through mythmaking to bring about ‘salvation’ from chaos or oppressive structures. These leaders seek to develop a culture where staff are loyal and inspired to help bring about shared goals (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 639). This filters down to the literature on student outcomes, where there tends to be a much greater focus on social outcomes rather than academic outcomes in transformational leadership literature (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 658). Therefore, in transformational leadership school culture is an essential component in its makeup, with ‘normative control,’ wherein staff pull together and perpetuate school-wide cultural norms as a driving force in bringing about a shared vision (Leithwood, 2013, p. 13).

Transformational leaders impact organisational culture by effective strategy to build a sense of ‘the way we do things around here’, by clearly articulating a shared vision and celebrating success (Hartnell and Walumbwa, 2011, p. 233). Organisational culture can be manipulated by transformational leaders to achieve success, with a more integrated vision and shared ideals leading to better performance (p. 232). To do this, transformational leaders need to demonstrate and exercise cultural intelligence. In their quantitative study of 193 leaders in international schools, Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2013) found a clear positive correlation between markers of cultural intelligence and transformational leadership. Matthews-Chioma’s analysis of three pre-existing leadership and school culture surveys found that transformational leadership strongly correlated to cohesive school culture and these in turn were associated with increased organisational commitment (2017, p. 76).

However, the data for both studies came from self-reported closed-option questionnaires which articulates their perceptions of their behaviour and actions within limited parameters but does not provide space to show how these are perceived by those they lead. Insight into how leaders perceive their cultural intelligence or actions

which fall under the category of cultural intelligence only presents one interpretation of the social reality. Even when the perceptions of staff are sought, assessment of the effectiveness of leaders is strongly influenced by respondents' own assumptions regarding leadership as well as the popularity of individuals, due to the inevitable focus on them in this discourse (Brown and Keeping, 2005). Thus, gauging performance by discussing subordinates' perceptions can reflect personal relationships and preferences more than an assessment of practice, making it more complicated to understand leadership framed as transformational (Robinson et al., 2008). Western (2008, p. 14) asserts that when positive outcomes are achieved, the role of the leadership team is over-emphasised, and this leads to them overcompensating when performance dips and they naturally move towards a more hierarchical controller model to address issues. Also, the perceived omnipotence of leaders can lead to an overdependence on them which leads to inefficiency and a lack of agency amongst staff (Western, 2008, p. 16). Therefore, better understanding school culture is a central part of understanding transformational leadership both because of the emphasis this discourse places on it, and the importance of unspoken assumptions on the perceptions of all stakeholders.

As discussed in the Chapter 3, cultural factors cannot be explored objectively, so some consensus based on strength of argument is vital to reach valid conclusions (Polkinghorne, 2007). Identifying a correlation in *what* leaders perceive in a broad sample of respondents' self-reports provides a potentially useful starting point for inquiry but given that school culture is laden with unspoken assumptions (Schein, 1992), understanding *how* and *why* they arrive at this perception requires a qualitative approach (Mertz, 2017).

School Culture: What is it and why is it important for leadership?

Much of the discussion of school culture in education mentions it as part of broader investigation but does not develop it as a concept which may explain why it is not often studied in-depth in education (Close and Wainwright, 2010). It could be argued that in general terms, there is agreement, or at least a shared focus on the same basic elements when defining school culture. Various definitions refer to shared values, norms or rituals, a common vision, unspoken assumptions, and a lens through which the world is viewed (Deal and Kennedy, 1988; Deal and Peterson, 1999; Hargreaves, 1994). Common across these conceptualisations is an acknowledgement that there are layers of action, articulated views and unarticulated assumptions which make up the social reality of a school. The difference, however, is in the detail. The term is often used interchangeably with 'school climate' and even when the terms are differentiated in the literature, there is significant overlap. Culture is often thought of as either a variable to be manipulated, or a continual process to

be better understood rather than modified (Driskill and Brenton, 2010, pp. 28-30), both very different starting points for discussion.

Central to this is the assumption of culture as something an organisation *has* or if it simply *is* (Bate, 1995). Wallace and Tomlinson's (2008) qualitative investigation the relationship between context and leadership practices led them to place factors on a scale from *readily manipulable* to *marginally manipulable*, with internal, context-specific, micro-level factors on the *readily manipulable* end and macro-level issues related to policy and social issues on the *marginally manipulable* end. By this framework, if school culture is something it *has* it could fall under what is *readily manipulable*, however, if it is something that the organisation simply *is* it will be much less so. They found that leaders saw professional culture as something that was only *possibly manipulable* because teacher identity, values and collegiality went far beyond the individual institution and were firmly entrenched (Wallace and Tomlinson, 2008, p. 35). If school culture is something that cannot be treated as a feature of an organisation but is, rather, its essence, it cannot be manipulated so easily.

However, Wallace and Tomlinson also frame "strategic vision" and "selective response to policy" as *readily manipulable* (2008, p. 27). Deal and Kennedy's (1988) definition of culture includes the values of an organisation and its unspoken or informal assumptions and communications outside official channels. In this case, at least some elements of organisational culture are readily manipulable because the strategic vision and selective response to policy are the result of leaders making decisions. More recent models incorporate organisational structure, communication, and activities, which encompass aspects of school life that leaders actively manipulate (Bell and Kent, 2010; Schoen and Teddlie, 2008). How it is framed will depend on the individual context of the school, the perceptions of the participants and the interpretations of the researcher. The subjectivity of this process requires researchers to remain conscious that their starting assumptions require constant revision to ensure that their validity.

Leaders who better understand and show respect for the culture of an organisation are more likely to get buy-in from their staff when implementing changes (Hickman, 2012, p. 69). Driskill and Brenton assert that better understanding of organisational culture improves communication, induction, and change management, and recruitment of better 'fits' (2010, pp. 20-21). Close and Wainwright take this further, stating that 'to understand culture is to understand power and to better navigate issues of control and consent, of authority and accountability' (2010, p. 436). It acts as a filter 'of ideas that do not fit,' so leaders may have freedom to choose courses of action, but the results of those actions are partially determined by the cultural context within which they are operating (Johnson et. al, 2011, p. 105). If school culture uncovers the hidden hierarchies and informal

communication along with the shared values of the institution (Deal and Kennedy, 1988), then it is all-permeating, so any analysis of practice without due consideration of school culture would be incomplete or may even make problematic assumptions. Western (2008, p. 15) claims that leaders are as bound by the dominant discourse as those they are leading, so being aware of the ‘normative assumptions, social relations and beneath the surface structural dynamics’ can help them better navigate their environment and bring about positive change. If the cultural context of the leadership practice being investigated is so influential that it renders practice ineffective, or at least at its base is the essential assumptions that inform decisions, then incorporating cultural analysis is necessary for meaningful investigation of education leadership practices.

An illustrative example is Hargreaves’ (1994) discussion of ‘contrived collegiality’ exemplifies how even straightforward staff initiatives that could be seen as uncontroversial could fall flat if they are at odds with school culture. In this case, initiatives to increase collaboration are clumsily implemented and cause feelings of resentment and obstinate behaviour. This not only showcases a lack of cooperation on the part of staff but can also demonstrate a lack of seriousness ‘about their rhetorical commitment to teacher empowerment on the part of leaders’ (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 208). If it is an issue with the motivations of leadership underpinning a temporary initiative, perhaps time and resources could be saved by shifting the strategic focus elsewhere. However, if it is more an issue with unwilling staff, it could point to deeper concerns, such as a clash of values or deep-seated resentment. Therefore, better understanding of school culture can make practical contributions that help drive successful leadership.

Teacher Turnover

Various causes have been attributed to teacher turnover, with several studies finding a clear correlation between pay, working conditions and years of experience (Hanushek and Rivkin, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001). The body of literature has grown substantially in the last decade, particularly internationally, due in part to more access to detailed data and improved searching mechanisms, with quantitative investigation remaining much more common (Nguyen and Springer, 2021, pp. 13-14). In their systematic review of empirical quantitative literature, Nguyen et al. (2020) found that previous patterns, such as higher turnover rates for female teachers are no longer prevalent in the last decade, speculating that this could be due to expanded data bases and literature, but could also reflect changes in the labour market. This demonstrates that even where patterns emerge in macro-scale research, these trends are subject to change and require constant revision.

Wronowski’s (2021) secondary analysis of two national surveys in the USA found that while perceived de-professionalisation was certainly an important causal factor of turnover across all schools, it had a lesser impact

on private schools. Ingersoll et al.'s (2016) analysis of data from the same base found that while increased accountability due national initiatives correlated to increased turnover, this effect could be mitigated by increased teacher autonomy, which falls under the dimensions of 'professional orientation' and 'organisational structure,' as defined by Schoen and Teddlie (2008). This suggests that although there are factors relating to external context that are beyond the control of individual leaders, internal changes to structure and school culture can heighten a sense of professionalism which could help maintain low turnover rates.

However, these conclusions were reached from gathering quantitative data on a national scale, so although correlations are found, the specifics of how this can work in practice and how it varies from case to case require focused investigation. Indeed, it can also be argued the reverse, that rather than school culture mitigating the effects of other factors, it is these other factors prevent the development of a strong professional culture.

