



Open Research Online

Citation

Hosegood, Caroline (2024). A Case Study Exploring School Leaders' Perspectives of Flexible Working: Implications for Teacher Retention and Career Progression in a Secondary School in England. Student dissertation for The Open University module E822 Masters multi-disciplinary dissertation: education, childhood and youth.

URL

<https://oro.open.ac.uk/102733/>

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.21954/ou.ro.00102733>

License

(CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0) Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Policy

This document has been downloaded from Open Research Online, The Open University's repository of research publications. This version is being made available in accordance with Open Research Online policies available from [Open Research Online \(ORO\) Policies](#)

Versions

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding

E822 EMA Dissertation
(Option EP)

**A Case Study Exploring School
Leaders' Perspectives of Flexible
Working: Implications for Teacher
Retention and Career Progression in a
Secondary School in England**

Caroline Hosegood

Tutor: Dr Don Bradley

Total word count: 11,982

Contents

Abstract	4
Chapter 1: Introduction	5
Chapter 2: Literature review	8
2.1 - Introduction	8
2.2 Literature search	8
2.3 Gender	10
2.4 Recruitment and retention	12
2.5 Barriers	16
2.6 Conclusion	18
Chapter 3: Conceptual framework	20
3.1 Introduction	20
3.2 Discourse	20
3.3 Power	22
3.4 Institutions	24
3.5 Methodologies and Positionality	26
3.6 Conclusion	28
Chapter 4: Research proposal	30
Chapter 5: Research design	32
5.1 Introduction	32
5.2 Research methods	32
5.2.1 Survey	33
5.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews	35
5.3 Analysis	37
5.4 Ethics	38
5.5 Conclusions	39
Chapter 6: Narrative critical reflection	41
References	43

Appendices	51
Appendix A – EMA reflection evidence grid	51
Appendix B – Search Terms	59
Appendix C – Draft Survey	59
Appendix D – Guiding Topics	65
Appendix E – Ethical Appraisal Form.....	66
Appendix F – Interview volunteer consent and assent form	69
Appendix G – Survey and Interview Letters	75
Survey letter.....	75
Interview Letter	76

Abstract

This case study proposes to investigate perceptions of flexible working in an English independent secondary school. By researching flexible working in conjunction with recruitment, retention, gender, career progression, and implementation barriers, current practices post-COVID-19 will be examined. Drawing on an interpretivist approach, semi-structured interviews and a survey are proposed tools to uncover the lived realities of individuals. The conceptual framework of discourse, power and institutions provide lenses to examine how flexible working may influence school staffing and career progression. Findings will provide insights for leaders evaluating flexible working approaches in their schools in the context of broader flexible working research.

(100 words)

Chapter 1: Introduction

School leaders significantly affect staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions (Doherty, 2020). Their effectiveness is crucial considering national and global teacher recruitment challenges and the pipeline deficit of school leaders (Bush, 2013). Literature reviewed in this dissertation outlines the potential for flexible working (FW) to alleviate poor teacher retention, recruitment challenges and mitigate gender inequalities in teaching careers. Therefore, the research proposed aims to further understanding of FW's implications for school leaders and contribute to the broader landscape of FW research.

Over the years, women in my organisation have primarily sought FW for part-time hours to manage child-care responsibilities. This has often resulted in a loss of leadership positions and consequently associated skills. Such self-deselection from leadership by women has been reported as a culturally accepted phenomenon in many secondary schools in England (Harland, et al., 2023). However, school leaders are now adopting more strategic, transformational approaches, building talent and planning for the future (Davies & Davies, 2012). Changes to FW legislation (Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023) further highlights the need for schools to re-evaluate their approach to FW and develop a compelling vision and ethos which both school leaders and teachers are inspired to support (Davies & Davies, 2012).

By developing innovative approaches to attract, retain and develop the talents of all teachers, schools can better address workforce challenges. Whilst technological developments have facilitated overcoming FW constraints, leadership attitudes remain key to the success of FW in any organisation (Soga, et al., 2022). Finding FW solutions that maintain female teachers in leadership roles may also impact broader societal issues, such as the gender pay gap, by retaining female role models and mentors for future generations of talented female leaders (Harland, et al., 2023). Additionally, the improved work-life balance and productivity associated with FW (Booth, et al., 2021) may enhance the profession for teachers irrespective of gender.

The literature reviewed, following instinctive, conceptual, and systematic searches of Google Scholar and the Open University Library for peer-reviewed articles relating to FW in English secondary schools, revealed the topic of FW is interwoven with those of gender,

recruitment and retention, and organisational barriers. These are examined further in Chapter 2 and influenced the development of the conceptual framework, the research proposal, and the research design. Aligning with the conceptual framework, set out in detail in Chapter 3, the research seeks to uncover the subjective experiences and perceptions of school leaders regarding FW in secondary schools.

The ontological paradigm is grounded in relativist interpretivism and both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to form a comprehensive small-scale case study (Bassey, 2012). Gender stereotypes (Butler, 1988), identity (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014) and leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005) are intertwined with the conceptual framework scaffolded to Foucault's concepts of discourse, power and institutions (Bevir, 1999) in conjunction with interpretivist work by Weber (Corbetta, 2003).

The research design, informed by the conceptual framework, allows for the exploration of discourse from multiple perspectives. It seeks to examine how power and institutional structures influence identity, gender stereotypes, and leadership attitudes on FW. Through this approach, a deeper understanding of these influences on individuals will be uncovered, providing indicative findings and insights into the research questions.

By reflecting on findings from the literature review, the conceptual framework, and ongoing feedback the research questions, as set out in Chapter 4, evolved to focus specifically on FW arrangements due to their direct relevance to the current educational context and legislative changes. Feedback from TMA01 led to evidence from literature, rather than subjective opinion, to inform the research questions. Further refinement to ensure each research question's phrasing ensured clarity and that it linked directly to the research title and findings within the literature review followed feedback from TMA02. The influence of feedback on the development of this dissertation is outlined in Appendix A.

This study aims to explore perceptions of models of FW implemented in a co-educational 11-18 independent secondary school in South-East England. In doing so it seeks to understand barriers and levers of successful facilitation, as well as school leaders' perceptions of links between FW and teacher recruitment and retention. As gender is intrinsically linked to the topic of FW (Brown, 2023), the research proposal suggests it should be explored in the context of career progression from the perspective of teachers

and school leaders in the school. To enable the aims of the study to be addressed, the following research questions were developed:

- RQ1: What models of FW have been implemented and enabled in the case study school?
- RQ2: How do school leaders perceive flexible working arrangements affecting teacher recruitment and retention?
- RQ3: How is gender perceived to influence the career development of teachers with flexible working arrangements?

The research design, detailed in Chapter 5, uses semi-structured interviews and a survey to gather data to address the research questions. Aligned with the conceptual framework, this case study to provide an in-depth exploration of individual perspectives and broader trends within one organisation (Bassey, 2012). By focusing on experiences of FW since the reopening of schools following the COVID-19 pandemic, the study aims to contribute new insights to the existing literature on FW in secondary schools in England.

(857 words)

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 - Introduction

This chapter critically analyses literature relevant to secondary school leadership facilitating FW practices in England. FW, as defined by the Department for Education (2020) as “working arrangements which allow employees to vary the amount, timing or location of their work”. This encompasses various approaches, including job sharing, part-time contracts, flexible scheduling, and remote work (Martin, et al., 2023).

Brown (2023) suggests that FW meanings evolve and should be reviewed periodically, reflecting the varying needs of individuals and schools. The range of practices and approaches to facilitate FW reflect the varying and evolving needs of individuals and schools. This field of research is temporally linked to the period since school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is due to rapid technological developments and widespread teachers experience of remote working during school closures (Harland, et al., 2023).

2.2 Literature search

The literature search followed Greenhalgh, et al.’s (2005) meta-narrative review approach, including instinctive, conceptual, and systematic searches. The systematic search focussed on peer-reviewed research, published in English in the last five years. Boolean operators were used to set key terms as search inclusion criteria for the systematic literature search.

The search terms, as outlined in Appendix B, yielded 72 results from Google Scholar. These were manually reviewed to exclude irrelevant papers and unpublished works. Key sources included peer-reviewed articles, books and grey literature which were frequently cited, or deemed to have significant relevance to the search.

The research by Brown (2023) and Harland, et al. (2023) serve as foundational works for this literature review. Brown’s study, with its life history approach and feminist lens, offers rich, qualitative, insights into the lived experiences of six women on FW, their careers and leadership, though its findings are context-specific and may not be broadly generalisable. Harland, et al.’s mixed-methods review explores links between FW and recruitment and retention. It provides a comprehensive update on FW post-2019 by drawing on diverse data sources, though its limited sample size and potential selection bias in interviews limit the generalisability and validity of its findings.

Additional sources include government commissioned reports and policy documents, such as the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (Jerrim & Sims, 2019), the Timewise FW report (Tersago, 2022), the Teacher Wellbeing Index (Savill-Smith & Scanlan, 2022), and the School Workforce Census (SWC) (GOV.UK, 2024). These sources provide extensive data on FW and the teaching workforce. They were evaluated for credibility, considering potential biases towards government policies.

Jerrim and Sims' (2019) work is credible due to its comprehensive methods, focusing on schools in England and minimising bias by using a comprehensive search matrix and several academic databases. Despite a limited sample of 2,376 lower secondary teachers and 157 heads, it provided valuable insights into a sector with over 450,000 teachers (GOV.UK, 2024).

The Teacher Wellbeing Index (Savill-Smith & Scanlan, 2022) provides compelling statistics, though limited by a sample size of 3,082 educators. Its links to peer-reviewed research enhance credibility. The Timewise report (Tersago, 2022) aims to improve FW practices but may have subjective bias. Nevertheless, it offers useful insights when triangulated with more reliable sources.

The SWC (GOV.UK, 2024) is robust due to its statutory nature, providing comprehensive information from state-funded schools in England. However, unlike TALIS (Jerrim & Sims, 2019), it excludes independent schools, non-maintained special schools, sixth-form colleges and further education establishments. As an annual quantitative survey, longitudinal trends can be identified, but it lacks the contextual insights derived from qualitative methodologies.

The literature reveals limited knowledge of informal FW arrangements, such as ad-hoc remote working or staggered hours. Temporary arrangements for religious observance or family reasons are reported less than I have observed in practice. In contrast, much of the research focusses on formal arrangements, such as part-time hours, which are easier to identify using quantitative methods (Harland, et al., 2023). Gibson, et al. (2019) reveal flexibility in phased returns to work following bereavement, illness or parental leave through additional survey commentary. Additionally, similar flexibility is captured through

qualitative interviews (Brown, 2023). This reflects the mixed research landscape analysed to identify pervasive themes.

Thematic analysis of literature identified the following key themes: gender; recruitment and retention; and barriers to implementation. Mediating factors within these include career progression, work-life balance, workforce flexibility, intensification of work, quality of the teaching workforce and professional development (Booth, et al., 2021; Mathou, et al., 2020). Within the themes identified, the influence of school leadership on FW is addressed from a variety of perspectives throughout the literature.

2.3 Gender

There is consensus in the literature that FW arrangements are more common for female teachers, although applications for FW are available irrespective of gender. In 2023, the SWC (GOV.UK, 2024) recorded over a quarter of female secondary teachers working part-time compared to less than 10% of male teachers. Similar levels, consistently lower than national workforce employment averages, have been reported from a range of sources by Harland, et al. (2023, p. 16). This suggests formally arranged FW experiences, such as part-time hours, differ by gender.

The difference in proportions of male and female teachers with FW arrangements has been explored from various perspectives, often part-time female teachers and full-time male school leaders. The experience of women has been examined acknowledging gendered differences in navigating teaching careers (Brown, 2023). It has been suggested these differences are influenced by self-selection by women facing gendered obstacles such as caring responsibilities (Phipps & Prieto, 2021).

Childcare is widely recognised as a gendered obstacle in FW requests by both teachers and school leaders. Most school leaders, surveyed by Gibson, et al. (2019), identified childcare as the main reason for FW requests. Despite a limited sample size and a low male response rate, this research indicates gendered differences in FW motivations. The research suggests that male teachers predominantly seek FW to increase time to pursue hobbies, rather than for childcare reasons. However, details of what these may be were not expanded upon in the research. The knowledge deficit about male teachers with FW arrangements in the literature may limit school leaders supporting FW applications effectively.

