

**More than *just* workload: Factors influencing  
the success and retention of new teachers**

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**Abstract**

This paper outlines research that set out to explore the acknowledged challenge of success and retention in the teaching profession in England. Through listening to early career teachers talk about what they deemed significant, the authors sought to interrogate the influences on success and retention.

The research framework draws from an interpretivist paradigm and seeks to ascertain from a small, focused sample of sixteen individuals, the significant factors that they perceived to influence their experiences in the Primary sector. The research made use of narrative stories (Cousin, 2009) which enabled the researchers to go beyond *what* was happening, to address *why* it was happening and to ascertain *how* the individuals concerned made sense of their experiences.

Within the data sample, eight key factors emerged as significant to the success and retention of the Early Career Teacher (ECT). The authors argue that the data found is significant, as current practice in England focuses on support through the newly developed Early Career Framework (ECF) (DfE 2019). This framework offers support through workload reduction, mentor support and a training package. Whilst this approach may go some way to enhance experiences for our new teachers the data suggests that much wider considerations are relevant. The findings of this research carry implications at all levels: schools, training routes and national policy.

**Key Words**

Initial Teacher Education (ITE); Early Career Teacher (ECT); retention; workload; primary teaching; narrative inquiry.

**Introduction**

The National Statistics Office (NAO, 2017) recognises the current challenge around the retention of staff in the teaching profession in England. Education statistics for 2020 are reported in the School Workforce Census (2021) and show that only 85% of teachers who qualified in 2019 were still teaching one year after qualification. This retention rate has gradually declined since 2011. The stimulus for this research project arose when the teacher retention crisis became a reality for colleagues within the field of Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Faced with the specifics of former students, who were now teachers, the tutors wanted to explore the situation further. The research project aimed to explore why our student teachers, who had met the Teachers' Standards at a high level just a term prior, were now struggling and in some cases leaving the profession.

In England, Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) are often used interchangeably for the purposes of this paper the authors will use ITE. ITE is recognised as the first phase of learning for student teachers who are embarking on a professional ongoing journey of learning teaching and becoming a teacher. Within ITE there are currently numerous routes into teaching. Within all routes, student teachers must demonstrate their competency against the Teacher Standards (DfE, 2012) within a minimum of two settings. This paper specifically relates to new teachers in their first year

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of teaching and is the prime focus of our research. The term Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) although now an historical term, will be evident throughout this paper. The more current term Early Career Teacher (ECT) found in recent literature, is utilised for teachers in the early stages of their professional journey as a qualified teacher.

Literature Review The context: Recruiting and retaining a teacher workforce

The Department for Education (DfE) set out its ambitions for the teaching workforce in the whitepaper Educational Excellence Everywhere (DfE, 2016) aiming to support school leaders to recruit, train, develop and retain the best possible teachers. Yet in 2018, the teaching profession in England is widely reported as being in a recruitment and retention crisis (House of Commons, 2018) with 13% leaving within their NQT year (NAO, 2017). In addition, a National Federation of Educational Research (NFER) report on teacher retention shows that for early career teachers, figures indicate that 85% of those entering teaching remained in the profession after the first year of teaching, a figure that declined to 73% after three years and further worsened to 67% after five years (Worth et al., 2017). This reflects not only a considerable loss of potentially gifted teachers but also an extremely poor return on the investment inherent in the training of these teachers.

The issues over recruitment and retention would not seem to be limited just to the UK. Overall, there appears to be a decline in the attractiveness of the teaching profession across Europe, which is influencing recruitment and retention (European Union, 2013). Teacher retention is a matter of concern in Australia too (House of Representatives Standing committee in Educational and Vocational Training, 2007) which adds evidence to the claim, made by Edge et al. (2017), referring to the fact that teacher supply is a pressing issue for policymakers across the globe. Jones (TES, 2021) argues that reform to raise the status of the profession in England, is required in order to address recruitment and retention post-Covid pandemic. Furthermore, in England, the current policy focuses on attracting individuals into the profession and supporting them to stay in the profession in the early stages of their careers (DfE, 2019a). Additionally, Lough (2019) reports Schleicher who identifies that teacher attrition in England's schools is linked to mistrust in the profession. According to Schleicher (2019), this mistrust creates an overly bureaucratic and accountable workload. However, it is interesting to note that in Finland, teachers are afforded a high level of status because of their education which enables them "to become innovative and professional teachers who are prepared to honour the trust and autonomy given to them by society." (Aspfors and Eklund, 2017, pp.400).