Erichsen and Reynolds (2020, p. 2) assert that accountability, working conditions and low pay, among other factors were more impactful on turnover and that these factors undermined the development of a healthy school culture. If culture is formed by developing patterns over time, then factors leading to turnover elsewhere may lead to a positive culture never being given the space to develop, thus removing the possibility of developing the kind of organisational culture needed to offset other issues (Schein, 2010, p. 18).

Perryman and Calvert's survey of 1200 UK teachers found that 57% of respondents who left teaching identified a 'target driven culture' as being the main reason for doing so, while 55% of those still in teaching identified this as the principal reason for them possibly leaving in the future (2020, pp. 11-12). However, workload and life balance were still higher, and the precise meaning of 'target driven culture' beyond a drive for demonstrable outcomes, which is closely connected these other cited factors is unclear. The authors note a general feeling of disenchantment with the realities of the profession and suggest an easing of workload would help reduce turnover, but this is often not feasible on an individual school basis due to budget constraints and external policy decisions. They acknowledge that their survey lacks depth and the closed option format of many of their questions requires participants to select the appropriate option creating an artificially stark data set as respondents choose one option over another. Additionally, of the nearly 4000 initial surveys, they found only 1200 were workable, which also presents the possibility that only those 'who have something to say' are represented with little room for those occupying more moderate positions (Perryman and Calvert, 2020, p. 16).

Holme et al.'s (2018) observe that while there is robust quantitative literature on annual turnover patterns, there is much less focus on differentiating types of turnover such as long-term, short term, temporary peaks, and chronic instability. They claim that disparities in rates of turnover using these metrics demonstrates a need for more longitudinal studies and studies of school culture, particularly in cases that prove exceptions to statistical

norms in their contexts (Holme et al., 2018 p. 72). Therefore, even where quantitative research may seem to allow for more objective analysis, the way the data is gathered and the manner in which statistics are presented greatly affects the conclusions which can be reached.

The Relationship Between School Culture and Turnover

Much of the literature that refers to both school culture and staff turnover tends to focus on what school culture effects, rather than how this works or what parts of it may be more impactful than others (Simon and Johnson, 2015). This is at least in part attributable to the difficulty in disentangling school culture from other factors which are often studied as independent issues in relation to turnover, such as school discipline, and leadership actions often implicitly shape school culture even when making purely administrative decisions (Simon and Johnson, 2015, p. 22). Even where data indicates that positive school culture does contribute to lower turnover, it often coincides with other, equally high performing traits such as academic performance (Johnson et al., 2012). Unsurprisingly, schools that develop a ‘strong organisational culture’ tend to do well on other metrics (Johnson et al., 2012 p. 30). Deciphering what is meant by ‘strong’ is difficult, and what creates this perception could be the measurable outcomes that are achieved rather than cultural factors which bring them about. It could be argued that such reservations miss the point, as culture is not a static entity, so that successes feed into the culture and allow for the formation new norms, which in turn create more success. It has already been noted that transformational leaders seek successes to build a positive culture (Hartnell and Walumbwa, 2011, p. 233), so this is perhaps best conceived as a continuous cycle. Some successes could conceivably be more influenced by factors not associated with culture, but their existence is what allows for such a culture to emerge. Proving a clear cause and effect relationship one way or another is not possible because it relies on subjective perceptions, but we do know that success is influenced by culture and vice versa, so while the correlation is worth noting, the *how* and *why* of the process can only be understood in subjective terms.

See et al.’s (2020) critical review of 120 studies internationally found that issues of workload and pay were a consistent factor and that the only demonstrably effective strategy in lowering turnover was to improve working conditions, particularly compensation. However, they note that this is partly because it has been studied more and thus it is easier to make correlations. Moreover, the impact of improved compensation seems to have only a short-term effect and varies in impact from context to context, with some studies demonstrating no clear benefit (See et al., 2020, p. 19). They assert that although many studies associate induction or professional development programs with lower turnover, there is such variation in the aims and quality of these that the causal link is at best tenuous (See et al., 2020 p. 5). This ignores the reasonable supposition that induction programmes *should* be specific to the needs and aims of schools as the context will vary greatly from school to

school. Although See et al.'s findings across multiple international settings give credence to the notion that some factors are similar across borders, this investigation is based on data from local schools in different countries rather than international schools, which by nature are at least partial exceptions to those local contexts.

Even where school culture does form a starting point for investigation the conclusions reached tend to only describe perceptions rather than explore their meaning. For example, Pogodzinski' et al.'s (2012) study of novice teacher attrition in primary schools across 11 school districts found that even where individual relationships were positive, negative perceptions of school culture had an impact on turnover. However, what is meant by school climate or culture (they are used interchangeably) is not explored and the general metric used was from "poor" to "excellent" (p. 261). Observing a correlation between turnover and these metrics undoubtedly helps identify its importance in the minds of participants, but what we learn from it beyond that is very limited.

School Culture and Turnover in International Schools

The literature on international school turnover is quite limited, which is at least partially explained by the fact that international schools are often independent of any associations unless they voluntarily to join them, and thus are not bound by the same requirements as local schools when it comes to sharing data (Odland and Ruzicka, 2009, p. 37). Gardner-McTaggart's (2018) review of leadership research in international schools found that turnover was usually discussed as one of many elements of school performance. Culture is very rarely mentioned and when it does appear, it is in terms of the variety of cultures interacting at these schools rather than a conception of school culture. Factors which can be linked to workplace culture are often cited as principal motivators for staff's decisions to stay or leave. However, the basis for reaching such conclusions is not always reliable. For example, Odland and Ruzicka (2009, p. 38) note that Hardman's (2001) assertion that work climate is a significant factor in teacher retention at international schools includes only very basic discussion of methodology and no mention of sample size. Part of this is attributable to the emphasis on the drive for short-term performance and short contract lengths, which make it difficult for staff to feel a 'healthy sense of continuity' (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018, p. 156). This lack of continuity also makes it less likely that staff will be present long to conduct qualitative analysis, which is most commonly associated with in-depth investigation of culture (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 20).

The fact that much of the research on staff turnover is based on quantitative studies has the benefit of providing data of being easily cross-referenced to reliably analyse trends which emerge, and this can aid making policy

decisions on a national level. However, the pre-existing quantitative data becomes less useful when we consider the particularities of the international school sector. The context in which they operate is not directly comparable to those operating within national frameworks. The staff they hire are already exceptions to the norm in that they are willing to relocate in the first place. Chandler's (2010) investigation of its importance found clear correlation between location meeting or surpassing expectations and staff retention, and Mancuso et al. (2011) found that 'wanderlust' was rarely a causal factor in teacher turnover intent at international schools. This suggests that staff who find a better 'fit' are not likely to move just because of the contractual norms outlined in Chapter 1. Chandler's data came from a range of locations across continents, while Mancuso et al.'s focus was on the Near East South Asia region, suggesting that even where local contexts vary greatly, some consistency can be found in the data.

Similarly, using four prominent recruitment firms to survey 975 respondents across multiple settings, Jurewicz (2017) found that 'organisational fit' and positive school culture was associated with a significant increase in the likelihood of contract renewal. However, she also found similar effects with positive responses related to working conditions and local context, and only teachers being placed over a two-year period were surveyed. An important caveat is that there are 5,500 International Baccalaureate schools alone (IBO, 2022), not to mention those under other curricula, and many teachers are recruited directly, meaning that apart from difficulties arising from a widely cast survey without further validation from respondents, the representativeness of the sample is limited.

Chandler (2010) notes that there is not clear agreement on which schools fall under the bracket of international schools and finding data sources across multiple locations is difficult. To address this, he gathered data via questionnaires issued to colleagues and contacts they provided. The eventual data pool came from a small and eclectic mix of respondents, some not known to the researcher, which further casts doubt on the reliability of the findings. For example, in Europe, only data from Spain and Portugal was considered because the respondents in the researcher's contact pool were found only from these countries. Mancuso et al.'s (2011) data was gathered from a very broad base of respondents in specific region increasing the reliability of the data on one level. However, while the focus of the study and number of respondents is useful, some of the respondents' responses could not be verified and they did not specify their actual employer, suggesting that the trends identified should be considered with a note of caution.

Literature on educational leadership and management in the Middle East is currently very limited both in terms of quantity and quality in the Middle East (Oplatka and Arar, 2019). Much of the research literature is not peer-reviewed, makes little reference to theory and is concerned with descriptive quantitative statistics and reference

to functional processes (p. 300-301). Furthermore, while studies such as Kadbey's (2018) investigation of Emirati public schools found a clear correlation between transformational leadership, strong school culture and organisational commitment, its comparability to international schools is limited the cultural background of staff and regulations they are subject to are very different. The topics which are permitted to be investigated are limited by the fact that some models and theories directly call into question certain aspects of conservative Muslim values that go directly against the policy of the ruling government in some contexts (Opatka and Arar, 2019, p. 300). The lack of peer-reviewed literature and the limited comparability of that which is more credible means makes drawing comparisons challenging.