In contrast to men, part-time arrangements for women are well established in literature, and extend beyond teaching. While part-time working in teaching does not always fully address the challenges of balancing work with caring responsibilities, workplace flexibility to facilitate childcare is a broader societal challenge. A lack of FW and childcare access have been identified as significant barriers to raising children while maintaining a career in a range of professions (Phipps & Prieto, 2021). Brown (2023) notes that although part-time work offers increased flexibility at the cost of salary, it does not always alleviate the emotional tensions of stress, guilt and anxiety teachers may experience when balancing work with caring responsibilities.

The literature reflects observations in my own setting that female teachers with new caring responsibilities following maternity leave, often step down from leadership roles and request FW arrangements. Furthermore, school leaders may require leadership roles to be relinquished to facilitate FW requests (Brown, 2023). Harland, et al. (2023) also identify that school leaders often limit FW in leadership roles due to their belief that a full-time presence in school is necessary. As societal expectations and organisational support influence individuals' behaviours (Phipps & Prieto, 2021), the gender difference in FW may be linked to organisational culture and leadership attitudes.

Tensions between leadership attitudes and caring responsibilities have been linked to gendered career decisions beyond FW alone. Leadership attitudes have deterred some teachers from making FW requests (Gibson, et al., 2019), while for others, they result in female staff "deselecting" themselves from leadership roles and future career progression (Brown, 2023). This deselection leads to fewer women in their thirties in leadership positions (Burge, et al., 2021), reducing diversity in leadership and arguably contributing to the gender pay gap (Harland, et al., 2023). There are also concerns that modelling a gender disparity in school leadership to pupils risks influencing future generations societal expectations (Brown, 2023).

A lack of part-time leadership models and FW affecting career progression has contributed to the gender disparity in leadership reported in the TALIS (Jerrim & Sims, 2019). There is consensus that part-time work can be career limiting and stepping down from leadership roles may result in loss of management skills over time (Brown, 2023). This may contribute

to a lack of female mentors and role models for females with leadership aspirations (Phipps & Prieto, 2021), influencing further gender disparity in subsequent generations of teachers.

Gender disparities in educational leadership may already be shifting in some schools due to changes in cultural attitudes to FW. Cultures more supportive of FW have been linked to improved succession planning for female leaders and reducing the gender pay gap (Harland, et al., 2023). However, closer examination revealed that this was based on supporting evidence of a government backed report on case studies within a group of schools and an article from a charity promoting FW in schools. Both sources risk being biased and lack scrutiny. Despite limitations, the case studies reflect observations in my own context which link the pandemic and the rapid adoption of technology as factors facilitating successful arrangements and cultural understanding of FW (Department for Education, 2021).

Developing a more nuanced understanding of FW compatible with career development and leadership in schools, such as staggered hours or remote working (Adams, et al., 2023) is important if FW is to be used as a method to tackle gender disparity in the future.

In summary, the gendered dimensions of FW in schools, particularly how they impact career progression and leadership opportunities, highlight significant disparities between male and female teachers. These disparities not only affect individual career trajectories but also contribute to broader structural inequalities within the education sector. As we shift our focus to recruitment and retention, it becomes crucial to examine how these gendered experiences with FW influence teachers' decisions to enter, stay or leave the profession, and how schools can address these issues.

2.4 Recruitment and retention

Irrespective of gender challenges, school leaders face significant recruitment and retention difficulties. These are compounded by teacher shortages, high turnover rates and an increasing spotlight on teachers work-life balance (Andrews, et al., 2023). Alongside efforts to manage workload intensification, FW arrangements have emerged as a lever to enhance teacher well-being and support retention. This issue is particularly acute in secondary schools, where the job satisfaction is lower and attrition rates are higher compared to primary teachers (Jerrim & Sims, 2019).

Attrition, defined as the loss of teachers from the school workforce for reasons other than retirement, poses a significant global challenge, threatening permanent loss of experience and skill from the workforce (Doherty, 2020). In England, while retirement rates have stayed similar to pre-pandemic levels, the annual SWC reports increasing rates of teachers leaving state secondaries (McLean, et al., 2023). Care is needed when interpreting literature citing the SWC that fails to distinguish between teachers leaving the profession and those either moving to specialist schools or teaching abroad. Given the global challenges of teacher attrition, retention strategies, such as FW, could be explored from countries with comparable education systems and living standards. School leaders in England could look to Europe, Australia, New Zealand (See, et al., 2020), USA and Canada (Doherty, 2020).

FW approaches to reduce attrition may vary depending on the needs of specific groups of teachers. In secondary schools, subject specialism increases complexity ensuring there are sufficient teachers. Acute shortages in Languages, Mathematics, and Sciences (See, et al., 2020) may warrant distinct recruitment strategies. Retention of male secondary teachers has been identified as a concern (Hulme, 2023, p. 41), but evidence for this more widely in the literature is limited. Women in their thirties and forties are also at risk of attrition linked to FW challenges (Brown, 2023).

Another group of teachers who may be influenced by FW are those new to the profession. This is an important group of teachers to examine due to challenges in retaining teachers in the first five years of their careers (Doherty, 2020) and long-term teacher training recruitment (McLean, et al., 2023). The inadequate supply of teachers is compounded by a growing population of school-aged children in England (Sibieta, 2020). Recruitment and retention challenges in English secondary schools are linked to deteriorating working conditions, negatively affecting teaching quality and pupils' life chances (Sutton Trust, 2011). Thus, exploring how FW influence recruitment and retention of new teachers could have wider implications for provision in secondary schools and should be researched further.

Graduates comparing FW across careers may see teaching less favourably, detrimentally impacting recruitment. As a result, school leaders should understand graduates' motivations to become teachers and factors which deter them, to strategically address recruitment

challenges. Hulme (2023) and Chong et al. (2024, p. 28) link comparisons between graduate jobs with teacher recruitment and retention difficulties.

School leaders should be mindful that comparisons between sectors of work-life arrangements and technologies facilitating FW are not direct due to contextual differences. However, the positive attitudes to FW practices which provide more autonomy over time and place of work in other professions may be pertinent to teachers (Martin, et al., 2023, p. 25). Some schools are already harnessing technology to facilitate remote working (Gibson, et al., 2019). However, this is limited compared to the high adoption of remote working for UK graduate roles (Soga, et al., 2022) which has accelerated since the COVID-19 pandemic (Andrews, et al., 2023) and may serve as a negative recruitment pressure for teaching.

FW, working hours, work-life balance and financial reward may influence recruitment and retention, countering the benefits of extended holidays, job security and vocational satisfaction. See, et al. (2020) found financial incentives' effects on retention are short-lived and adversely affect the suitability of graduates entering the teaching profession.

Interestingly, Bamford and Worth (2017) concluded that opportunities for FW were more important than money to teachers, echoing Judge et al.'s (2010) findings from that financial reward was less important for retention than professional worth and self-efficacy. In contrast Doherty (2020) links deterioration in recruitment and retention to financial reward. Despite real-term salary reductions for all teachers since Doherty's research (Andrews, et al., 2023) which may have elevated the importance of finance, the literature suggests FW also has potential for increasing teacher training applications.

Types of FW offered to attract teachers or incentivise retention may vary depending on the individuals involved. However, there may be trends within demographic groups of teachers, such as age and gender, and types of roles. Gibson, et al. (2019) found part-time arrangements were more common for classroom teachers than for school leaders, while more school leaders reported having remote working arrangements in place. These findings are limited and not representative of all teachers and contexts due to the small sample size of less than 500 teachers in the study. Furthermore, this study does not probe the perceptions of these groups, for example, whether working from home would be an attractive FW adjustment for classroom teachers. It may even be more nuanced, with different attitudes by age or subject.

As the implementation of FW may vary among individuals or groups of teachers, school leaders need robust policies and government guidance appropriate for their context. Martin et al. (2023) found a minority of the 409 school leaders surveyed had reviewed FW policies. Additionally, minimal reference to FW policies in job advertisements, compared to healthcare, staff welfare, career development, and working environments, indicates a lack of status for FW policies among school leaders (Chong, et al., 2024). This is only partial evidence, as the research was conducted outside peak recruitment periods, and the low respondent numbers make it unrepresentative of secondary teacher recruitment in England. Furthermore, awareness of FW may have changed since the launch of the Flexible Working Toolkit by the Department for Education in 2023 (Chong, et al., 2024).

Government policies promoting the use of FW may help attract inactive skilled teachers back into the workforce. Analysis from the Department for Education indicates part-time contracts may incentivise this group of teachers (Doherty, 2020). However, there are retention risks associated with part-time contracts, especially when balanced with leadership roles or caring responsibilities. Brown (2023) reports that inequalities and work-life tensions faced by part-time teachers can lead to their attrition (Worth, et al., 2018). Furthermore, part-time arrangements combined with leadership attitudes that limit career progression or access to professional development can exacerbate retention challenges (Booth, et al., 2021).

Leadership plays a pivotal role in the successful implementation of FW. Harland, et al. (2023) link effective implementation and leadership with retention. This finding is echoed by Chong, et al. (2024). School leaders may establish cultures of trust, fostering environments where mutually beneficial FW arrangements can be agreed upon, thereby retaining teachers (Doherty, 2020). Taylor, et al. (2023) also note the positive influence leaders, as well as balanced workload and supportive colleagues, can have on teacher recruitment.

In summary, FW practices play a critical role in addressing the recruitment and retention challenges in secondary schools, particularly as they relate to teacher workload, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. However, while FW can enhance teacher retention by providing greater flexibility, it also raises complex barriers that require careful consideration. In the next section literature on FW barriers are examined, including

concerns about maintaining teaching quality, organisational challenges, and the evolving needs of teachers in a post-COVID-19 educational landscape.

2.5 Barriers

As well as retention, experienced teachers' having FW arrangements have been linked to enhanced work-life balance, increased innovation and productivity, and reduced absenteeism. However, there may be unforeseen consequences of changing or increasing FW for teachers. As well as potential cultural challenges, barriers to FW include concerns about maintaining quality of teaching, organisational challenges, and contractual considerations (Mathou, et al., 2020). There is significant research in the drivers for teachers leaving the profession and changing needs of teachers throughout their careers. However, schools have evolved since COVID-19 and established research may not reflect current perceptions and needs of teachers and school leaders. Additionally, there have been significant technological developments affecting organisational barriers to FW.

There are a range of barriers to implementing FW practices including organisational constraints, culture and the impact on pupils themselves. The context of the school may affect the impact of such barriers. Schools which are part of larger groups such as multi academy trusts may have more flexibility to overcome organisational constraints such as staffing levels and budgetary concerns. Conversely, schools with higher levels of deprivation are less likely to be able to facilitate FW requests (Harland, et al., 2023). Adams, et al. (2023) also report an inverse relationship between "Free school meal" pupils and the likelihood of FW requests being approved.

The size and resources available to a school may affect the scale of logistical considerations, such as timetabling and attendance at meetings, with greater constraints affecting smaller and more deprived settings. Technology driven solutions may mitigate logistical constraints and facilitate FW in new ways. Timetabling constraints can be overcome using software solutions (Harland, et al., 2023) and online video calls may facilitate remote attendance at meetings (Soga, et al., 2022).

Even with technology solutions available, logistical barriers are not always surmountable. Gibson, et al. (2019) identified timetabling issues and reallocation of work amongst staff as the most common reason for declining FW requests. They also identified challenges specific

to schools, such as ensuring the supervision of pupils, which requires additional teachers to be on-site even when not teaching. However, this research may not reflect current practice in schools due to its timing.

Research prior to COVID-19, has temporal limitations due to the rapid temporary adoption of remote working by teachers during school closures in 2019 and subsequent technological developments (Harland, et al., 2023). In recent years there have been shifts in working practices, such as the increased adoption of online parents' evenings. However, Patience and Rose (2022) suggest that remote working by teachers is still often resisted by school leaders, presenting a greater barrier than the logistical constraints themselves.

Leadership attitudes and approach to change can hinder or facilitate FW. The traditional request-response approach, as described by Tersago (2022), aligns with transactional leadership. In contrast, a proactive, whole-school approach where leaders articulate a clear vision for FW aligns with transformational leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Transformational leadership fosters a collaborative culture that encourages open communication. However, research indicates that this is not the case in many schools. Harland, et al. (2023) report multiple sources indicating a reluctance of staff to make FW requests.

The attitudes and culture within a school may present barriers to the adoption and implementation of FW arrangements. Although there is evidence of the importance of FW for recruitment and retention, leaders' perceptions may limit their facilitation. This may be due cultural leanings towards presenteeism (Harland, et al., 2023), with some leaders considering staff to only be capable and effective when working in the school building itself (Marsh & Derbyshire, 2019).