Conclusion

In conclusion, school culture is an underexplored concept the international school sector, particularly in relation to turnover. This is due to it being difficult to quantify on the one hand, along with perceptions around its lack of manipulability, but also compounded by the fact that in the context of the Middle East, the region within which this research is to take place, there is a paucity of academic literature on leadership and management. The disparate nature of the literature on school culture and the lack of focus on both turnover and school culture means researchers have a choice between a broad base of quantitative Western-oriented literature with limited interrogation of the assumption-laden terminology, or a sparse base of international and locally situated research. All of these pose serious questions of comparability, even where the conclusions reached are credible and consistent across a broad sample size. Despite this, school culture is continuously cited a vital part of maintaining healthy rates of staff turnover, so better understanding subjective perceptions of its impact should help foster positive leadership practices.

Chapter 3: Literature review – Conceptual framework

This research is based on an interpretivist/constructivist ontological stance in that it will rely on the subjects' perceptions of their experience and acknowledge the impact that the researchers' own views will play on the process and outcomes (McKenzie and Knipe, 2006). This approach acknowledges that as there is no detachment between the subject and object of the research, social reality can only be understood, not explained, as the outcomes of research are variable and constantly evolving (Corbetta, 2003). Social phenomena cannot be observed directly so interaction is required between researchers and the subjects of research for them to be understood, and this very process also influences the data which is produced (Grix, 2002). Dilthey defined this type of understanding as *verstehen*, which was adapted to the study of sociology by Weber, positing that even though the researcher must remove value judgements from analysis to ensure objectivity, the researcher's

values will inevitably shape the choices made in the process (Corbetta, 2003). So, according to Weber, researchers can detach themselves from the scenario, but how they do so and what they choose to focus on is still shaped by assumptions and context.

Boudon (1984) states that such a process is similar to what is sometimes referred to as ampliative induction, whereby less explicit motives are discovered in scenarios where directly cross-checking facts does not add clarity. Through the constructivist lens, reality is relative and will be constructed differently by different people, so greater understanding is found through careful conceptualisation and re-conceptualisation through a transactional process between researchers and subjects (Allison and Pomeroy, 2000).

Starting assumptions need to be carefully considered throughout the research process. Gronn notes that how we decide “what it means to ‘do’ something” also requires interrogation (1982, p. 18). The context within which research takes place has a multitude of situations where action or inaction may speak to more than the face-value decision-making taking place, and such events may go unperceived or misconstrued by the subjects and researchers alike. Foucault contended that there is an inextricable and continuous effect of power on language and knowledge (1984, p. 109). This means that texts must be interrogated for unspoken, implicit, and value-laden assumptions to better understand the social reality (Cheek, 2008). Therefore, when, and how actors have agency is contentious, moreover, from a Foucauldian perspective, how we express this action or inaction in words is an exercise in reinforcing pre-existing power structures. Interpretivist research depends on an often-multi-phase inductive process of data collection so that commonalities can be noted in order to construct ideal types. This is ‘an abstraction, that comes from empirically observed regularities’ (Corbetta, 2003, p. 229). To carry out such abstractions without careful consideration of contextual factors would raise serious questions over the reliability of findings. Although not an alternative approach to be used on its own, Foucault’s discussion of power provides a useful ‘toolbox’ to further unpack the terminology employed and explore its implications (Cheek, 2008).

Conceptualising School Culture for the Purpose of This Case Study

As noted in Chapter 2, definitions of school culture hold in common the acknowledgement that there are layers of articulated views and unarticulated assumptions which make up the social reality of a school, however exactly what this constitutes is elusive. Van Houtte, in her plea for conceptual clarity, posits that ‘climate’ and ‘culture’ are different levels of the same construct, where climate ‘entails the total environmental quality,’ and culture focuses on manoeuvrable aspects (2005, pp. 77, 84). Alternatively, in Schoen and Teddlie’s (2008) response to this plea, they resolve the ambiguity by stating that climate is best understood as a subset of culture,

which also encompasses less manipulable aspects, therefore allowing for different elements of culture to be placed at different points on Wallace and Tomlinson's (2008) spectrum of manipulability. Thus, Schoen and Teddlie's definition allows for more aspects to be incorporated in a flexible framework, incorporating both what the school *has* and *is* (Bate, 1995), and giving more room for interpretation and analysis of a broader and more complete base of data to better explore the case.

Martin (2002) describes 3 possible lenses through which organisational culture can be viewed; as a type of monoculture, as differentiated in that it is made up of subcultures, or as fragmented where there is no pervasive culture apart from when certain markers emerge on key issues. For example, a limitation to Schein (1992) and Deal and Kennedy's (1988) work which underpins the framework chosen for this investigation is the underlying assumption of organisations being monocultural (Schoen and Teddlie, 2008, p. 147). It has been argued that in fact, organisations, and by extension schools are in fact more appropriately conceived of as agglomerations of 'loosely coupled' subcultures (Weick, 1990). Separating the views of each group under investigation can make the discussion of these more targeted, allowing for clearer analysis (Van Houtte and Van Maele, 2011, p. 521). Daly asserts that only by acknowledging and catering for this network of subcultures will leaders form a realistic base from which to understand their schools and implement desired changes (2008, p. 6). To fail to do so, he argues, is naïve and has contributed greatly to failed policy changes on a national level in the past.

Eacott (2010) asserts that in fact, both schools and leaders are more homogenous than we think, and that patterns emerge within leadership behaviours and the school in general which are reasonably predictable. Thus, this should allow for some conceptualisation of leadership which considers that which is not directly observable or explicit (Eacott, 2010). However, the basis of this claim rests on macro/meso-level categorisations such as the presence of students, staff, and outside actors. He notes that descriptive work which focuses on micro-level variances 'demands little scholarly attention' and can quickly become irrelevant once a new list of criteria on leadership emerges (Eacott, 2010, p. 274). However, to sweep differences aside in order to develop a new theory or make comparisons between different settings could lead to research being influenced by confirmation bias in favour of catch-all generalisations, leading to the Neo-Taylorist approach so vehemently argued against by Gronn (1982). Spillane et al. (2004) advocate the role of theory as a thinking tool for careful reflection rather than a template to be applied indiscriminately, so such comparisons could lead to problematic lines of thinking.

Another possibility is that culture is conceived as a combination of all three of Martin's (2002) lenses. Deal and Kennedy outline values, informal communication, and hidden hierarchy as essential elements of culture while Schein (1992) describes artefacts, espoused beliefs, and assumptions. None of these concepts are mutually

exclusive and they inform each other in a continuous loop. Subcultures and overarching homogenous cultures can be said to do the same. Subcultures could simultaneously be seen as ‘fragmented forces’ making up the whole (Bell and Kent, 2010), and as distinct subcultures whose differences need to be scrutinised. The issue, then, is one of framing the field and priority of focus. This investigation will operate under the assumption of one school culture, not because subcultures do not exist, but because this case study is bounded by the exploration school culture and its impact on turnover, which needs to be understood thematically across the organisation. As noted above, research inevitably comes with the caveat that both the framing and focus of research are subjective, so the process of interpretation and analysis will need to incorporate opportunities to interrogate assumptions to ensure validity.

Framing the Analysis

For this investigation, Schoen and Teddlie’s (2008) New Model of School Culture (Figure 1) has been chosen because it provides a clear framework to allow for focused analysis on four dimensions which can be explored across the three levels of culture identified by Schein (1992).

IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Figure 1: ‘New Model of School Culture (Schoen and Teddlie, 2008, p. 142).

Schoen and Teddlie (2008) note that Schein's (1992) three levels of school culture unite concepts of school culture and school climate, allowing for more complete analysis. Schein places unspoken assumptions as the base of school culture, followed by espoused values and artefacts. Espoused values are akin to what climate literature describing articulated values, and basic assumptions are the underlying concept of literature on culture (Schoen and Teddlie, 2008, p. 139). Each level is discussed in terms of: (i) Professional Orientation; (ii) Organisational Structure; (iii) Quality of Learning Environment and (iv). The particularities of each school lead to variance in assignment of category, for example, *professional orientation* refers more attitudinal elements while *organisational structure* refers to the way organisational factors affect day to day operations (p. 140). In a case study focusing on turnover, aspects related to organisational commitment or employee expectations could fall under *professional orientation* while internal responses to corporate or government mandates could fit under *organisational structure*.

On the other hand, the responses to mandates are affected by the expectations and commitment of employees, and these responses in turn affect expectation and organisational commitment. The explicit interconnectedness of this model allows for analysis to be driven by the data rather than dogmatic adherence to categorisation which could compromise the credibility of interpretation. Bell and Kent (2010, p. 8) caution against focusing on semantics and advocate a move towards studying the 'fragmented forces that help to shape the culture.' Thus, Schoen and Teddlie's (2008) model allows for the delineation of elements of school culture that can be explored empirically and fit more readily into categories. This echoes Glaser and Strauss' (1967) assertion that research that fits with empirical situations and is easily understandable is preferable. Schoen and Teddlie's (2008) four dimensions provide a clear starting point for the collection and interpretation of data which facilitates focused analysis.

However, Thomas (2007, p. 112) claims that Glaser and Strauss' stance is akin to stating that we should build a bridge because metal is strong, whereas the fundamental purpose of bridges is to connect places. Qualitative research calls for a "bottom-up" process moving from data towards theory (Cohen et al., 2017). Research questions set out the objectives of the investigation, but the data is what drives the research, rather than an abundance of pre-set questions. Schoen and Teddlie's (2008) model bridges the gap between the two difficulties because the four dimensions allay Bell and Kent's (2010) fears of over-abstraction, and the incorporation of Schein's (1992) three levels of culture provide Thomas' (2007) bridge between empirical observations and theory. Semantics *are* important, after all, particularly when the empirical reality is social and thus is inherently subjective at every stage from its iteration, to collection, to interpretation, to analysis. However, school culture and turnover within the case are the subject of investigation, so the theory needs to be a tool for their

exploration. This model allows for both to be considered simultaneously and the qualitative approach should prevent rigid categorisation that could hinder comprehension, as the process will incorporate opportunities for reflection.

It could be argued that the necessity for the incorporation of both Schein's (1992) levels and Schoen and Teddlie's (2008) dimensions into one model lends itself to overcomplication. For example, in the above example where the line between Schoen and Teddlie's (i) professional orientation and (ii) organisational culture is highly dependent on context, what differentiates one from the other can ultimately come down to whether or not it is related to Schein's (1992) artefacts, which could be visual representations of organisational structure, espoused values, which could be either, or unspoken assumptions, which align with professional orientation because this is explicitly outlined by Schoen and Teddlie (2008) as dealing with the intangibles of school life. This would seem to suggest Schein's model renders their dimensions obsolete, because it seems that those elements which are clearly dimension (i) apply to Schein's base level of cultural pyramid (unspoken assumptions), and those clearly defined as (ii) relate more to artefacts and espoused values. However, Schoen and Teddlie make no pretensions at creating a 'specific instrument or inventory', rather, they present their model as a framework from which appropriate inventories and instruments can be developed (2008, p. 147). Thus, their dimensions, when used in combination with Schein's levels allow for opportunities for discussion across themes, which lends itself to interpretive analysis.

Methodology

Schoen and Teddlie argue that a mixed-methods approach to determine the homogeneity of the culture will work best for this model (2007, p. 147), but this is to equate quantifiability with certainty in a realm where that which can be quantified is entirely dependent on the starting assumption that all parties derive the same meaning from the terminology used.

Critics of having a set paradigmatic position cite the lack of practicality and real-world representation in viewing the world through only one lens. They cite mixed-methods approaches untethered to a set paradigm as being the most representative and useful. Gorard (2010) argues that researchers tend to work within either quantitative or qualitative research and as a result consolidate arguments to extoll the virtues of their chosen approach and dismiss others as their paradigmatic position becomes entrenched. Therefore, it could be concluded pertinent to adopt a mixed-method approach for a case study, because a distinguishing feature of this research design is a focus on the case itself, rather than the topic (Cohen et al. 2017). However, case studies are also clearly bounded, not only by the unit of analysis (the case) but also by conceptual and aspectual

considerations (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 188). If the purpose is to better understand a particular aspect of the context which is better suited to qualitative research, incorporating an opposing paradigm is equally artificial. From an interpretivist perspective, laws cannot be established, only *causal connections*, and these are infinite, subjective and ever-changing. Conclusions should be couched in terms of ‘*specificity and probability*’ (Corbetta, 2003, p. 23). Quantitative data may provide an opportunity to gather more reliable data, but the conclusions reached are only valid if the terminology used is not contentious (Wellington, 2015). Therefore, if the operating paradigm is qualitative-interpretive, clarification will come through depth of investigation, and quantitative analysis cannot help “solve” issues with alternative data as social reality cannot be proven definitively.

Stentz et al.’s (2012) review of mixed-methods leadership research found that only 55 of the 1179 of articles examined included evidence of both quantitative and qualitative elements, and of these, only 15 carried through a mixed-method approach to the analysis stage. This suggests that Gorard’s (2010) observation of a lack of interrogation of assumptions in research is not unique to orthodox investigations. Also, Gorard’s definition of what may count as qualitative/quantitative terminology is extremely broad. For example, he claims that the appearance of terms such as ‘tend, most, some, all, none, few’ in qualitative research is evidence of quantitative data (Gorard, 2008, p. 8). In discussion of the pitfalls of theory in research, Fish (1989) notes that to broaden parameters too much is to make *everything* theory, which makes it impossible to develop credible analysis. This seems to be a case trying to fit *everything* into an investigation. Gorard focuses on arbitrary exclusion of data or analysis on paradigmatic grounds, but the issue could just as easily become that of indiscriminate inclusion based on superficial similarities within data with the added confusion of blurred paradigmatic assumptions. Thomas (2007) argues that it is no use attempting to forget about theory in the pursuit of some constraint-free models, as models themselves are based on epistemological assumptions. Thus, even if Gorard’s position on arbitrary exclusion of data or analysis is supported, what can be learned from diversifying methodology could cause more problems than it solves.

A continuous process of qualitative investigation involving reflection and validation should allow for ‘types’ to emerge which allow researchers to construct theoretical models to interpret reality (Corbetta, 2003). There is a possibility that subjects might deliberately mislead researchers (Thomas, 2007), but this represents an opportunity for more nuanced inquiry as the validation process, sampling and document analysis should uncover potential difficulties, and potential reasons for such responses could also be explored. Of course, this is only one of many issues with the subjectivity of data in qualitative research, with the inescapable elements of tacit knowledge and local context embedded in all interactions (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Claims are evaluated

in terms of degrees of validity rather than absolute proofs, and ‘validity is a function of intersubjective judgment’ based on strength of argument and what can be considered enough evidence (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 474). Given that there is already space in qualitative research methodology to uncover and better comprehend such issues through open questioning, thorough and reflective interrogation of data within the qualitative paradigm will be most effective in producing credible conclusions.

Although the starting assumption to this investigation is that of one school culture, the qualitative exploratory case study approach helps incorporate data that presents different possibilities. Case studies by nature reject the possibility of there being one reality and view the researcher’s and participants’ views as only some of many possibilities, ‘indeed, the researcher has a duty to address reflexivity and to address or report others’ (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 377). While Schoen and Teddlie’s model may not explicitly provide for the existence of subcultures, the reflexive process of qualitative research and previously mentioned malleability of their framework will allow for disparate perceptions to be acknowledged, developed, and incorporated into analysis, even with the starting assumption of a monocultural school. The purpose of this investigation is to explore school cultural factors and their impact on turnover, rather than develop a new model for a singular school culture in this context. The interviews will prove invaluable in this process because the semi-structured approach will allow for participants to correct and clarify perceptions, so space will be provided to uncover weakly substantiated interpretations and analysis.

Chapter 4: The Research Proposal

The title for this proposed investigation is “Leadership, school culture and staff turnover: an exploratory case study of an international school in UAE.” The goal is to carefully describe aspects related to school culture to improve the understanding of its impact on staff turnover so that leaders can identify areas to improve practice and maintain healthy turnover rates. Therefore, the research will be focused on answering these three research questions:

1. What aspects of school culture are perceived to impact staff turnover?
2. How consistent are perceptions of school culture among the participants?
3. How might school leaders utilise school culture to maintain desired levels of staff turnover?

Initially, only one research question was set: “How can leaders foster a culture that reduces staff turnover?” However this was problematic in that it move directly to normative considerations. Thomas (2006) advocates firstly prioritising the process of carefully delineating objectives of the investigation and consistently referring

back to them throughout. These objectives must coincide with the epistemological assumptions inherent in the research methodology, so to move directly towards normative statements when claims are built around consensus rather than proof, would be to present subjective *causal connections* which need to be couched in terms of probability as objective facts. The purpose of this case study is to first explore the context carefully and develop *verstehen*, so to move directly what leaders can do, before exploring what they already do or do not do in this context and how it is perceived, is to jump to conclusions. The first research question seeks to *describe* what is happening, whereas the second seeks to examine and compare perceptions (Cohen, et al., 2017). A clear understanding of what the situation is and how it is perceived will uncover which aspects leaders might utilise. The use of the word “might” in the last question is deliberate, as it is dependent on the analysis of the first two questions, how *manipulable* the factors are, and whether or not they should be manipulated.

Thomas (2006) advocates firstly prioritising the process of carefully delineating objectives of the investigation and consistently circling back to them throughout. Such a caution is a valuable reminder that the methodology should develop from what researchers seek to explore and how this manifests ontologically and epistemologically. The proposed design frame for this research is an exploratory qualitative case study on the impact of school culture on turnover intent. Merriam and Elizabeth (2015, p. 39) assert that it is the unit of analysis that is the focus of the case study, not the theoretical topic. A qualitative case study was chosen because the focus is bounded by the context it is to take place in, and by the focus on school culture and turnover within this setting. As this investigation is bound by its exploration of school culture and its effect on turnover in this single institution, an exploratory case study is most appropriate.

Chapter 5: Research Design, Research Methods and Methods of analysis

Research Design

The subjective nature of the data gathered, and the evidence analysed is what adds depth or *thickness* to qualitative research. Another tension in searching for emergent meaning from qualitative data is what we consider as evidence or data in the first place. Research design requires careful consideration of what can be considered *evidence* as opposed to general data (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 175). This investigation seeks *thick descriptions* (Geertz, 1973) surrounding the themes of school culture and staff turnover. Narrowing of discussion to maintain focus on these themes is necessary, otherwise it runs the risk of talking around the issue. However, an overly restrictive approach in the opening stages runs the risk of leaving some perspectives

undiscovered due to the role of uncontested assumptions from the researcher shaping the questions asked and the space given to hear responses.