Perceptions of FW being incompatible with school environments are common. Gibson, et al. (2019) found that these perceptions were the most common reasons for requests being declined. The need for teaching staff to be in school during specific times when pupils are on-site has been linked to the unsuccessful FW requests (Burge, Lu and Phillips, 2021). In addition to leadership attitudes, school culture may influence the actions of teachers. In organisations where requests have not been granted or policies are not well-established, teachers may be less likely to make requests for FW (Harland, et al., 2023).

The ability of school leaders to facilitate FW is influenced by the nature of the requests themselves. Inflexibility in FW requests can undermine leadership efforts. However, this inflexibility may stem from the reported challenges of managing workload on formalised FW arrangements (Gibson, et al., 2019). Negative experiences, where leaders spend significant time seeking mutually agreeable working patterns only to be met with inflexibility from teachers, may lead to more guarded responses in the future.

Overcoming organisational constraints to facilitate FW increases the workload of line managers and potentially colleagues. Brown (2023) notes that negotiating and facilitating FW requires additional support from line managers and can necessitate time for handovers among colleagues sharing work. Despite these challenges, proactive steps to address organisational constraints can foster a more supportive environment for FW, ultimately benefiting both staff and school leadership.

A significant barrier to FW in schools is the perceived impact on pupils. Concerns have been raised that FW could affect teacher performance, particularly in terms of availability for meetings and professional development training (Booth, et al., 2021), which may impact pupils. Additionally, perceptions that there are issues with continuity in the classroom have been reported (Gibson, et al., 2019). However, Harland, et al (2023). suggests there is a lack of evidence supporting these assertions.

In summary, while FW can enhance work-life balance, innovation, and productivity for teachers, it also presents significant barriers. These include concerns about maintaining teaching quality, organisational challenges, and cultural resistance. The evolving needs of teachers post-COVID-19 and advancements in technology further affect FW implementation. School leaders must navigate these barriers, considering the unique contexts of their schools, to effectively integrate FW practices as appropriate.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined the relationship between FW and its impact on English secondary schools, focusing on gender disparities, recruitment and retention challenges, and barriers to implementation. The analysis of gender highlighted that female teachers are more likely to request and be granted FW, often at the cost of career progression. The literature

suggests a need for equitable FW policies that support all teachers in balancing their professional and personal lives.

FW can address recruitment and retention challenges in the teaching profession. With rising attrition rates and difficulties in attracting new talent, especially in secondary schools, FW may improve teacher wellbeing and job satisfaction. However, its success depends on strategic and tailored implementation. Moreover, school leadership can present significant barriers to FW. Organisational constraints, cultural attitudes, and concerns about pupil impact are considerable obstacles. Despite these challenges, FW's potential to foster a more sustainable teaching workforce is important.

In conclusion, gender inequality, teacher attrition, and recruitment difficulties may be impacted by school leaders' approaches to FW. Successful implementation requires understanding the barriers and a commitment to create flexible and inclusive working environments. Understanding current practices and perspectives in schools may facilitate the development of equitable and adaptable FW policies, making teaching a more resilient and attractive career pathway, and warrants further research.

(4,056 words)

Chapter 3: Conceptual framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the conceptual framework to establish the ontological paradigm underpinning the research proposal. It includes the ontological assumptions that inform the epistemological position and, subsequently, the methodologies (Grix, 2002). Additionally, the positionality and reflexivity of the researcher, and their influence on the research process, are explored.

When considering school leaders facilitating FW my ontological perspective is that the lived experience of both leaders and teachers will vary for individuals and organisations.

Furthermore, interactions between individuals will continuously revise their perspectives, influencing their reality. This relativism is an ontological perspective which excludes the possibility of an absolute reality (Corbetta, 2003).

Distinct from the ontological perspective concerned with the reality to be studied, epistemology is concerned with how this reality can become known to the researcher. For this research an interpretivist epistemology is most appropriate, pursuing understanding behaviours of individuals. The conceptual framework is influenced by key theorists of social phenomena. Particularly, the work by Weber seeking to provide deeper understanding of meaning and motivations behind human actions (Schwandt, 1998). Ideas from Butler, Bourdieu and Leith wood are also identified to add additional depth to discussion and analysis of gender stereotypes, identity, and leadership.

Finally, Foucault's focus on understanding meaning and practice within social contexts provides a scaffold to examine the social complexities within a school. While his work has strong connections to critical theory by providing tools to challenge social inequalities (Bevir, 1999), his focus on understanding individuals within specific contexts aligns with interpretivist inquiry. Thus, the conceptual framework is based on Foucault's concepts of discourse, power and institutions to provide multiple lenses through which to frame the research question.

3.2 Discourse

Foucault's work on discourse is fundamental for interpreting the shaping of societal norms by knowledge and power. His work on discourse established a more flexible concept for

writing about the world (Bevir, 1999, p. 348). Discourse simply means using language to share ideas and information as a form of communication. For Foucault, discourse is the ways knowledge and ideas are communicated and developed through language. It is about what is said, by whom and how.

The Foucault lens examines a body of statements and events, tentatively grouping them by connections (Bevir, 1999). The experiences of teachers affected by FW in schools and school leaders engaged in evaluation and subsequent moderation or facilitation of requests will be individual. However, there will be links and connections which can be identified to provide more generalised discourse in isolation as a tool for exploring the experiences of individuals further, aligning with my interpretivist epistemology.

Weber is a key foundational interpretivist theorist (Corbetta, 2003). He presented Dilthey's concept of "*Verstehen*" (understanding) into sociology, emphasising the importance of objectivity. Within the conceptual framework it is important to identify the challenges associated with gender and FW may affect objectivity. Therefore, the analysis of discourse is enriched further by considering Butler's concept of gender performativity (1988).

The language and normalities surrounding FW in schools are not only shaped by power but also by embedded gender stereotypes. These stereotypes may influence the expectations and experiences of both male and female teachers and leaders differently, thereby affecting their ability to negotiate FW arrangements. An understanding of societal stereotypes and their influences will further enhance the focus of developing a body of knowledge, free from values-based judgements. This is particularly important in interpretivist research to develop an understanding of the motives behind individual actions.

In seeking to develop objective understanding of the actions of individuals, this research will examine FW within the framework of discourse by examining statements from key stakeholders. Bourdieu's theories on field, habitus and capital (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014), further examine how social identities shape discourse around FW. Discourse will be influenced by teachers' and leaders' habitus, or their perspectives and practices, along with their social, cultural, and economic capital.

Capital affects teachers' ability to negotiate and benefit from FW arrangements. There is a tension with "*Verstehen*" and objectivity of researchers. Whilst Weber proposes that

understanding exists when the observer is able to put themselves into the position of the research subject, there is criticism this requires the researcher to have a psychological connection with their subjects (Geertz, 1983). I echo this concern as it may result in assumptions which undermine the objectivity of the researcher.

In summary, the objective study of individuals, free from values-based judgements, will contribute to a richer understanding of how schools are affected by the practice of FW. Whilst Weber places greater emphasis on empathic understanding of individuals and Foucault's work is intrinsically linked to power structures, both instil an importance in the study of the actions and ideas of individuals.

3.3 Power

Foucault contends that power relations shape discourses. Consequently, those in power control knowledge creation and its dissemination, reinforcing their power (Miller, 1990). As discourse constructs societal conventions and knowledge, which in turn informs behaviours and beliefs, it acts as a form of power. Thus, discourse, knowledge and power are intrinsically linked (Pitseo & Letseka, 2013).

Similarly, Weber identifies that behaviours will be orientated by societal norms which act as a form of power through invisible rules of conduct (Spencer, 1970). For examples, gender norms and stereotypes, as explored by Butler (1988), interact with power dynamics in significant ways. Female teachers might face greater scrutiny or different expectations compared to their male counterparts when seeking FW arrangements. This intersection of gender and power can reinforce existing gender inequalities within the institution.

The actions of teachers and school leaders within an institution may be examined through the lens of societal norms as a form of power influencing the behaviours of individuals. To understand discourse, institutional and societal conventions which will influence behaviours and beliefs must be examined. As well as Foucault identifying societal norms operating as power through subtle shaping of truths, power is also recognised in more overt forms of coercion.

Weber identifies these more coercive expressions of power in his work on types of authority (Spencer, 1970). Considering authority as a relationship where the instructions of certain individuals will be considered necessary by others, Weber categorises authority as

traditional, charismatic and rational-legal (Spencer, 1970). This provides a framework for understanding how power is legitimised in social contexts, aligning with interpretivist approaches seeking to understand practices within a specific context. In a school the categories of traditional, charismatic and rational-legal may be too rigid and simplistic.

Authority within a school may involve a mixture of authority types, rather than being confined to the Weber's rigid categories of authority. He also fails to recognise illegitimate or coercive forms of authority which affect power dynamics within an organisation.

However, there may be benefits to categorising authority within schools when examining the influence of power on school leaders implementing FW arrangements. The leadership styles of those in positions of authority will have a significant influence on institutional power dynamics and any changes in approaches to FW practices.

Leithwood's model of transformational leadership (2005) is particularly relevant when considering how school leaders facilitate change. This leadership style focuses on inspiring and motivating staff to follow a shared vision. Examining leadership styles alongside power dynamics can provide a contextual understanding of how FW models are implemented in schools. Analysing power, authority, and leadership styles within a school helps uncover the underlying dynamics shaping social interactions and influencing FW practices.

Contextual analysis of power will contribute to the interpretivist approach by examining and understanding individual actions within a specific cultural context. Hierarchical power structures in schools are individual to their context and history. Foucault recognises how power relations evolve over time within a setting through his genealogical and archaeological methods (Bevir, 1999). Whilst schools have not evolved over the expansive timeframes examined by Foucault, his work highlights the importance of examining not only power structures as they present themselves at the time of inquiry, but also their development over time and how long they have been embedded within the organisation.

This work on power emphasises the importance of revealing the influence of power structures and dynamics on social interactions when examining FW practices. Power may present itself in more obvious ways, such as positional authority. However, to develop a deeper understanding of social phenomena both societal norms and authority constructs need to be examined. This will vary between schools and the power dynamics may vary

between departments and individuals. Understanding of power in a particular school setting will be enhanced by paying attention to how and when these power constructs have come to occur, being mindful that realities will differ for individuals and understanding will only develop by identifying links and connections within the discourse.

3.4 Institutions

Foucault identified institutions, such as schools, as settings where power is exercised through the production and control of knowledge (Bevir, 1999). School leaders may draw on their authority to promote knowledge and practices which align with institutional goals. This may rely on legal-rational authority (Spencer, 1970, p. 133) using formal policies and procedures. By analysing power and authority, how authority is perceived and exercised in a school can be uncovered. Furthermore, examining institutions, like schools, through an interpretive lens creates a more comprehensive framework to examine connections between school leaders, teachers and FW. Key aspects of institutions to consider include governmentality and policies, disciplinary mechanisms and surveillance.

Foucault examined the regulation of populations through institutions' policies and "governmentality" (Spencer, 1970, pp. 352-353), Governmentality refers to methods employed to mould the behaviours of others (Mifsud, 2017, p. 40). Schools and educational policies designed to shape the behaviours and attitudes of students and teachers aligns with Foucault's concept of governing populations. By extension the actions of school leaders to promote or limit FW practices, shaping teachers' behaviours and attitudes, may be considered a form of governmentality.

The concept of governmentality can be simplified for the interpretive approach by drawing on Weber's work on bureaucracy (King, 1980). Considering the school as a bureaucracy, with clear hierarchies and standardised procedures, helps identify the policies and processes influencing FW. Schools are highly regulated and organised institutions, yet their complexities may appear chaotic as they continuously evolve to respond to the needs of the numerous stakeholders. Focussing on policies and processes associated with FW requests and practices can provide greater clarity in interpreting how schools and their leaders shape behaviours.

Weber considered bureaucracy the epitome of rationalisation (King, 1980, p. 18), promoting efficiency and control, and prioritising reason and practicality (Langer, 2022). FW arrangements might be considered a form of rationalisation, modernising schools as institutions. Although FW arrangements may deviate from traditional practices or be judged emotionally by stakeholders, they can be practical tools for recruiting and retaining teachers, influencing their career decisions.

Both rationalisation and Foucault's concept of disciplinary power (Bevir, 1999) concern the regulation and control of individuals by institutions. They diverge, with Foucault highlighting more subtle forms of power, contrasting Weber's focus on formal structures within institutions. Foucault argued that schools use various disciplinary mechanisms (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017), such as timetables and surveillance, to control students, and even teachers. Foucault suggests that power is most effective when it is least visible. In FW practices, negotiating arrangements may allow greater institutional control over teachers' working practices whilst appearing to offer more flexibility.