Therefore, the initial focus of the investigation will remain broad for two reasons. Firstly, because the interpretive positionality of the research comes with the assumption that the subjective understanding of the social reality being discussed necessitates space for emergent themes. As this topic has not been investigated in this context and the specificity of each situation according to interpretivist assumptions, there is a danger that over-structuring of focus at the early stage could compromise the detachment of the researcher and lend itself to leading questions and confirmation bias. Secondly, this will allow for ‘progressive focusing’ (Parlett and Hamilton, 1976), wherein a broader view is started with to uncover key themes can be investigated in closer detail. In this way, space will be provided to get a clearer overview of potential areas of importance in the initial stages, allowing for depth and *thickness* in themes and interpretations to emerge as more specific data is gathered.

As a framework for data collection and discovery of emergent themes, Schoen and Teddlie’s (2008) four-dimensional model of school culture which employs Schein’s (1992) focus on rituals, espoused values and assumptions will be used. Staff turnover is only explicitly relevant to dimensions (i) and (ii), namely Professional Orientation and Organisational Structure, but if relevant themes emerge under the dimensions of (iii) Learning Environment or (iv) Student-Centred Focus, they can be incorporated within this framework. They caveat that their model makes no provision for external factors, which will limit analysis (Schoen and Teddlie, 2008, p. 147), but this fits the focus of the investigation and the ethical considerations outlined below.

The research will take place in five phases:

1. Preliminary semi-structured interviews
2. Thematic Analysis of Interview transcripts
3. Document Analysis: Thematic analysis of staff handbook and written communication related to turnover
4. Final semi-structured interviews
5. Final Analysis

Research Methods

Practical Issues

The setting for research is an international school operating in the UAE. Staff have progressively less free time from February onwards due to both Muslim and Western holidays as well as a shortened school day for the period of Ramadan and exam schedules. Therefore, the first round of interview will be scheduled to take place early, in the first 4-6 weeks of the school year so that preliminary thematic analysis can begin in October.

The document analysis will begin in late November and early December, partly because this is a period when it is unlikely that staff will participate in interviews due to holidays. As key communications regarding handing in notice are usually announced in November ahead of the deadline in early December, this provides space for opportunistic sampling of relevant data from the most up to date sources. Staff return on the first weekday of January, so final interviews will be completed in the first 6 weeks of the new year. Preparations for mock exams begin in February so this is the last opportunity to conduct interviews before the most intense part of the school year. As leavers will have handed in their notice and recruitment of new staff begins at this time, this should provide an additional platform for meaningful discussion.

The interviews will be recorded as audio files and data summaries will be written up, with the dual purpose of reducing the data to its most relevant parts and to protect participants, as outlined in the Ethical Issues section below. The selection of data to include in these summaries is an interpretive process in itself (Cohen et al., 2017), so care will be needed to ensure that participants' perceptions are represented accurately. To ensure this, some notes will be taken during the interview, compared to notes taken in the transcript and themes will be returned to in the final interview to ensure ample opportunity for clarification and correction.

Sampling for Interviews

Blaikie (2018) argues that to define sample size in advance of research commencing is difficult to reconcile with an interpretive approach as it artificially limits the potential for research to explore emergent data and develop it. He posits that while the context, purpose and focus may be set, usually the nature of what is being sampled in the context of the research is not fully known from the outset and flexibility is required. His solution is to outline 'a range in the sample size that *might* be required' (Blaikie, 2018, p. 636).

However, Marshall and Rossman (2016, p. 108) state that 'fitness for purpose' is the fundamental determinant of sample size for qualitative research, so it is possible to recruit participants that are most suited to qualitative

data gathering, particularly given that the researcher will have worked with them. Purposive, intensive sampling in the search for a small number of participants (Cohen et al., 2017) which are more likely to yield rich data from an informed perspective will be the sampling frame for this investigation. Two members of the senior leadership team will be asked to participate as they are most responsible for turnover decisions, communication of these decisions, and the staff handbook, which will also be analysed as part of this investigation. Along with these, two heads of department and two fulltime teaching staff, each with at least 5 years of experience in the school will be sought to participate. In this way, apart from the variation on an individual level, data can be gathered from three different levels of the school hierarchy. This case study is bound by two specific factors: that of staff turnover and school culture within this school, so participants need enough exposure to both elements for them to be able to speak at length.

Preliminary Interview

The most natural form of obtaining data is an informal unstructured approach (Burton and Bartlett, 2005), however it can be difficult to organise the data as the questions and responses arising are spontaneous, which will lead to a lack of focus. As this investigation is concerned with the impact of school culture specifically on turnover and this is a small-scale investigation, it will be important to allow as much space for themes to emerge but to remain focused on relevant data. Alternatively, while taking a standardised approach with agreed upon questions appearing in a set order would provide a clear framework for discussion, the nature of the topic could lead to more generic responses as respondents seek to avoid controversial remarks, or the bounds of questioning could limit their ability to provide key insights.

Therefore, a semi-structured approach (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 313) to the interview will be adopted. Kerlinger's (1970) 'open-ended items', where participants are given a frame to work within but are not bound by limits in how to address the question will be used to provide depth. Participants will be given the following definitions based on Schoen and Teddlie's (2008, pp. 141-142) dimensions for school culture and then asked, 'What aspects of our school come to mind?', with the responses being recorded in the research instrument (Appendix 1):

Professional Orientation: The way business is conducted in the school, attitudes, degree of professionalism

Organisational Structure: The type of leadership, consensus on goals, implementation of policy

Quality of Learning Environment: degree and frequency students are involved in meaningful, challenging learning

Student Centred Focus: Extent to which individual students' needs are met

Schein's (1992) *espoused values* will be directly observable as respondents articulate their perceptions, and clarification will be sought through prompting and probing. Prompts allow for clarification of the question and moving along the interview, whereas probes seek greater understanding of the participant's perceptions (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 513). A guiding principle will be to prompt and probe as little as possible as it can lead to limited responses as interviewees respond directly to the researcher's instruction, leaving open the possibility of significant bias or unnatural responses (Fowler, 2007; Wellington, 2015). A semi-structured approach was selected to uncover meaning from open responses that have less room to emerge in a structured setting, so probes and prompts will be restricted to use a support for discussion, only to be deployed as necessary.

Data Collection for Document Analysis

The purpose of the document analysis is to use the data gathered from the initial interviews to compare to the information as set out in the handbook. Data from the handbook can be collected because one of its stated purposes is to represent the espoused values of the school. All staff members are expected to read it and refer to it when making decisions or going about their routines. It also makes direct reference to both the rules and the norms related to staff turnover. The wording and organisation of this document, therefore, will provide a valuable reference point for emergent themes and a useful starter for discussion. Apart from being physical artefact and its espousal of values directly, its lack of articulation of certain subjects or ambiguity means that it could also provide insight into unspoken assumptions. Therefore, this is valuable as a representative sample as it straddles all three dimensions of Schein's (1992) model. Gibbs (2007, p. 4) cautions that progressive focusing can lead to data saturation due to continuous, multi-layered interpretation of new data on specific factors, but this research will be anchored by the interview process and a focus on turnover, and this should mitigate such difficulties. This will be supplemented by opportunistic sampling of official documents and communication which are mentioned in the initial interview. The data will be organised according to emergent themes from the preliminary interview and relevant data which does not seem to fit any particular theme can be used as the basis to form new questions for the final interviews.

Final Interview

The final interviews will also take a semi-structured approach, this time incorporating questions fitting salient themes from the first interviews on an individual basis, as well as general themes emerging from across the samples and documents analysed. As part of the process of progressive focusing, the discussion points will be narrower than in the initial interview. To ensure this, an 'interview guide' approach will be adopted, wherein the topics to be covered will be outlined prior to the interview, with freedom to incorporate them as best fits on an

individual basis (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 510). As themes will have already emerged, the goal will be to refine them, make corrections and clarifications that improve understanding. The aim is to interpret and understand the participants' responses, by giving some additional focus and depth rather than breadth. As in the first interview, prompts and probes will be employed sparingly and wherever possible, questions will be open-ended to ensure that participants are not artificially led to responses which reflect the researcher's views more than their own.

Ethical Issues

Cultural analysis can be "at best boring and at worst dangerous" (Schein, 2004) because its analysis can drift towards impractical abstractions on the one hand, or uncover previously dialogues, necessitating uncomfortable decision making (Close and Wainwright, 2010). Care must be taken to ensure that individuals' rights to anonymity and confidentiality are respected, given that voicing previously unspoken assumptions has the potential to cause problems. A qualitative investigation of this nature operates under the assumption of subjective perceptions of the social reality. The perceptions of espoused values are likely to be different at least in part from participant to participant and variance in responses could cause tension. As a semi-structured approach allows researchers and participants to cover material not specifically mentioned before the interview to gain authentic responses, great care will need to be taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality so that respondents are protected and that they also trust that they can speak honestly.