The negotiation of FW practices, particularly part-time arrangements, may influence or impact the hierarchical status of individual and groups of teachers. Weber's theories on social stratification provide a framework to understand the social hierarchies within schools (King, 1980). He suggests that class, status and power influence individuals' positions within society. Similarly, Bourdieu's concept of field, habitus and capital help explain how teachers with greater social or cultural capital might negotiate more favourable FW arrangements (Eacott, 2010). Both Bourdieu and Weber identify a reciprocal relationship between social structures and power.

Understanding this relationship may shed light on the influences of FW on teachers. For example, examining links between FW and status may reveal connections between FW arrangements and teachers' professional identities and their career trajectories. Considering Foucault's concept of normalisation (Bevir, 1999), understanding social stratification can help explain the process of normalisation, where some behaviours, such as facilitating FW for leadership roles, are marginalised while others are promoted. This normalisation is a form of power, promoting conformity to societal norms.

The interplay between power dynamics and institutional structures can be examined further by considering Foucault's work on surveillance (Bevir, 1999). While this concept originated in prisons and has been applied to surveillance of students in schools, I extend the analogy to the surveillance of teachers. Through meetings, timetables, lesson observations, policies and cultures of on-site working, there is a form of surveillance through the scrutiny of teachers' working practices.

Foucault links surveillance to self-imposed discipline but also identifies the potential for resistance by teachers (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017). There is a tension in this argument. FW arrangements may reduce surveillance, lessening conformity to institutional expectations with unknown effects on resistance. However, limited workplace flexibility may be seen by teachers as a form of power exerting overt control over their work, promoting resistance. Exploring surveillance of teachers and power dynamics in schools may further understanding of the risks and opportunities of FW within schools as institutions.

In summary, schools function as complex institutions where power is often mediated by hierarchical structures and formalised procedures. Foucault's concept of governmentality indicates that school leaders may use policies and practices to shape the behaviours and attitudes of teachers. Weber's insights into bureaucracy further illuminate the organisational dynamics within schools, revealing how standardised processes can both facilitate and constrain FW arrangements. Additionally, Bourdieu's theories on social stratification and capital offer valuable perspectives on how teachers' social positions influence their ability to negotiate such arrangements. This multifaceted analysis of institutions highlights both overt and subtle forms of power and control in understanding the implementation and impact of FW practices in schools. By examining these dynamics, a deeper appreciation of how institutions shape the experiences and opportunities of teachers and leaders may be revealed.

3.5 Methodologies and Positionality

The methodologies, concerning the choice of approach to the enquiry (Grix, 2002), are underpinned by the relativist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. As a result, the importance of understanding the experiences, motives and perceptions of participants is a key priority (Corbetta, 2003). Qualitative methodologies are associated with interpretivist

research, promoting empathetic inquiry to facilitate an understanding of the multifaceted lived realities of participants (Corbetta, 2003).

Although Corbetta identifies qualitative research techniques as critical to develop the desired understanding of participants advocated by interpretivist researchers this does not mean that methodologies must be confined to them. Indeed, Weber employed quantitative alongside qualitative methodologies, acknowledging limitations such as subjectivity in social research (King, 1980). Thus, the methodologies, whilst informed by the epistemology, should be appropriate to address the research question.

Mixed methodologies can bridge the philosophical divide between qualitative and quantitative approaches (Gersten, 2013) and facilitate a more pragmatic approach (Biesta, 2012). Aligning with interpretivist aims of understanding the nuanced realities of individuals, a case study methodology can use mixed methods to provide an in-depth exploration of their experiences within a specific context (Yin, 2014).

Positionality and reflexivity are critical considerations in this research, particularly given the use of an insider researcher. Reflexivity is a critical tool for insider researchers to overcome limitations and maximise advantages (Aburn, et al., 2021). Strategies to promote reflexivity are outlined in section 5.1. This proposal recognises there are ethical and methodological challenges associated with insider researchers (Labaree, 2002) and examines these further in sections 5.2 and 5.4.

The research design, process and outcomes will be influenced by the positionality of the researcher. Carrying out research as an insider researcher, may provide unique access and insights into the research setting. When conducted in a setting where the researcher has worked for a significant period, they may be considered a member of the community being studied. Being part of the community being studied, rather than merely accessing it, distinguishes an insider researcher (Byrne, et al., 2015).

Key advantages of the insider researcher include removing barriers to accessing the context being studied and a more nuanced understanding of non-verbal cues and language used by participants (Mercer, 2007). Their contextual familiarity may also inform more insightful questions and generate more meaningful knowledge. Furthermore, researchers have identified greater trust between participants and the researcher, a more truthful

understanding of the culture and context and removal of challenges associated with 'culture shock'.

The insider researcher status may vary within the context of a school, as there may be colleagues who have not worked with the researcher. On the other hand, some relationships with colleagues may transcend professional boundaries, blurring professional and personal identities and interfere with research when carried out by an insider researcher. This reflects the suggestion that to some extent all researchers might be considered insiders and outsiders (Deutsch, 1981) and it is widely accepted that there is a continuum (Mercer, 2007), rather than a dichotomy, between being an insider and outsider researcher.

A range of factors influence positionality, including relationships, gender and power (Holmes, 2020). Whilst some factors such as race, gender and prior experience are mostly fixed, other factors such as personal perspectives may shift during the research process (Aburn, et al., 2021). Strategies to support self-reflection and a reflexive approach can enable researchers to recognise changing positionality and its influence on the research process. Relationships and power are not fixed and will evolve between participants and the researcher during the research process (Holmes, 2020).

In summary, grounded in a relativist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, the chosen methodologies emphasise a deep understanding of participants. By integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches within a case study, the research offers an in-depth exploration of participants' lived realities in their specific context. The importance of objectivity, reflexivity, and positionality for insider researchers is also emphasized.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has integrated Foucault's concepts of discourse, power and institutions with Weber's work on "Verstehen", authority and bureaucracy in the context of examining FW arrangements. It has highlighted the multifaceted dynamics affecting school leaders and teachers, which will be further influenced by issues of identity, capital and stereotypes. Additionally, the chapter has linked paradigms to methodologies and outlined the importance of positionality and reflexivity.

I propose a research paradigm which combines an ontologically relativist and epistemologically interpretivist approach to develop an understanding of the experiences of those within this social construct. Qualitative methodologies will facilitate a deep understanding of the perspectives of individuals, while quantitative methodologies will allow connections and patterns to be triangulated with understanding. This research will draw on the diverse perspectives of educators affected by FW in a secondary school, with a reflexive approach ensuring that the evolving positionality of the researcher is acknowledged and addressed throughout the study.

(3,113 words)

Chapter 4: Research proposal

This research titled: 'A Case Study Exploring School Leaders' Perspectives of Flexible Working: Implications for Teacher Retention and Career Progression in a Secondary School in England.' will contribute to an emerging field examining how FW management influences teacher retention and career development. It aims to provide insights into FW arrangements following societal and technological shifts post COVID-19 (Harland, et al., 2023). Furthermore, the research will provide insights for school leaders responding to changing FW legislation (Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023) and addressing recruitment and retention challenges.

The proposed research seeks to illuminate the range of FW arrangements possible in schools and understand challenges and solutions implementing FW arrangements, from the perspective of both teachers and school leaders. Additionally, the study aims to understand perceptions of the impact of FW arrangements on retention, recruitment, and career trajectories.

The research topic has been refined from the initial, overly broad focus of 'new ways of working' to 'flexible working'. This broader topic, compared to solely 'part-time working', seeks to illuminate models of FW that are not always captured through quantitative methodologies. Informal FW arrangements will be more easily identified as an insider researcher with a profound understanding of the institution of focus (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). However, a caveat is that greater care will be needed to interpret observations objectively and be mindful of 'selective function', as the researcher's values may influence the choice and implementation of methods. By adopting reflexive practice, the researcher will consciously reflect on how their subjectivity might influence the research.

An example of this reflexivity is evident in the evolution of the research title from examining 'risks and opportunities' to 'impact', and then finally to 'implications'. The initial iterations of the title reflected my preconceptions of what the research may uncover. The final title, examining 'implications', is more neutral and is tied to key themes of retention and career progression identified from literature. The focus of this research was inspired by reflections on previous study of change and leadership styles. Working at a secondary school in England, which has undergone significant changes in policy and culture in relation to FW in

recent years, provides me with an opportunity as an insider researcher to develop a deep understanding of the perspectives of both teachers and school leaders in the setting through a comprehensive case study.

My final research questions are:

RQ1: What models of FW have been implemented and enabled in the case study school?

RQ2: How do school leaders perceive flexible working arrangements affecting teacher recruitment and retention?

RQ3: How is gender perceived to influence the career development of teachers with flexible working arrangements?

(440 words)

Chapter 5: Research design

5.1 Introduction

The research is designed as a case study, providing an in-depth exploration of FW by examining actions and perspectives of teachers and school leaders in an English independent secondary school. This approach allows individual experiences in one specific school (Bassey, 2012, p. 157) to be explored. As a small-scale case study seeking deep understanding of participants' perspectives (Shah, 2004, p. 552), this research aligns with the ontological and epistemological paradigm shaping this study's contextual framework. While the continuum between insider and outsider research positionality (Mercer, 2007) is acknowledged, privileged 'insider' positionality of the researcher is expected to enhance the research by facilitating access to participants and contextual understanding (Shah, 2004).

Researcher positionality within the school and its impact on the research process is considered in conjunction with methods for reflexivity. Using memos systematically, as outlined by Aburn et al. (2021), will promote self-reflection throughout data collection and analysis. This focused case study approach, using mixed research methods, will explore institution-specific processes and perspectives. It will develop a deep understanding of the interplay between FW arrangements, teacher retention, and career progression.

5.2 Research methods

Two primary research instruments will be used: semi-structured interviews and a survey. The deployment of multiple research instruments allows triangulation of findings, addressing concerns over credibility of data analysis (Fielding, 2012). However, the study is limited to two instruments, due to the time constraints and resources available for a small-scale study. Semi-structured interviews are expected to generate qualitative data that explores participant perspectives (Coleman, 2012, p. 251), while a survey with a mixture of closed and open-ended questions will capture both quantitative and qualitative data from a broader, more representative sample of the school (Muijs, 2012).

Using convenience sampling, as the research does not seek to be representative of the wider teaching population in England (Muijs, 2012, p. 145), all teachers, including school leaders, will be invited to complete the survey. To ensure higher engagement, the survey will be short and distributed online. Engagement with surveys correlates to time available to

individuals, as well as strength of feelings about the focus of the survey which may skew the data collected (Muijs, 2012, p. 148). Analysis of the survey will be used to amend prepared questions for semi-structured interviews, to examine emergent themes and facilitate triangulation (Fielding, 2012).

Online volunteer sampling will be used to identify a potential group of interviewees, with purposive sampling employed to select participants based on predefined criteria (Coleman, 2012, p. 259) to prevent bias during sampling. Participants will volunteer separately to the survey to maintain its anonymity. If necessary, stratified random sampling will obtain an unbiased sample of interviewees (Muijs, 2012) should there be too many volunteers and snowball sampling will be used if it is necessary to recruit additional participants.

5.2.1 Survey

Semi-structured interviews are a flexible research tool and facilitate deep understanding of individuals and context. However, they are time-consuming and only capture the perspectives of a few individuals, limiting generalisations and insights when used in isolation. A survey is a complementary research tool to interviews (Muijs, 2012).

This survey will provide a more representative dataset by enabling rapid data collection from all teachers. Standardised questions will allow for comparisons across participants, with differences between different subgroups being quantifiable. The survey (Appendix C) will be piloted with four colleagues, and modifications will be made based on feedback to ensure independent comprehensibility (Muijs, 2012). Two colleagues from the administration who have experience in proof-reading and testing whole school surveys and two teachers from partner schools who are familiar with the schooling context will be used for the piloting phase.

To maximise response rates, the survey will be distributed early in the school year, kept open for a month and be followed by reminder e-mails. By scheduling the survey early, significant peaks in workload and conflicts with FW contract negotiations in the spring and summer term will be minimised. Clarity sharing the purpose of the survey will seek to overcome any survey fatigue and anonymity will be ensured to promote participation and candid answers (Muijs, 2012).

Microsoft Forms, a GDPR compliant platform already used by the school, will host the survey, harnessing the benefits of rapid data analysis, low cost and rapid dissemination (Cohen, et al., 2017). The platform's adaptive questioning will allow for customised questions for pre-selected subgroups (Muijs, 2012). This will ensure the survey's relevance to different subgroups, allowing specific RQ's to be addressed. Specific questions exploring the experiences of those who have taken family leave will seek to address RQ3, given the links in the literature between gender, family caring responsibilities and FW and career trajectories (Booth, et al., 2021).

To respond to the RQ's fully, both open and closed-ended survey questions will be used. Closed-ended questions will facilitate faster completion, associated with higher response rates (Muijs, 2012). The survey will identify models of FW implemented in the last three years to address RQ1. The restricted timeframe will remove the temporal effects of modified working conditions during the COVID pandemic. However, additional questions will address a larger timeframe, aligning with Foucault from the contextual framework of the importance of understanding the contextual histories of institutions (Bevir, 1999). This approach seeks to establish a more comprehensive understanding of attitudes towards FW practices.

Further insights into attitudes will be captured by participants responding to a series of opinion statements using the five-point Likert scale. Whilst an increase in response points may increase reliability and validity (Kusmayono, et al., 2022), using a five-point Likert scale aligns with pre-existing evidence in the field of FW in schools (Tersago, 2022). Aligning with the interpretivist epistemology to better understand participant perspectives, Likert scales capture the extent of participants agreement to statements relating to FW.

Acquiescence response bias will be minimal in responses to the opinion statements, due to the inclusion of positive and negative statements. This overcomes the tendency of participants to select responses of agreement irrespective of the statement (Primi, et al., 2019). The statements devised will provide perceptual insights for RQ2 and RQ3. For example, the extent different groups agree or disagree with "I am confident my gender would not affect a FW request for myself" and "FW limits career progression at this school" will provide evidence for RQ3 by examining the links between gender, FW and career progression. Additionally, comparing responses by teachers and school leaders to "Teachers

would be more likely to remain in the profession long term if they are able to work flexibly” will inform RQ2 by exploring retention and school leaders’ perceptions.

Participants will have the opportunity to express themselves in their own voice through open-ended questions relating to the RQs. These will be option and placed following closed-questions in the survey to avoid them can negatively affect response-rates by being more time consuming and risking anonymity (Muijs, 2012). These open-ended questions are included with the aim of capturing further insights and allow for unanticipated themes to be identified and explored further through interviews.

5.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews will gain deep insights into individual experiences and perspectives. They will be framed by a list of guiding topics (Appendix D) and open-ended questions to stimulate meaningful exploration of individual perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). By enabling participants to elaborate their ideas, more nuanced insights will be derived than using other research tools (Coleman, 2012). Despite the time constraints of interviews, the flexible format will allow exploration of unexpected themes and deeper understanding of context and individual experiences to form (Mercer, 2007), aligning with the interpretivist paradigm framing this research.

Practicalities conducting, transcribing, and coding interviews will limit their number, and therefore will not provide representative findings for all teachers in the case study school. However, this research tool does not seek such representation. Instead, the aim is to provide deep insights into lived experiences (Booth, et al., 2021) which can then be triangulated with broader findings from the survey.

A sample of teachers and school leaders will be interviewed. Time constraints, as well as the number of willing participants, will limit the number of interviews conducted. However, the research design seeks at least three interviews with teachers with formalised FW arrangements, plus three interviews with school leaders who have experience either managing teachers with FW arrangements (Heads of Department or Heads of Year) or negotiating FW arrangements (Assistant and Deputy Heads).

Insights from both teachers and school leaders will provide diverse perspectives of the models of FW facilitated in the case study school to address RQ1. While teachers may offer

opinions about the impact of FW on retention, interviews with school leaders exploring their perspectives of FW in relation to recruitment and retention will directly support analysis for RQ2. On the other hand, the experiences of teachers who have, or have had, formalised FW arrangements during their careers will be critical in addressing RQ3.

The flexibility of semi-structured interviews will facilitate the generation of knowledge between interviewer and interviewee. To generate knowledge and meaning from semi-structured interviews, the importance of rapport and trust between the participant and interviewer has been identified (Mercer, 2007). To promote rapport and facilitate observations of visual cues (Coleman, 2012) interviews will be conducted in person where possible. Audio recording, with participant permission for the purposes of transcription (Brown, 2023), will allow interviewer and interviewee to engage without the need for note taking and facilitate a more informal exchange.

Power differences between the researcher and teachers may affect the approaches to data collection, particularly for semi-structured interviews for which the richness of the data collected has been linked to the rapport and relationship between interviewees and interviewers (Shah, 2004). Whilst a senior leader interviewing other senior leaders may elicit more forthright insights; the opposite may occur when interviewing teachers. As noted by Mercer (2007), the relationship between the researcher and participants may be influenced by the power relationships between them. These power challenges may be mitigated by the approach of the researcher and their working relationships with colleagues. Furthermore, the culture within the proposed school promotes candid and open discourse with limited fear of recourse. This institutional knowledge is an example of the advantages of insider researchers who approach the research context with a greater understanding of culture (Holmes, 2020).

The positionality of the researcher could influence decisions taken during the research design and data collection phases. Furthermore, it may affect participants preconceptions of the researcher's opinions and potential biases on the research topic, influencing their engagement with the interview. While identities and relationships may evolve throughout the research for participants and the researcher (Mercer, 2007), the researcher's positionality in terms of gender and career history in terms of FW are fixed. Whilst there may be a temptation to share perspectives and experiences to break down barriers and

develop common ground, the researcher will not share personal opinions on FW during interviews and generally with colleagues at the school throughout the planned research. This is because the neutrality of the interviewer should be maintained as far as possible to preserve the integrity of the data collected (Mercer, 2007).

The integrity of data collection and analysis will be facilitated using transcription software to save time. The transcription will be checked by the interviewer, with interviewees also being given the opportunity to check the transcription for accuracy. These steps will be taken to assure the validity of the interview transcripts prior to thematic analysis.

5.3 Analysis

The data methods chosen will increase validity of findings, acknowledging they are limited to the case-study school. This will be sought through comparative analysis of quantitative data patterns derived from closed-ended questions with thematic analysis of open-ended questions and interview transcripts (Chong, et al., 2024). Completion of the survey will be self-selecting and likely to attract individuals with polarised views on FW (Muijs, 2012).

These may skew the data set if the data set is small due to low response rates. Triangulation is crucial for credibility, particularly with small data sets (Fielding, 2012). The number of staff with FW arrangements, or in leadership roles, will be too small for statistically significant findings, so subgroup analysis will provide topics to explore further during interviews.

Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended questions can be challenging to analyse due to the quantity of information to interpret. Thematic analysis is a flexible research tool to address this challenge (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By simplifying data into meaningful codes, themes will be identified, and a richer understanding will be developed (Peel, 2020).

However, it is time intensive and requires researchers to repeatedly move between data and analysis throughout data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This study will use Peel's (2020) six-step model for thematic analysis. An inductive for open-ended survey responses will identify trends from the 'bottom up' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theoretical approach will link thematic analysis to the RQs in interview transcript analysis. Reflexive review of analysis choices will help maintain consistency, though researcher assumptions and values will influence theme determination (Peel, 2020).

5.4 Ethics

The principles of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) are a framework for ethical considerations throughout this research. The research design and ethical considerations have been reviewed using the Open University Ethical Appraisal Form (Appendix E). Prior to data collection, ethical approval will be obtained from the affiliated university and the gatekeeper of the study, the headmaster of the case-study school. Informed consent will be gained at the outset of data collection (BERA, 2018) by sharing ethical consent forms (Appendix F) and letters (– **Interview volunteer consent and assent form**

This includes the questions from the E822 INTERVIEWS CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM. Below are draft volunteer form questions generated in Microsoft Forms. They can also be found online using this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/bYLZzjnRDL>

Interview volunteer form, including E822 consent and assent form

Prior to volunteering for interview, please ensure you have read **E822 Information letter for adults (aged over 18): Interviews.**

Thank you for volunteering to take part in interviews to extend this research into flexible working.

There are two parts to this form. The first is the E822 Interviews Consent and Assent Form. The second is to share background information and indicate availability to be interviewed.

This information will be stored securely and will only be used for data analysis purposes. By volunteering to take part in an interview, you are agreeing for an audio transcript of the conversation to be recorded. This is solely for the purposes to ensure accuracy of transcription. Recordings will be deleted upon your verification of the transcript.

Transcripts will be anonymised and use pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

All participants have the right to withdraw at any time.

* Required

E822 INTERVIEWS CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM

Please note, you must be over 18 years of age to participate.

Please indicate YES or NO for each of the questions below.

The form closes on 10 November 2024.

1. Have you read (or had read to you) the information about this interview? *

Yes

No

2. Has someone explained this interview to you? *

Yes

No

3. Do you understand what this interview is about? *

Yes

No

4. Have you asked all the questions you want? *

Yes

No

5. Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand? *

Yes

No

6. Do you understand it is OK to stop taking part at any time? *

Yes

No

7. Are you happy for the interview to be audio recorded? *

Yes

No

8. Are you happy with how your data will be stored? *

Yes

No

9. Do you understand that your and any other real names as well as any identifiable information will be removed from what will be shared after the interview? *

Yes

No

10. Are you happy to take part? *

Yes

No

11. If any answers are 'no' you can ask more questions. But if you **don't** want to take part, please let me know and **don't** type your name in the space below.

If you **do** want to take part, please type your name and today's date as a digital signature.

*

Background information

The information provided in this section will be used for the purposes of data analysis.

12. What best describes your role in the school? *

Administrator/Support staff

Teacher

Teacher with invitational leadership role. eg assistant head of year.

Middle Leader eg Head of department/Head of year

Senior Leader

Prefer not to say

13. What best describes your current working arrangements? *

Full time

Part time

14. Optional: Have you have any other formally agreed flexible working arrangement in place in the last three years? Select all which apply from the list below.

Home/remote working

Job share/Split role

Flexitime/time in lieu

Staggered hours

Phased retirement

Compressed hours

Sabbatical

None

Other

15. Optional: Have you used any temporary or ad-hoc flexible working arrangements at this school in the last three years? Select all which apply from the list below.

- Personal/family days
- Home/remote working
- Flexitime/time in lieu
- Staggered hours
- None
- Other

Appendix G) with participants. These outline the purpose of the research and the procedures for participants rights to withdraw at any point without any adverse professional or personal implications (Gallagher, 2009). A summary of the approach to ensure anonymity of participants will also be included. With participants confirming consent digitally there will be a central log of consent. To enhance ethical considerations a summary of the ethical consent forms will be shared at the outset and close of both interviews and surveys.

The privacy and dignity of interviewees will be addressed by providing an environment in which the interviewee's feel secure (Busher & James, 2012). The timing and locations will be mutually agreed, with locations evaluated for personal safety, ethical considerations and recording feasibility (Brown, 2023). A priority will be identifying locations where the interviews cannot be overheard (Busher & James, 2012), and hierarchical differences might be minimised. Neutral spaces, such as the school meeting room, will be made available.

Participants will review interview transcripts to approve the data captured. This process of review ensures transparency with participants (BERA, 2018) and mitigates bias in the researcher's interpretations, increasing the credibility of the study (Norris, 1997). To promote confidentiality, responses to survey open-answer questions which identify respondents in any way will be redacted prior to data analysis, and all names, including the interviewee's, will be anonymised using codes in interview transcripts.

Online storage secured with two-factor authentication will be used for all data collected. The primary data will be deleted upon completion of the research. This complies with the legalities of the Data Protection Act (1998), GDPR and BERA guidelines (2018) requiring security and transparency regarding the use, storage and sharing of personal data.

As well as personal data, personal relationships are a key ethical consideration, particularly between the researcher and the participants. As the proposed research would be carried out by a member of the senior leadership team of the case study school, the power differences between school leaders and teaching staff should be considered (Hatcher, 2005). The use of online, anonymous surveys and selecting interviewees from a group of volunteers will be steps taken to ensure participation is free from coercion. Rewards will not be given for participation, ensuring participation in the research project is self-determined (Gallagher, 2009).

The insider role of the researcher is an ethical consideration, particularly for interviews. The duality of the researcher being a senior leader in the case study school makes it impossible to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality (Busher & James, 2012). Following BERA's guidelines to address duality by making the researcher role very explicit (BERA, 2018), any teachers managed directly by the researcher will be excluded from being interviewed.

The research proposal has been informed by guidance from BERA (2018), Busher and James' ethical framework (2012), completion of the Open University 'Becoming an Ethical Researcher' course, and best practice identified from literature. Ethical considerations for participants including consent, right to withdraw, privacy and anonymity have been identified and incorporated into the research design. Additionally, both laws and ethics of data collection, storage and sharing have been addressed, although laws may change during the research process which require adjustments to be made. Furthermore, power dynamics and the duality of the insider researcher will need to be monitored alongside any other emergent ethical issues. In order to maintain high ethical standards ethical checkpoints will be included during data collection and analysis to ensure planned reflexivity for the research approach to respond to any ethical issues (Gallagher, 2009).