Participants will be contacted directly and conversations surrounding logistical issues and consent forms will take place individually so that they are fully aware of the process at all levels and are not exposed to unwanted inquiries from colleagues. The interviews will be recorded in separate office spaces or teacher's classrooms, employing common sense to take the most discreet option possible. The recorded interviews will be assigned a number and stored securely on a USB device which is password protected. The corresponding names and numbers will be stored on a separate device to ensure anonymity.

The outcomes of this semi-structured approach to interviews are unpredictable so consent becomes an even more crucial issue and clear parameters for the dissemination of the data will be agreed beforehand. There is no union to protect individuals' jobs and all staff have two-year contracts. Given that the school is under no legal obligation to renew contracts regardless of longevity, any perceived problematic outcomes could fundamentally change the course of individual careers. Another complicating factor is that of the strict rules on speaking out against local authorities. While the culture of the predominantly North American staff is one of open communication, the local context in the UAE means that criticism of any matters related to government or local culture outside accepted channels is discouraged, and in some cases met with legal action (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Placing individuals in a position where they at risk will be avoided by storing the initial audio

separately, responses which puts participants at risk will not be processed in the final analysis, with arguments will be framed in a way that does not criticise the government or local culture. As a final precaution, participants will be given access to the final article to ensure that they are fully informed of what it contains before dissemination.

Analysis

Often the most effective qualitative analysis is simple in its design. The semi-structured approach to data gathering is designed to allow for emergent themes to be uncovered while maintaining the bounding of the study on school culture and turnover in this school context. The area of focus will remain narrow, but the openness of approach could lead to the emergence of a disparate base of themes as participants' perceptions and the documentary analysis unfold. A further complicating factor is the recognition that there is an overlap between interpretation, data collection, meaning that although the process may be mapped out linearly, it is also a cyclical process as progressive understanding uncovers new themes to be reflected on (Cohen et al., p. 178). For example, at the outset it would seem most probable that dimensions of school culture directly related to professional orientation and organisational structure would have the most impact on staff turnover given that they directly impact teachers, however, elements related to student learning strike at the espoused values of all schools and educators. As these are likely to emerge incrementally throughout the data collection process and thematic analysis, original responses will need to be returned to clarify and interrogate implicit meaning. Schein's (1992) base level of unspoken assumptions are likely to emerge in this process. For this reason, Wellington's (2015) 7-stage model will be used, allowing for repetition of some of the earlier steps so that there is sufficient space for analysis, synthesis, and reflection.

The design frame and the corresponding stages in Wellington's (2015, p. 267) model are illustrated here:

Research Design	Corresponding Stage in Wellington's (2015, p. 267) model
Preliminary semi-structured interviews	Stage 1: Immersion in data
Thematic Analysis of Interview transcripts	Stage 2: Reflecting
	Stage 3: Analysing
	Stage 4: Synthesising, re-combining data
	Stage 5: Relating to other work
Document Analysis	Stage 1: Immersion in data
	Stage 2: Reflecting
	Stage 3: Analysing
	Stage 4: Synthesising, re-combining data
Final semi-structured interviews	Stage 6: Reflecting back, seeking more detail
Final Analysis	Stages 3 & 4 Again
	Stage 7: 'Presenting, disseminating, sharing' finding

Interpretive research methodology is hermeneutic, with data being relayed back to subjects to allow for clarification and rectification, and Wellington's stages 2, 3 and 4 are repeated in this research design, to facilitate this process. When there is convergence of accounts between different participants, it is considered as significant, and tentative conclusions are arrived at by confirming or correcting information with participants (Allison and Pomeroy, 2000, p. 94). The choices of the researcher on what data to include and what themes to focus on are also an interpretive process, so analysis of differing perceptions from participants will help ensure the validity of analysis. *Emic* analysis is concerned 'with participants' own subjective interpretations and perceptions,' whereas *etic* analysis is concerned with 'objective analysis of different frameworks' to provide more complete conclusions (Cohen et al., p. 648). In this case, the interview analysis provides an emic perspective while parts of the handbook will be analysed from both *etic* and *emic* perspectives as they outline more outwardly objective elements such as the hierarchical structure of the school, official guidelines and also espoused values which are assumption-laden and subjective.

Schoen and Teddlie's (2008) four dimensions will form the initial basis for descriptive coding of data from both the interviews and document analysis. Relevant data from the first interview will be placed in each of these categories, as will "in Vivo" coding, where data is directly transcribed from interviews or documents for coding (Castelberry and Nolen, 2018, p. 3). Data will be analysed in relation to Schein's (1992) levels of artefacts, espoused beliefs and unspoken assumptions, and the three research questions. Themes can emerge both vertically across Schein's (1992) levels, and connections and contradictions in interpretation can be used to allow for the merging of convergent data under categories or separation under subunits (Wellington, 2015, p. 163).

As there are few other recourses for the qualitative researcher than respondent validation, it is an integral part of the process (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 648). In this case the document analysis can be used to ensure more case-focused conclusions are reached but the emphasis of the investigation is on perceptions of school culture and its impact, so the more clarification and correction by those whose perceptions the researcher is trying to understand, the better. However, this is also fraught with difficulties because participants may simply disagree with the interpretations of the researcher or change their minds on something they have said out of embarrassment or fear of repercussions (Cohen et al., p. 649). This can be partially mitigated throughout by comparing the conclusions reached with past literature on school culture. If the conclusions reached do not fit with or build on any past literature, it may be necessary to return to the data and possibly the respondents for further clarification (Wellington, 2015, p. 164).

Postscript: Narrative Critical Reflection

Culture is a challenging enough topic to deal with on its own, but when trying to examine links between turnover and culture, it became even more complicated. I struggled to do this while remaining focused on leadership and management and the feedback from TMA 01 drew attention to the fact that I was drifting towards a straightforward review of literature on school culture and turnover with no purpose beyond that. However, after speaking with my tutor and going over my notes and draft paragraphs again, I eventually came to realise that much of what I was referring to in the context of the investigation had clearly identifiable traits associated with Transformational Leadership, which gave me a starting point to focus my research on school culture and turnover. There was a temptation to only focus transformational leadership and school culture, but the purpose of this study was to focus on the central issue of turnover in international school sector and propose research that would be useful to my current setting. If I only focused on differing perceptions of the impact of transformational leadership on school culture, it would be of limited use to our school leadership because changing the discourse is unlikely to occur, particularly after one small-scale investigation. However, if I could provide focused insight into perceptions of school culture related to staff turnover, it could lead to improvements in practice as those factors which were perceived as innate or malleable were discovered in the study.

Even so, a challenge that I encountered throughout the research process was to remain focused on the topic I was addressing. As noted above, cases studies are fundamentally distinguished from other types of research by their focus on the specific case being investigated, rather than the topic. As there are two essential topics that overlap in this case study, it was difficult to not drift into long passages on theory because the data from the case itself is not there to anchor it yet. In a sense all paradigmatic and methodological discussion is relevant as deciding not to follow an approach can be equally as important as deciding which one to follow, so deciding when to cut material that was not necessary was not a straightforward process. However, the practicalities of the proposed methods helped provide direction. In the feedback from TMA 02 my tutor recommended more emphasis on the research tools to be used. By articulating the reasoning behind my chosen methods and referring to the ontological and epistemological underpinnings, this became a process of back and forth editing. I would adapt my methods, go back and check that they matched my conceptual framework and methodology, and then work to exclude any superfluous exploration of conceptual frameworks in the earlier chapters. Much like my proposed research design, this was a reflexive cycle rather than a linear process. The structure of my essay improved gradually as I referred back and forth to each section and my reasoning became clearer once I could envision how I would actually carry out the research.

References

- Allison, P. and Pomeroy, E. (2000) 'How Shall We "Know?" Epistemological Concerns in Research in Experiential Education', *Journal of Experiential Education*, 23(2), pp. 91–98. doi: 10.1177/105382590002300207.
- Bate, P. (1995) *Strategies for cultural change*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Ball, S. J. (2006) 'The Necessity and Violence of Theory', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 27(1), pp. 3–10.
- Bass, B.M. and Riggio, R.E., 2006. *Transformational leadership*. Psychology press.
- Bell, L. and Kent, P., 2010. 'The cultural jigsaw: A case study exploring the ways in which sixth-form students perceive school culture', *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 38(1), pp.8-32.
- Blaikie, N., (2018) 'Confounding issues related to determining sample size in qualitative research', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 21(5), pp.635-641.
- Boudon, R., (1984) *La place du désordre: critique des théories du changement social*. Presses universitaires de France.
- Brown, D.J. and Keeping, L.M., (2005) 'Elaborating the construct of transformational leadership: The role of affect', *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(2), pp.245-272.
- Burton, D., & Bartlett, S. (2005) 'Questionnaires and interviews. In Practitioner research for teachers (pp. 101-128). SAGE Publications, Ltd, <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9780857024527.d10>
- Bush, T., and Glover, D. (2003) *School Leadership: Concepts and Evidence*, Nottingham, National College for School Leadership
- Castleberry, A. and Nolen, A., 2018. 'Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds?', *Currents in pharmacy teaching and learning*, 10(6), pp.807-815
- Chandler, J., (2010) 'The role of location in the recruitment and retention of teachers in international schools', *Journal of Research in International Education*, 9(3), pp.214-226.
- Cheek, J. (2008) 'Foucauldian discourse analysis', in Given, L. M. (ed.) *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, London, Sage, pp. 356–8.
- Chemers, M. (2000) 'Leadership research and theory: a functional integration', *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 27–43.
- Close, P. and Wainwright, J., (2010) 'Who's in charge? Leadership and culture in extended service contexts', *School Leadership and Management*, 30(5), pp.435-450.
- Cohen, L, Manion, L, & Morrison, K (2017) *Research Methods in Education*, Taylor & Francis Group, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [31 July 2022].