5.5 Conclusions

The research design has been developed to align with the objectives of exploring FW arrangements in the educational settings. The case study approach will facilitate the research to explore the unique experiences of school leaders and teachers, providing rich contextual insights.

The duality of the insider researcher has been identified, highlighting the importance of reflexivity for the integrity and objectivity of the study. The research methods of semi-structured interviews and a survey are suited to capturing the nuanced perspectives of participants, providing a robust framework for analysis. The qualitative and quantitative data will generate a rich landscape of individual experiences and allow limited generalised patterns to be identified.

Ethical considerations have been carefully integrated into the research design, ensuring that the study respects the rights of all participants. In so doing, this chapter has laid a solid foundation for the investigation of the complex and evolving dynamics of FW arrangements in secondary schools.

(2980 words)

Chapter 6: Narrative critical reflection

The reflection grid (Appendix A) charts key reflections completing this dissertation. In this postscript I also consider how writing this dissertation, as well as my study of E811 and E812, has contributed to my knowledge and understanding of leadership in education, my skills critically analysing academic papers to form an argument, and my ability to design a small-scale research project.

Studying how leaders promote agency instilled a curiosity in the many forms of power and leadership evident in schools. Grounding this dissertation in the work of Foucault and Weber, as well as drawing on Leithwood's model of transformational leadership is just one example of how my knowledge of power and leadership theories have developed.

Furthermore, I have drawn on my previous study of personalising staff support and the importance of trust in transformational leadership to inform my understanding of the influence of trust, culture and personalisation for school leaders supporting FW in schools.

When reviewing the literature on FW in schools I found integration of critical evaluation of research articles into my writing challenging. The advice from my tutor to ensure my voice permeated my writing by using shorter sentences to introduce my arguments and then follow with literature to support them helped significantly. I have found this has transcended my academic writing to my professional practice, helping me to justify my thoughts and proposals within the senior team more effectively.

Engaging critically with qualitative research methods was another personal challenge. My background as a biochemist meant I had greater experience with quantitative analysis and a scientific method approach to research. However, selecting an interpretivist approach for both my E812 small-scale research project and the research proposal for this dissertation, reflects how my perspectives have changed.

Developing a research proposal which was explicitly small-scale required several attempts, with useful feedback to review my approach further from both TMA's. Writing the conceptual framework was pivotal in my development. Examination of key theorists led me to appreciate the nuances within an organisation which may only be revealed through a case study. By limiting my research methods and considering the practicalities of implementation I was finally able to reduce the breadth of my research aims. Whilst I

discuss triangulation of findings to increase credibility, I also appreciate the truth of the lived experience of one individual and the value exploring their perspectives has in developing deep understanding of phenomena in society.

Although progress through the course has not always followed the timelines I initially planned; I found my planning skills improved significantly as I wrote the dissertation. Including time to review, edit and redraft my work was invaluable. I also developed confidence to seek advice from my tutor more readily. I was grateful for efficient responses to my questions, which resulted in rapid progress.

Choosing to start studying for this masters at the start of school lockdowns and my second maternity leave was a temporally significant time societally and personally. Overall, I am thankful I invested the time in developing these research skills and understanding of leadership. I am heartened that the proposal stands to instigate further discussion for developments in my school and hope to uncover insights into my research questions in the future.

(536 words)

References

Aburn, G. E., Gott, M. & Hoare, K., 2021. Experiences of an insider researcher - interviewing your own colleagues. *Nurse Researcher*.

Adams, L. et al., 2023. *Working lives of teachers and leaders - wave 1*, s.l.: Government Social Research, Department for Education.

Andrews, J., Hunt, E. & Khandekar, S., 2023. *Education priorities in the next general election*, s.l.: Nuffield Foundation & Education Policy Institute.

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

Bassey, M., 2012. Case Studies. In: A. Briggs, M. Morrison & M. Coleman, eds. *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management*. s.l.:Sage Publications, pp. 155-169.

BERA, 2013. *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fourth edition*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018-online> [Accessed 05 12 2021].

BERA, 2018. *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fourth edition*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018-online#privacy> [Accessed 01 08 2024].

Bevir, M., 1999. Foucault, Power and Institutions. *Political Studies*, 47(2), pp. 345-359.

Biesta, G., 2012. Mixed Methods. In: *Research Methods and Methodologies in Education*. London: Sage, pp. 147-162.

Bonner, A. & Tolhurst, G., 2002. Insider-outsider perspectives of participant observation.. *Nurse Res.*, 9(4), pp. 7-19.

Booth, J. et al., 2021. MidCareer Teachers: A Mixed Methods Scoping Study of Professional Development, Career Progression and Retention. *Education Sciences*, 299(11), pp. 1-33.

- Braun, V. & Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77-101.
- Brown, S., 2023. Where are the part-time women teachers in senior school leadership: Inequalities, tensions and timescapes?. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, pp. 1-15.
- Burge, P., Lu, H. & Phillips, W., 2021. *Understanding Teacher Retention: Using a discrete choice experiment to measure teacher retention in England*, Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.
- Busher, H. & James, N., 2012. The Ethical Framework of Research Practice. In: A. R. Briggs, M. Coleman & M. Morrison, eds. *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 90-104.
- Bush, T., 2013. Leadership Development. In: T. Bush, ed. *Leading Professional Practice in Education*. London: Open University & SAGE Publications Ltd., pp. 240-254.
- Butler, J., 1988. Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. *Theatre Journal*, 40(4), pp. 519-531.
- Byrne, E., Brugha, R. & Clarke, E., 2015. Peer interviewing in medical education research: experiences and perceptions of student interviewers and interviewees.. *BMC Research Notes*, 8(513).
- Cho, J. & Trent, A., 2006. Validity in qualitative research revisited. *Qualitative Research*, 6(3), pp. 319-340.
- Chong, S. W. et al., 2024. Teacher recruitment and retention in schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas in England - review of practice. *Education Endowment Foundation*.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K., 2017. *Research Methods in Education*. 7th ed. s.l.:Routledge.
- Coleman, M., 2012. Interviews. In: A. Briggs, M. Morrison & M. Coleman, eds. *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management*. s.l.:Sage Publications, pp. 250-265.

Corbetta, P., 2003. Paradigms of social research. In: *Social Research: Theory, Methods and Techniques*. s.l.:SAGE Publications, Ltd, pp. 8-29.

Creswell, J. W., 2013. *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Davies, B. & Davies, B., 2012. The Nature and Dimensions of Strategic Leadership. In: M. Preedy, N. Bennett & C. Wise, eds. *Educational Leadership: Context, Strategy and Collaboration*. London: Open University & SAGE Publications Ltd., pp. 83-95.

Department for Education: IFF Research, 2020. *The School Snapshot Survey: Winter 2019, 2: Workforce*, s.l.: s.n.

Department for Education, 2021. *Case Study: United Learning*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/united-learning>
[Accessed 02 June 2024].

Deutsch, C. P., 1981. The behavioral scientist: insider and outsider.. *Journal of Social Issues*, 37(2), pp. 172-191.

Doherty, J., 2020. A systematic review of literature on teacher attrition and school-related factors that affect it.. *Teacher Education Advancements Network Journal*, 12(1), pp. 75-84.

Eacott, S., 2010. Bourdieu's strategies and the challenge for educational leadership. *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice*, 13(3), pp. 265-281.

Edgerton, J. D. & Roberts, L. W., 2014. Cultural capital or habitus? Bourdieu and beyond in the explanation of enduring educational inequality. *Theory and Research in Education*, 12(2), pp. 193-220.

Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023, c. 33. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/33/2024-04-06>
[Accessed 02 07 2024].

Fielding, N. G., 2012. Triangulation and Mixed Methods Designs: Data Integration With New Research Technologies. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 6(2), pp. 124-136.

Gallagher, M., 2009. Ethics. In: *Researching with children and young people: Research design, methods and analysis*. London: SAGE, pp. 11-62.

Gersten, R., 2013. The Two Cultures of Educational Research?. *The Elementary School Journal*, pp. 139-141.

Gibson, S. et al., 2019. *Exploring flexible working practice in schools*, London, UK: CooperGibson Research & Department for Education.

GOV.UK, 2024. *School Workforce in England: Reporting Year 2023*. [Online] Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>

Greenhalgh, T. et al., 2005. Storylines of research in diffusion of innovation: A meta-narrative approach to systematic review.. *Social Science & Medicine*, 61(2), pp. 417-430.

Grix, J., 2002. Introducing Students to the Generic Terminology of Social Research. *Politics*, 22(3), pp. 175-186.

Harland, J., Bradley, E. & Worth, J., 2023. Understanding the factors that support the recruitment and retention of teachers - review of flexible working approaches. *Education Endowment Foundatio*, p. 16.

Hartley, D., 2007. The Emergence of Distributed Leadership in Education: Why Now?. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 55(2), pp. 202-14.

Hatcher, R., 2005. The distribution of leadership and power in schools.. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 26(2), pp. 253-67.

Hockey, J., 1993. Research methods - researching peers and familiar settings. *Research Papers in Education*, 8(2), pp. 199-225.

Holmes, A. G. D., 2020. Researcher Positionality - A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(4), pp. 1-10.

Hulme, M., 2023. The Supply, Recruitment, and Retention of Teachers. In: *The Palgrave Handbook of Teacher Education Research*. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, pp. 35-49.

Jerrim, J. & Sims, S., 2019. *The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018*, s.l.: UCL, Institute of Education & Department for Education.

- Joshi, A., Kale, S., Chandel, S. & Pal, D., 2015. Likert Scale: Explored and Explained. *British Journal of Applied Science and Technology*, 7(4), pp. 396-403.
- Judge, T. et al., 2010. The relationship between pay and job satisfaction: A meta-analysis of the literature. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Volume 77, pp. 157-167.
- King, R., 1980. Weberian Perspectives and the Study of Education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 1(1), pp. 7-23.
- Kusmayono, I., Wijayanti, D. & Maharani, H., 2022. Number of response options, reliability, validity, and potential bias in the use of the likert scale education and social science research: A literature review.. *International Journal of Educational Methodology*, 8(4), pp. 625-637.
- Labaree, R. V., 2002. The risk of 'going observationalist': negotiating the hidden dilemmas of being an insider participant observer. *Qualitative Research*, 2(1), pp. 97-122.
- Langer, J., 2022. Bureaucracy and the Imaginal Realm: Max Weber, Rationality and the Substantive Basis of Public Administration. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, Volume 5, pp. 122-134.
- Lawrence, T. B. & Buchanan, S., 2017. Power, Institutions and Organizations. In: R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T. B. Lawrence & R. E. Meyer, eds. *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 477-506.
- Leithwood, K. et al., 2006. *Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership.*, London: Department for Education and Skills.
- Leithwood, K. & Jantzi, D., 2005. A Review of Transformational School Leadership Research 1996-2005. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, Volume 4, pp. 177-199.
- Marsh, H. & Derbyshire, C., 2019. Flexing our Schools. In: V. Porritt & K. Featherstone, eds. *10% Braver: Inspiring Women to Lead Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Martin, K., Classick, R., Sharp, C. & Faulkner-Ellis, H., 2023. Supporting the recruitment and retention of teachers in schools with high proportions of disadvantaged pupils: understanding current practice around managing teacher workload. *Education Endowment Fund*, pp. 1-72.

- Mathou, C., Sarazin, M. A. C. & Dumay, X., 2020. Wither employment protections? Deregulation and the flexibilisation of the teaching workforce in the state-funded sector. *Journal of Education Policy*, pp. 1-23.
- McLean, D., Worth, J. & Faulkner-Ellis, H., 2023. *Teacher Labour Market in England: Annual Report 2022*, s.l.: National Foundation for Educational Research.
- Mercer, J., 2007. The challenges of insider research in educational institutions: wielding a double-edged sword and resolving delicate dilemmas. *Oxford Review of Education*, 33(1), pp. 1-17.
- Merriam, S. B. & Tisdell, E. J., 2015. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. 4th ed. s.l.:Jossey-Bass.
- Mifsud, D., 2017. *Foucault and School Leadership Research: Bridging Theory and Method*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.
- Miller, S., 1990. Foucault on Discourse and Power. *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, Volume 76, pp. 115-25.
- Morrison, M., 2012. Reflection as Research: Using Diaries and Blogs. In: *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management*. s.l.:SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 323-338.
- Muijs, D., 2012. Surveys and Sampling. In: A. Briggs, M. Morrison & M. Coleman, eds. *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management*. s.l.:Sage Publications, pp. 140-154.
- Norris, N., 1997. Error, bias and validity in qualitative research. *Educational Action Research*, 5(1), pp. 172-176.
- Patience, L. & Rose, L., 2022. *Flex Education: A Guide for Flexible Working in Schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Peel, K. L., 2020. A Beginner's Guide to Applied Educational Research using Thematic Analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, 25(2), pp. 2622-2633.
- Phipps, S. & Prieto, L., 2021. Leaning in: A historical Perspective on Influencing Women's Leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, Issue 173, pp. 245-259.

- Pitseo, V. & Letseka, M., 2013. Foucault's Discourse and Power: Implications for Instructionist Classroom Management. *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 3(1), pp. 23-28.
- Primi, R., Santos, D., De Fruyt, F. & John, O. P., 2019. Comparison of classical and modern methods for measuring and correcting for acquiescence. *British Journal of Mathematical and Statistical Psychology*, Volume 72, pp. 447-465.
- Savill-Smith, C. & Scanlan, D., 2022. *Teacher Wellbeing Index*, London: Educational Support.
- Schwandt, T., 1998. Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry. In: N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln, eds. *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Lincoln Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 221-259.
- See, B. H. et al., 2020. Teacher Recruitment and Retention: A Critical Review of International Evidence of Most Promising Interventions. *Education Sciences*, 10(262), pp. 1-45.
- Shah, S., 2004. The researcher/interviewer in intercultural context: a social intruder!. *Educational Research Journal*, 30(4), pp. 549-575.
- Sibieta, L., 2020. Teacher Shortages in England: Analysis and Pay Options. *Education Policy Institute*.
- Soga, L. R. et al., 2022. Unmasking the other face of flexible working practices: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 142, pp. 648-662.
- Spencer, M., 1970. Weber of Legitimate Norms and Authority. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 21(2), pp. 123-134.
- Sutton Trust, 2011. Improving the Impact of Teachers on Pupil Achievement in the UK - Iterim Findings. *Sutton Trust*.
- Taylor, B. et al., 2023. Teacher Quality, Recruitment and Retention, Rapid Evidence Assessment. *Education Endowment Foundation*.
- Tersago, M., 2022. *Developing a whole-school approach to flexible working*, London: Timewise.
- Worth, J., Lynch, S., Hillary, J. R. C. & Andrade, J., 2018. Teacher Workforce Dynamics in England. *National Foundation for Educational Research*.

Yin, R., 2014. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 5 ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Appendices

Appendix A – EMA reflection evidence grid

Category	Feedback received, targets achieved and areas of development worked on	How did this shape my dissertation?
<p>Knowledge and understanding: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to knowledge of current debate and issues in your specific area of focus; drawing out concepts and themes; choosing a focus area for your dissertation; identifying and overcoming ethical issues.</p>	<p>TMA 01 Feedback:</p> <p>‘use a variety of search terms.’</p> <p>‘led by the evidence from research studies’</p> <p>‘you have the kernel of a great topic.’</p> <p>PDP targets:</p> <p>Achieve the badged “ethical researcher” course.</p> <p>Improve understanding of applications of ethics to research by reviewing BERA guidelines and</p>	<p>Identifying a research focus area of professional and personal interest was a daunting initially. The PDP aim to identify a focus area to further my own leadership understanding helped me to rationalise my thinking to three topic areas. I noted these in my research journal: flexible working, school inspections and leadership approaches in international settings. Considering feasibility of the research as a small-scale study and developing my knowledge of a topic of increasing focus professionally I settled on flexible working. Feedback from TMA 01 led me to increase the variety of search terms in Google Scholar and the Open University Library to identify current literature, relevant to English secondary schools. By broadening the search terms and identifying a definition for flexible working I</p>

	<p>ethics sections in research papers.</p> <p>Identify a focus for the dissertation which warrants research and through study will develop or broaden my knowledge and understanding as a leader.</p>	<p>identified a larger body of literature to review and was able to exclude irrelevant literature. This helped to focus the research to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.</p> <p>Completing the ethics course and reviewing the BERA guidelines led me to consider the implications of ethics more critically when approaching Chapter 5. As I was writing Chapter 5 I considered the challenges of the insider researcher particularly and how anonymity would be difficult to achieve. Considerations of ethics practically for research methods, led me to redraft the discussion of methodologies in Chapter 3 to include a critical review of positionality and reflexivity and their influence on the research design.</p>
<p>Critical analysis and evaluation: Targets , reflections or feedback relating to justifying or challenging your personal perspective;</p>	<p>TMA 01 feedback: ‘these are mostly descriptive accounts of chosen literature.’</p> <p>TMA 02 feedback: ‘You have sometimes</p>	<p>The feedback that there was one research paper cited a lot in a draft chapter led me to review my research journal and notes on this paper, as well as other papers I deemed significant in the literature review. I identified that this paper challenges some of my own assumptions, not just about the topic but also about the</p>

<p>interpreting and critically analysing evidence and methodologies from your own and others' research; analysing and evaluating themes and issues; sourcing and critically reviewing a wide range of publications; creating an academic argument using synthesis; comparing and connecting practice and theory.</p>	<p>critically assessed the literature you have read'</p> <p>EMA chapter feedback: 'Be analytical of the research you cite – sample size, respondents used, sampling frame, claims not supported by the evidence, flaws in reasoning. 'there is a lot of citing of this author.'</p> <p>PDP targets: Whilst confident searching literature and identifying themes, conveying criticality and building an argument was a skill which I had identified in my PDP as an area for development.</p>	<p>influence a feminist lens may have on the validity of the research. Reflecting on key pieces of literature let me to expand the section on the literature search to critically analyse their relevance and findings at the outset.</p> <p>I found it challenging to strike a balance between being critical of the literature and use it to build arguments. This was reflected where my use of literature in TMA01 was more descriptive, but more critical in TMA02. Similarly, my tutor encouraged this criticality to feature more in my writing in feedback to my EMA chapter. In particular my use of statistics from literature lacked evaluation. By analysing key pieces of literature at the outset of the literature I sought to drill down into the literature more explicitly, whilst I sought to write critically throughout the dissertation.</p> <p>Creating an academic argument was self-identified early in my PDP as a writing style which I was less confident in, particularly following a year break in study. Advice from my tutor to include my own voice and then support arguments from the literature</p>
--	---	---

	<p>EMA personal reflection: I have reviewed the feedback [from Chapter 2] and used it to inform my writing for Chapter 3, particularly thinking about where references lie within a paragraph and ensuring there is a clear line of argument drawing on my own voice. I am conscious to increase my criticality by drilling into literature in a more analytical way.</p>	<p>was instrumental. It led to me redrafting paragraphs to begin with the argument that had formed during analysis of the literature in my own words and then follow this with the extent to which the literature conveyed this and at times was in conflict with itself.</p>
<p>Links to professional practice: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to: designing and/or applying</p>	<p>TMA 01 feedback: 'decide what are the main issues to identify in the literature and then write open</p>	<p>Following feedback on the feasibility of the study led me to plan a smaller scale research design to be carried out in my own school. This led me to consider challenges in the research design of the insider researcher, but also draw on advantageous such as</p>

<p>research methods; developing ideas from previous research and frameworks; reflecting and making adaptations during the research and writing process; addressing problems in research design; identifying implications for practice and professional debate; challenging your own assumptions; managing workload and personal motivation.</p>	<p>research questions.’</p> <p>‘evaluating new ways of working in secondary schools is very general’.</p> <p>‘you would be able to implement [the research proposal] within a short space of time.’</p> <p>TMA 02 feedback: ‘[the research questions] imply a much larger piece of research’</p> <p>‘This looks bigger than a small research project. It looks sector wide’</p> <p>EMA chapter feedback: ‘here you discuss gender and gender stereotypes. I am sure these are very important yet they do not figure in your title or</p>	<p>being better able to conceptualise how the research may be implemented in practice. Writing a draft of the survey to be used helped to further refine the research design as I considered practical implications to identify volunteers from an anonymous survey.</p> <p>From the outset of TMA 01 I had some misconceptions identifying and clearly outlining research questions. However, as the significant themes of gender, recruitment and retention, and barriers emerged during early EMA drafts, I was better able to identify 3 research questions with clarity. This evolved further as I drafted the research methods and considered how they would provide evidence to address the research questions. Striking a balance to draft sufficiently open research questions whilst avoiding implying overly broad research was considered throughout the drafting of the EMA following feedback from TMA 02.</p> <p>The synthesis of ideas and applying ideas to practice, evolved more significantly when I heeded my PDP goals of maintaining work-life balance.</p>
---	--	--

	<p>research questions.’</p> <p>PDP targets:</p> <p>Maintaining work-life balance and enthusiasm for research were key targets at the outset of the year.</p> <p>As were setting out to keep research journal and study notes and to challenge my assumptions.</p> <p>Finally, I recognised that managing an extended project through small, regular, early deadlines would be crucial to the successful completion of the dissertation.</p>	<p>Regular study led to greater enthusiasm for the project. Initially this was hindered slightly by frustrations identifying relevant literature and research questions, however keeping a research journal to track my thoughts supported development of this. Of course, life does not run in a linear fashion and at times study was impeded by work or life. However, this actually provided further interest and motivation to further my understanding of the topic area given the strong links between flexible working and work-life balance.</p> <p>Drawing on evidence to form arguments was key in challenging my assumptions and I noted my own perspectives evolving as I drafted the EMA. This influenced my understanding of positionality, informing my methodologies discussion further, as I experienced how perspectives may shift during the research process.</p> <p>My increased understanding of leadership from my studies of all three modules of the course, combined with developing a deep and nuanced knowledge of the topic of flexible</p>
--	--	---

		<p>working will directly inform practice in my own setting. Workplace reform has been added as a specific project area to my brief next year, to include a consultation with staff and proposals for the Senior Team to evaluate for implementation in the subsequent year. Furthermore, this proposal has led me to consider the lived realities of individuals and their individual perspectives, as well as how leadership attitudes may influence culture and therefore the actions of those within an organisation.</p>
<p>Structure, communication and presentation: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to using academic style and referencing; presenting, managing and sharing information in different modes; communicating concepts, findings and ideas for</p>	<p>TMA 01 feedback: ‘if there had been more criticality and a clear and unambiguous writing.</p> <p>TMA 02 feedback: There is no need to include so many references. It is not clear which aspects relate to which writers.</p> <p>‘You usefully identified themes</p>	<p>As discussed for critical analysis and evaluation, feedback from TMA 01, TMA 02 and the first EMA chapter draft contributed to developing my academic writing style to convey arguments with clarity. Reflecting on this work and my PDP targets when I proof-read and edited the EMA I improved the quality of written communication by evaluating to what extent I had written what I had intended to convey and whether there were more succinct or clearer ways to write it.</p> <p>I gained confidence following my 1-2-1 tutorial on Chapter 3. I found the</p>

<p>different audiences.</p>	<p>but they should have been explicit sections in this’</p> <p>‘Have short sentence introductions to them, with summing up sentences and then a final conclusion. Structuring your arguments is important.’</p> <p>EMA Feedback:</p> <p>‘Remember to have linking sentences to each section, with concluding points, plus a conclusion at the end of the chapter’</p> <p>PDP targets:</p> <p>Writing to convey an argument with evidence.</p>	<p>literature supporting this chapter the least accessible and was nervous constructing the conceptual framework. Feedback about improvements in my writing style and understanding of the theorists gave me confidence to adopt a similar style as I continued to write, review and refine the EMA.</p> <p>Following feedback that I would often include too many references at the end of sentences, I sought to cite research more precisely. In order to do this I reviewed my reference list to identify relevant papers for each sub-heading within a chapter. I re-read the papers consolidating notes relevant to the theme on one or two pages. When I had reviewed each paper I consolidated the reading into a grid in order to identify themes within the reading to form arguments. This approach was time consuming initially, but led to more a more fluid writing phase. Furthermore, by systematically adding the literature references to the reference function within Word as I was reading, I was more easily able to make in text citations and track the literature.</p>
-----------------------------	---	---

Appendix B – Search Terms

The terms and operators below were used for the literature search in Google Scholar and the Open University Library:

("school leadership" OR "educational leadership") AND ("secondary school" OR "11-18" OR "11-16") AND ("flexible working" OR "flexible work arrangements") AND ("England" OR "UK") AND ("teacher retention" OR "staff retention")

Appendix C – Draft Survey

Below are draft survey questions generated in Microsoft Forms. They can also be found online using this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/wwkxQp0BC>

Flexible working survey

Prior to completing this survey, please ensure you have read **E822 Information letter for participants invited to complete a questionnaire**.