- Daly, T., (2008) 'School culture and values-related change: Towards a critically pragmatic conceptualisation', *Irish Educational Studies*, 27(1), pp.5-27.
- Deal, T. and Kennedy, A. (1988) *Corporate Cultures: The Rights and Rituals of Corporate Life*, London, Penguin.
- DeMatthews, D.E., Knight, D.S. and Shin, J., (2021) 'The Principal-Teacher Churn: Understanding the Relationship Between Leadership Turnover and Teacher Attrition', *Educational Administration Quarterly*, p.0013161X211051974.
- Driskill, GW, & Brenton, AL (2010), *Organizational Culture in Action : A Cultural Analysis Workbook*, SAGE Publications, Incorporated, Thousand Oaks. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [17 August 2022].
- Erichsen, K. and Reynolds, J., (2020) 'Public school accountability, workplace culture, and teacher morale', *Social Science Research*, 85, p.102347.
- Fish, S. (1989) *Doing What Comes Naturally*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Foucault, M.(1984) 'The order of discourse', In M.Shapiro (Ed.), *Language and politics* (pp. 108–138).London: Basil Blackwell.
- Fowler, F. J., Jr (2009) *Survey Research Methods* (fourth edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gardner, H., and Laskin, E. (1995) *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership*, New York, Basic Books.
- Gardner-McTaggart, A., (2018) 'International schools: Leadership reviewed', *Journal of Research in International Education*, 17(2), pp.148-163.
- Geertz, C., (1973) 'Chapter 1/Thick Description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture' *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York, Basic Books.
- Glaser, B.G. and Strauss, A.L. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine
- Gronn, P. (1982) 'Neo-Taylorism in educational administration?', *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 18(4), 17–35.
- Gujarati, J., (2012) 'A comprehensive induction system: A key to the retention of highly qualified teachers', *The Educational Forum* (Vol. 76, No. 2, pp. 218-223). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Hanushek, E.A. and Rivkin, S.G., (2007) 'Pay, working conditions, and teacher quality', *The future of children*, pp.69-86.
- Hargreaves, A., (1994) 'Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age.' *Teachers College Press*.
- Hartnell, C.A. and Walumbwa, F.O., (2011) 'Transformational leadership and organizational culture', *The handbook of organizational culture and climate*, 2.

- Hickman, G.R., (2012) 'Concepts of leadership in organizational change', *Educational Leadership: Context, strategy and collaboration*, pp.67-82.
- Holme, J.J., Jabbar, H., Germain, E. and Dinning, J., (2018) 'Rethinking teacher turnover: Longitudinal measures of instability in schools', *Educational Researcher*, 47(1), pp.62-75.
- Human Rights Watch, (2022), *UAE: Sweeping Legal 'Reforms' Deepen Repression*, 5 June 2022. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/05/uae-sweeping-legal-reforms-deepen-repression> (Accessed 9 August 2022).
- IBO, (2022) Facts and Figures [Online]. Available at: <https://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/facts-and-figures/> (Accessed: 10 August 2022).
- Ingersoll, Richard. (2001) 'Teacher Turnover, Teacher Shortages, and the Organization of Schools', CPRE Research Reports. https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_researchreports/12 (Accessed on 26 August 2022).
- Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L. and May, H., (2016) 'Do accountability policies push teachers out?', *Educational Leadership*, 73(8), p.44.
- Johnson, G., Whittington, R. and Scholes, K., (2011) 'The strategy lenses', *Educational Leadership: Context, Strategy and Collaboration* (nd), pp.96-114.
- Johnson, S.M., Kraft, M.A. and Papay, J.P., (2012) 'How context matters in high-need schools: The effects of teachers' working conditions on their professional satisfaction and their students' achievement', *Teachers college record*, 114(10), pp.1-39.
- Jurewicz, A. M. (2017). *Job Embeddedness: the Pulls of Staying for Teachers in the International School Setting* [Doctoral dissertation, Bethel University].
- Keung, E.K. and Rockinson-Szapkiw, A.J., (2013) 'The relationship between transformational leadership and cultural intelligence: A study of international school leaders' *Journal of Educational Administration*.
- Kerlinger, F. N. (1970) *Foundations of Behavioral Research*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Kezar, A., Carducci, R. and Contreras-McGavin, M. (2006) Rethinking the 'L' Word in Higher Education: the Revolution of Research on Leadership. ASHE-Higher Education Report, 31, 6, pp. 1–218.
- KHDA (2014) 'About Us-News' Available at: <https://beta.khda.gov.ae/en/About-Us/News/2014/%E2%80%98UAE-has-highest-number-of-int%E2%80%99-schools-in-Gulf%E2%80%99> (Accessed 28 February 2022)
- Leithwood, K. (2013) 'Leadership and student learning: what works and how', in Wise, C., Bradshaw, P. and Cartwright, M. (eds) *Leading Professional Practice in Education*, Sage, London/The Open University, Milton Keynes, pp. 25–37.
- Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G., (1985) *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage. London.

- Lumby, J. and English, F. (2013) 'From simplicism to complexity in leadership identity and preparation: exploring the lineage and dark secrets', in Wise, C., Bradshaw, P. and Cartwright, M. (eds) *Leading Professional Practice in Education*, London, Sage/Milton Keynes, The Open University.
- Mackenzie, N. & Knipe, S. (2006). 'Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology', *Issues In Educational Research*, 16(2), 193-205. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier16/mackenzie.html>
- Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. B. (2016) *Designing Qualitative Research* (sixth edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Matthews-Chioma, E. (2017) An Investigation of the Relationship between School Culture and Leadership Behavior on Organizational Commitment [Doctoral dissertation,] Moderated by Social Identity for Public School Administrators in the Mid-Atlantic Region, Delaware State University.
- Merriam, Sharan B., and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. (2015) *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Mertz, N. T., (2017) 'Norma T. Mertz Discusses Theoretical Frameworks', SAGE Video. [Streaming Video] London: SAGE Publications Ltd. Available at: <<https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473985193> & gt; [Accessed 31 Jul 2022].
- Nguyen, T.D., Pham, L.D., Crouch, M. and Springer, M.G., (2020) 'The correlates of teacher turnover: An updated and expanded meta-analysis of the literature', *Educational Research Review*, 31, p.100355.fing
- Nguyen, T.D. and Springer, M.G., (2021) 'A conceptual framework of teacher turnover: a systematic review of the empirical international literature and insights from the employee turnover literature', *Educational Review*, pp.1-36.
- Odland, G. and Ruzicka, M., (2009) 'An investigation into teacher turnover in international schools', *Journal of Research in International Education*, 8(1), pp.5-29.
- Parlett, M. and Hamilton, D., (1972) 'Evaluation as Illumination: A New Approach to the Study of Innovatory Programs', Occasional Paper.
- Polkinghorne, D.E., (2007) Validity Issues in Narrative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13 (4), 471–486.
- Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C. A. and Rowe, K. J. (2008) 'The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes: An Analysis of the Differential Effects of Leadership Types', *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), pp. 635–674. doi: 10.1177/0013161X08321509.
- Schein, E. (2004) *Organizational culture and leadership*.3rd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Schein, E.H., (2010) *Organizational culture and leadership* (Vol. 2). John Wiley & Sons.
- Schoen, L.T. and Teddlie, C., (2008) 'A new model of school culture: A response to a call for conceptual clarity', *School effectiveness and school improvement*, 19(2), pp.129-153.
- 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.