Thank you for agreeing to share your thoughts about flexible working at this school in this short survey which should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

This Microsoft Form has been set to collect results anonymously. The system will not record your name or contact details. Limited demographic data will only be used for the purposes of data analysis

There are questions about you and your working arrangements, your thoughts about current working arrangements and how these could change in the future. If there are any questions which you would rather not answer, please select 'prefer not to say'.

The last four questions are open-ended to allow you to add any thoughts or ideas you have had during the survey more freely.

Primary data collected will be destroyed upon completion of analysis.

Thank you for taking part.

Required

1. What best describes your current working arrangements? *

- Full time
- Part time
- Prefer not to say

2. Have you have any other formally agreed flexible working arrangement in place in the last three years? Select all which apply from the list below. *

- Home/remote working
- Job share/Split role
- Flexitime/time in lieu
- Staggered hours
- Phased retirement
- Compressed hours
- Sabbatical
- None
- Other

3. Have you used any temporary or ad-hoc flexible working arrangements at this school in the last three years? Select all which apply from the list below. *

- Personal/family days
- Home/remote working
- Flexitime/time in lieu
- Staggered hours
- None
- Other

4. Prior to September 2022, have you previously had any flexible working arrangements in place at this school? Select all which apply from the list below. *

- Personal/family days
- Home/remote working
- Part-time hours
- Job share/Split role
- Flexitime/time in lieu
- Staggered hours
- Phased retirement
- Compressed hours
- Sabbatical
- None
- Other

5. Have you taken family leave whilst working at this school? *

- Yes - maternity/adoption leave
- Yes - paternity/maternity support leave
- Yes - shared parental leave
- Yes - parental leave
- No
- Prefer not to say

6. Branched question: Did you change your working arrangements following family leave? *

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

7. What reasons would motivate you to work flexibly now or in the future?
Select as many as you want. *

- Parenting commitments
- Caring commitments (eg for partner, elderly relative)
- Mental well-being
- Physical well-being
- More control over work-life balance
- More time for further training/study
- Time to manage workload
- Less time commuting
- Other

9. What best describes your role in the school? *

- Administrator/Support staff
- Teacher
- Teacher with invitational leadership role. eg assistant head of year.
- Middle Leader eg Head of department/Head of year
- Senior Leader
- Prefer not to say

10. What gender do you identify as *

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

11. What age group do you fit into? *

- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 50+
- Prefer not to say

12. Optional: Do you have any thoughts on how flexible working might effect teachers thinking about joining or leaving the profession?

13. Optional: Do you have any thoughts on how flexible working might effect teachers professional development and future careers?

14. Optional: What challenges do you think face school leadership supporting flexible working arrangements?

15. Optional: How might flexible working affect teachers their schools?

16. Optional: Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share about flexible working for teachers?

Appendix D – Guiding Topics

These will be explored using open questions as prompts and include:

- observed models of FW
- FW as a recruitment and retention strategy
- FW and professional development
- FW and teacher training
- FW and career development
- FW and gender
- FW and school leadership

Appendix E – Ethical Appraisal Form



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 the safety of yourself and your participants.

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.

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.	Student name	Caroline Hosegood
b.	PI	[REDACTED]
c.	Project title	A Case Study Exploring School Leaders' Perspectives of Flexible Working: Implications for Teacher Retention and Career Progression in a Secondary School in England
d.	Supervisor/tutor	Dr Don Bradley
e.	Qualification	Masters in Education
		Masters in Childhood and Youth
f.	MA pathway (where applicable)	Leadership and Management in Education
g.	Intended start date for fieldwork	September 2004



h.	Intended end date for fieldwork	June 2005
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>	England, UK

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)? Yes, the headteacher.	x	
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 The organisation requires a DBS to be held by the researcher.	x	
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 This research does not involve participation by school aged pupils. Details of the aims and objectives of the research and the participants right to withdraw will be shared with all participants completing informed consent forms.	X	
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 non-public places)? If so, have you specified appropriate debriefing procedures? ³		x

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? ¹		x
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? Transcripts of interviews will be made available to participants. The transcripts will be anonymised to protect confidentiality. Audio recordings will be deleted following the approval of transcripts by participants. Permission will be sought for audio recording. If it is not given, the recording will not proceed and notes will be taken during the interview and agreed at the end of the interview.	x	
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? Participants will be advised at the point of seeking informed consent, that they will have the opportunity to approve the transcript of their interview and they will be invited to discuss the outcomes of the research upon completion.	x	
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? Time has been built in to check the survey, which will include review for phrasing which may cause offense. However the research design is not age sensitive given it is aimed at volunteering adults.		x
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? Discussion of colleagues and personal career experiences may be sensitive for some participants. As such, all contributions will be anonymised and participants have the right to withdraw at any point in the research. All primary data collected will be destroyed upon analysis and completion of research.	x	
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?		x
11	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		x
12	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data?		x

If you answered 'yes' to questions **12**, you will also have to submit an application to an appropriate National Research Ethics Service ethics committee (<https://www.hra.nhs.uk/about-us/committees-and-services/res-and-recs/>).

¹ Where participants are involved in longer-term data collection, the use of procedures for the renewal of consent at appropriate times should be considered.

Appendix F – Interview volunteer consent and assent form

This includes the questions from the E822 INTERVIEWS CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM. Below are draft volunteer form questions generated in Microsoft Forms. They can also be found online using this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/bYLZzinRDL>

Interview volunteer form, including E822 consent and assent form

Prior to volunteering for interview, please ensure you have read **E822 Information letter for adults (aged over 18): Interviews.**

Thank you for volunteering to take part in interviews to extend this research into flexible working.

There are two parts to this form. The first is the E822 Interviews Consent and Assent Form. The second is to share background information and indicate availability to be interviewed.

This information will be stored securely and will only be used for data analysis purposes. By volunteering to take part in an interview, you are agreeing for an audio transcript of the conversation to be recorded. This is solely for the purposes to ensure accuracy of transcription. Recordings will be deleted upon your verification of the transcript. Transcripts will be anonymised and use pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. All participants have the right to withdraw at any time.

* Required

E822 INTERVIEWS CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM

Please note, you must be over 18 years of age to participate.

Please indicate YES or NO for each of the questions below.

The form closes on 10 November 2024.

1. Have you read (or had read to you) the information about this interview? *

Yes

No

2. Has someone explained this interview to you? *

Yes

No

3. Do you understand what this interview is about? *

Yes

No

4. Have you asked all the questions you want? *

Yes

No

5. Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand? *

Yes

No

6. Do you understand it is OK to stop taking part at any time? *

Yes

No

7. Are you happy for the interview to be audio recorded? *

Yes

No

8. Are you happy with how your data will be stored? *

Yes

No

9. Do you understand that your and any other real names as well as any identifiable information will be removed from what will be shared after the interview? *

Yes

No

10. Are you happy to take part? *

Yes

No

11. If any answers are 'no' you can ask more questions. But if you **don't** want to take part, please let me know and **don't** type your name in the space below.

If you **do** want to take part, please type your name and today's date as a digital signature.

*

Background information

The information provided in this section will be used for the purposes of data analysis.

12. What best describes your role in the school? *

Administrator/Support staff

Teacher

Teacher with invitational leadership role. eg assistant head of year.

Middle Leader eg Head of department/Head of year

Senior Leader

Prefer not to say

13. What best describes your current working arrangements? *

Full time

Part time

14. Optional: Have you have any other formally agreed flexible working arrangement in place in the last three years? Select all which apply from the list below.

Home/remote working

Job share/Split role

Flexitime/time in lieu

Staggered hours

Phased retirement

Compressed hours

Sabbatical

None

Other

15. Optional: Have you used any temporary or ad-hoc flexible working arrangements at this school in the last three years? Select all which apply from the list below.

- Personal/family days
- Home/remote working
- Flexitime/time in lieu
- Staggered hours
- None
- Other

Appendix G – Survey and Interview Letters

Survey letter



E822 Information letter for participants invited to complete a questionnaire

Dear [REDACTED]

I am currently studying on the Masters module 'E822 Multidisciplinary Dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth' at the Open University in the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, Language and Sport. My studies are being supervised by a personal tutor and I am following research protocols recommended by the University which have been approved by a named supervisor in this setting. I am using a range of ways of collecting information to help answer 'A Case Study Exploring School Leaders' Perspectives of Flexible Working: Implications for Teacher Retention and Career Progression in a Secondary School in England' as part of a small-scale investigation and to share my findings with others for whom the findings will be relevant to changing practice.

I invite you to complete a survey by questionnaire in [REDACTED]. The questionnaire is estimated to take no longer than ten minutes. This is to be completed online, and I would appreciate the return of the questionnaire by 1 November 2024. This has been agreed with the headmaster of this school. Please feel free to ask me any questions about the questionnaire in advance of offering your consent to participate.

Information collected will be de-identified and kept confidential, being stored securely on password protected devices. In the case of paper copies of the questionnaire these also will be kept confidential and responses typed up as soon as possible. The original notes will then be destroyed. If you do not consent to participate, this is absolutely fine: simply do not complete the questionnaire. It is not possible to withdraw your consent because the questionnaires are de-identified and therefore cannot be identified for removal.

If you consent, please complete and return the questionnaire. If you would like more information about the questionnaire before completing it, please contact me on [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

Caroline Hosegood

Interview Letter



E822 Information letter for adults (aged over 18): Interviews

What is the aim of this interview?

The aim of the interview is to gain an individual's perspective on an aspect of education, childhood and youth studies as part of a small-scale investigation for a Masters qualification designed to contribute to knowledge and practice in my chosen area of specialism. This particular interview is designed to help answer 'A Case Study Exploring School Leaders' Perspectives of Flexible Working: Implications for Teacher Retention and Career Progression in a Secondary School in England'.

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?

This interview is part of my studies on the Open University Masters module E822 'Multi-disciplinary dissertation: Education, Childhood and Youth'. On this module I have an opportunity to design a small-scale investigation which will generate findings relevant to and of value to practice settings. The interview has been agreed with my tutor to be an important part of this design to allow me to include the perspectives of selected participants in addressing the above research question. I will be analysing the data collected and reporting my findings in the dissertation I submit to the University as my final assessment for my Masters qualification.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been chosen as your experiences and opinions would be highly valuable in helping to address a question which is considered one which will have value for your setting and others like it.

If I take part in this research, what will be involved?

The interview is intended to last no longer than 30 minutes and a place which I will negotiate with you and others in the setting to be mutually convenient. If there is anyone else affected by the interview, such as a member of staff, they will also have been consulted about when would be a convenient time and permission has been granted from the headteacher. I would like to ask your consent to make an audio recording of our discussion so that I can refer back to what was said more accurately than would be possible just from my notes. If you do not wish to be audio recorded, I will accept your wish, and rely only on my written notes. Only I will have access to the audio recording. I do not need to share this with those at the University or in this practice setting. I will transcribe and anonymise the interview before sharing any part of this with my tutor or it form part of the final dissertation. Your contribution will be recognised by a pseudonym and you will be asked if you would like to suggest what name should be used. Any other real names referred to during the interview will be removed and renamed.

What will we be talking about?

The focus of the interview will be to find out your perspective on flexible working. I can share the questions with you in advance, if you would like.

Will what I say be kept confidential?

Your participation will be treated in **strict confidence** in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). No personal information will be passed from me to anyone else. Your consent forms will be stored safely in our professional setting as agreed with the senior leader overseeing the safe conduct of this research. In the case of the audio recording and my notes of the interview, these will be kept confidential and typed up as soon as possible. However, if you disclose anything during your interview which I consider means that you might be unsafe or have been involved in a criminal act, because this is a safeguarding concern, I will need to pass this immediately to the organizational Designated Safeguarding Officer. The anonymised records of the interview will be stored securely on password protected devices and the original notes and recording will then be destroyed. I will be submitting an analysis of the data collected from the interviews as part of my dissertation submitted as the end-of-module assessment. I also plan to present my findings to relevant audiences. I can confirm that neither you as an individual nor the setting will be identifiable in any of these reports and presentations.

What happens now?

After reading this information sheet, please review and complete the online consent form. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw your consent at any point up by letting me know, until the time I am using your data in my University assessments, June 2025. As soon as you let me know you wish to withdraw, your consent forms and any data collected will be destroyed.

What if I have other questions?

If you have any other questions about the study, I would be very happy to answer them. Please contact me at [REDACTED]