- Simon, N. and Johnson, S.M., (2015) 'Teacher turnover in high-poverty schools: What we know and can do', *Teachers College Record*, 117(3), pp.1-36.
- Stentz, J.E., Clark, V.L.P. and Matkin, G.S., (2012) 'Applying mixed methods to leadership research: A review of current practices', *The leadership quarterly*, 23(6), pp.1173-1183.
- Storey, J (ed.) (2009), *Leadership in Organizations : Current Issues and Key Trends*, Routledge, London. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [2 August 2022]
- Swaffield, S. and MacBeath, J. (2013) 'Leadership for learning', in Wise, C., Bradshaw, P. and Cartwright, M. (eds) *Leading Professional Practice in Education*, Sage, London/The Open University, Milton Keynes, pp. 9–24.
- Teddle, C. and Yu, F., (2007) 'Mixed methods sampling: A typology with examples', *Journal of mixed methods research*, 1(1), pp.77-100.
- Thacker, S., (2019) *Collaboration Road: Dubai's Journey towards Improved School Quality*. KHDA. Available at: https://www.khda.gov.ae/Areas/Administration/Content/FileUploads/Publication/Documents/English/20190324160314_CollaborationRoad.pdf (Accessed on 28 August 2022).
- Thomas, D.R., (2006). 'A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data', *American journal of evaluation*, 27(2), pp.237-246.
- Thomas, G. (2007) *Education and Theory*. Maidenhead: Open University Press (Conducting Educational Research). Available at: <https://search-ebshost-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=234254&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 30 July 2022).
- Van Houtte, M., (2005) 'Climate or culture? A plea for conceptual clarity in school effectiveness research', *School effectiveness and school improvement*, 16(1), pp.71-89.
- Van Houtte, M. and Van Maele, D., (2011) 'The black box revelation: In search of conceptual clarity regarding climate and culture in school effectiveness research', *Oxford Review of Education*, 37(4), pp.505-524.
- Wallace, M. and Tomlinson, M., (2010) 'Contextualizing leader dynamics: How public service leaders endeavour to build influence', *Leadership*, 6(1), pp.21-45.
- Weick, K. E. (1990) 'Cartographic myths in organisations' in Huff, A. S. (ed.) *Mapping Strategic Thought*, Chichester, Wiley.
- Wellington, J. (2015) *Educational Research* (second edition). London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Western, S. (2008) 'An overview of the leadership discourses,' in Preedy, M., Bennett, N. and Wise, C. (2011) (eds). *Educational Leadership*. SAGE Publications, Ltd. (UK). pp. 11-24
- Wohlin, C., (2014), 'Guidelines for snowballing in systematic literature studies and a replication in software engineering', *Proceedings of the 18th international conference on evaluation and assessment in software engineering* (pp. 1-10).

Appendix 1:

Artefacts	(i) Professional Orientation	(ii) Organisational Structure
	(iii) Quality of Learning Environment	Student Centred Focus
Espoused Beliefs	(i) Professional Orientation	(ii) Organisational Structure
	(iii) Quality of Learning Environment	Student Centred Focus
Unspoken Assumptions	(i) Professional Orientation	(ii) Organisational Structure
	(iii) Quality of Learning Environment	Student Centred Focus

Appendix 2

Category	Feedback received, targets achieved and areas of development worked on	How did this shape my dissertation
Knowledge and understanding:	TMA 01 feedback: “the dissertation cannot be about a review of literature on culture or staff turnover. The thrust has to be about the leadership issues in culture and staff turnover.” I needed to bring the focus back to this so that my research was focused and I had a clear point of reference	My initial focus was only on these elements and the connection to leadership was only explicit- this developed once I articulated the link between transformational leadership and school culture, which was not outlined at the earlier stages
Critical analysis and evaluation:	<p>PDP Goal from Week 1 in E822: Develop enough of a base of understanding so as not to just agree with the latest article I have read</p> <p>TMA 02 feedback: “More on the research tools to be used was necessary”</p>	<p>Greater understanding of epistemology helped me defend my intuitive position and this meant that I could critique it while still being secure enough to return back to it after probing its advantages and disadvantages</p> <p>I adjusted my focus to analysing the tools I would actually be using, and this in turn aided my conceptual understanding when I reflected on what assumptions underpin the use of these tools. It helped me think about the strengths and weaknesses of a qualitative approach</p>
Links to professional practice:	A constant point referred to by my tutor was to ensure that the study was actually plausible, both in terms of logistics and actually collecting relevant data. Documentary analysis and questionnaires were suggested.	I decided not to do questionnaires because I wanted to focus on a small sample size and clarify and validate meaning directly with participants. Also, our school consistently conducts surveys and a formal request was made by middle leaders to reduce the quantity, so there would have been resistance. Documentary analysis is very useful here though, particularly when it directly espouses the values mentioned in Schein’s model
Structure, communication and presentation:	<p>Feedback from my tutor meeting after draft 2: My first two drafts lacked clear structure so I asked about putting the work into sections for chapters 2 and 3.</p> <p>I rewatched the tutorials and looked specifically for ways to ensure that my whole dissertation was linked, section by section</p>	I ended up with far more words for section 2 and section 3 than I needed, but was able to organise my ideas much better once I recentred my focus on the goal of the research. I realised that the reasons for my approach were justified, but I had not put them into any meaningful order. One of the pieces of advice in the tutorials was to start writing early, so I made sure to get ideas on the page for chapter 5, and then I could relate these back and forth to the literature review and conceptual framework chapters to see if they made sense together.

E822 Ethical Appraisal Form

Masters: Education, Childhood and Youth



NB: it should be noted that The Open University is unable to offer liability insurance to cover any negative consequences students might encounter when undertaking ‘in-person’ data collection. It is therefore very important that you follow appropriate research protocols which should include seeking Gatekeeper permissions to undertake any data collection within your setting and adhering to ethical principles for

Because ethical appraisal should precede data collection, a completed version of this form should be included with TMA02 for those developing a Small-Scale Investigation (SSI) and as part of the EMA submission for those completing an Extended Literature Review and Research Proposal (EP) form of the Dissertation.

the safety of yourself and your participants.

Fill in section 1 of this document with your personal details and brief information about your research. For section 2, please assess your research using the following questions and click yes or no as appropriate. If there is any possibility of significant risk please tick yes. Even if your list contains all “no” you should still return your completed checklist so your tutor/supervisor can assess the proposed research.

Section 1: Project details

a.	-	N/A	
b.	PI	-	
c.	Project title	Leadership, school culture and staff turnover: an exploratory case study of an international school in UAE	
d.	Supervisor/tutor	-	
e.	Qualification	Masters in Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Masters in Childhood and Youth	<input type="checkbox"/>

f.	MA pathway (where applicable)	
g.	Intended start date for fieldwork	1 st September 2023
h.	Intended end date for fieldwork	1 st March 2024
i.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in <i>If you are resident in the UK and will be conducting your research abroad please check www.fco.gov.uk for advice on travel.</i>	United Arab Emirates

Section 2: Ethics Assessment		Yes	No
1	Does your proposed research need initial clearance from a ‘gatekeeper’ (e.g. Local Authority, head teacher, college head, nursery/playgroup manager)?	√	
2	Have you checked whether the organisation requires you to undertake a ‘police check’ or appropriate level of ‘disclosure’ before carrying out your research? ¹	√	
3	Have you indicated how informed consent will be obtained from your participants (including children less than 16 years old, school pupils and immediate family members)? Your consent letters/forms must inform participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. ²	√	
4	Will your proposed research design mean that it will be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in nonpublic places)? If so have you specified appropriate debriefing procedures? ³		√

¹ You must agree to comply with any ethical codes of practice or legal requirements that maybe in place within the organisation or country (e.g. educational institution, social care setting or other workplace) in which your research will take place. If required an appropriate level of disclosure (‘police check’) can be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (England and Wales), Disclosure Scotland, AccessNI (Northern Ireland), Criminal Records Office (Republic of Ireland), etc.

² This should normally involve the use of an information sheet about the research and what participation will involve, and a signed consent form. You must allow sufficient time for potential participants to consider their decision between the giving of the information sheet and the gaining of consent. No research should be conducted without the opt-in informed consent of participants or their caregivers. In the case of children (individuals under 16 years of age) no research should be conducted without a specified means of gaining their informed consent (or, in the case of young children, their assent) and the consent of their parents, caregivers, or guardians. This is particularly important if your project involves participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children under 16 years, people with learning disabilities, or emotional problems, people with difficulty in understanding or communication, people with identified health problems). There is additional guidance on informed consent on the Masters: Education and Childhood and Youth website under Project Resources.

³ Where an essential element of the research design would be compromised by full disclosure to participants, the withholding of information should be specified in the project proposal and explicit procedures stated to obviate any potential harm arising from such withholding. Deception or covert collection of data should only take place where it has been agreed with a named responsible person in the organisation and it is essential to achieve the research results required, where the research objective has strong scientific merit and where there is an appropriate risk management and harm alleviation strategy.

5	Does your proposed design involve repetitive observation of participants, (i.e. more than twice over a period of more than 2-3 weeks)? Is this necessary? If it is, have you made appropriate provision for participants to renew consent or withdraw from the study half-way through? ⁴		√
6	Are you proposing to collect video and/or audio data? If so have you indicated how you will protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality and how you will store the data?	√	
7	Does your proposal indicate how you will give your participants the opportunity to access the outcomes of your research (including audio/visual materials) after they have provided data?	√	
8	Have you built in time for a pilot study to make sure that any task materials you propose to use are age appropriate and that they are unlikely to cause offence to any of your participants?	√	
9	Is your research likely to involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. adult/child relationships, peer relationships, discussions about personal teaching styles, ability levels of individual children and/or adults)? What safeguards have you put in place to protect participants' confidentiality?	√	
10	Does your proposed research raise any issues of personal safety for yourself or other persons involved in the project? Do you need to carry out a 'risk analysis' and/or discuss this with teachers, parents and other adults involved in the research?		√
11	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		√
12	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data?		√

If you answered 'yes' to questions **12**, you will also have to submit an application to an appropriate National Research Ethics Service ethics committee (<http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/>).

⁴ Where participants are involved in longer-term data collection, the use of procedures for the renewal of consent at appropriate times should be considered.