Caena (2014) proposes that ITE is critical to creating the mindset required to sustain the challenges teachers face in the teaching profession. The Carter Report (2015) reviews ITT in England and concludes that there should be a clear emphasis on student teachers being competent at enabling pupils to achieve outcomes linked to learning and well-being. Coker (2017) adds to this by stating that creating confident and effective professionals is a core aim of ITE. The report also indicates the importance of providing support to new teachers. Gorard (2017) suggests that Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) across a variety of training routes claim to be equally satisfied with how their training prepares them for the demands and challenges of the NQT year. This supports the findings published in the Carter Review (2015) which found strengths across the numerous training routes.

Since 1999, a statutory induction period has been central to the support and training given to NQTs in England. The intention of this induction was to 'consolidate and extend the skills learned in their [student teachers] initial training.' (Williams, Prestage and Bedward, 2001, p. 253). The recent consultation on Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) (DfE, 2018) recognises that there should be increased support for ECTs (Early Career Teachers) to aid retention. Now in 2021 in England, there is a statutory two-year induction period with the introduction of the Early Career Framework (ECF). This could suggest a shift in induction practices to focus on continued professional development, with enhanced support for the personal and professional demands of the job. It is interesting to note that discussion about the content and length of the induction period is still ongoing twenty years after its first inception.

**Experiences: transition from ITE student to teacher.**

It is acknowledged that there is a continuing problem in the transition from student teacher to NQT, Bubb (2005) and Williams *et al.* (2005). Veenman (1984) describes how the ideals formed during ITE can be shattered once the practicality of everyday life in the classroom is undertaken. He refers to this as the 'reality shock.' (Veenman, 1984, pp. 143). These challenges can be exacerbated as NQTs, who need to hone their teaching skills and develop their understanding of teaching and learning, struggle to assimilate with the existing practices of their new school context (Haggerty and Postlethwaite, 2012). Du Plessis and Sunde (2017) argue that to resolve this, there is a need for close partnerships based on collaboration between higher education providers and the employing schools to bridge the apparent gap between the student teacher and the reality of the first post.

Caena (2014) recognises the requirement for resilience within the teaching profession to cope with the reality of the job that they encounter. Boyd, *et al.* (2016) also suggest that to manage this reality, qualities of self-efficacy and resilience are required, '...becoming and being a teacher is not simply about developing a set of skills or techniques. Learning teaching is an emotional experience, and success will require you [the student teacher] to strengthen a range of dispositions including self-belief, self-awareness, and resilience.' (Boyd, Hymer and Lockney, 2016, p.2). Le Cornu (2013) suggests that relationships are significant in developing early-career resilience and that this is achieved through mutually formed trusting relationships. However, Haggerty *et al.* (2011) suggest that support must go beyond emotional reassurance to provide challenge for the new teacher. Du Plessis and Sunde (2017) expand upon this by stating, 'The teaching profession needs confident, well-prepared, and well-positioned beginning teachers. Beginning teachers rely on school leaders and colleagues they can trust to guide them through their first teaching experiences' (Du Plessis and Sunde, 2017, p. 146). This suggests a move from competence against Teachers Standards (2012) to an understanding of the complexity of teaching and the need for ongoing professional development.

**Supporting those entering the profession: mentoring and coaching**

In England, new teachers are supported by an identified mentor, a more knowledgeable other or expert, someone who is an experienced teacher themselves with some form of mentoring qualification. Significantly, research suggests that professional discussion is one of the most powerful development tools for NQTs (Williams *et al.* 2001). This discussion is something which requires considerable amounts of time and contributes to a coaching style of mentoring. It is suggested that to successfully support the new teacher there must be a balance between challenge and encouragement (Williams *et al.* 2005). This is claimed to be a key element within a coaching style of mentoring, in which self-belief is vital (MacLennan, 2017). There is a resonance with Coker's (2017) claims about the need for student teachers to harness the unequal power in professional relationships they encounter. Ovenden-Hope *et al.* (2018) also claim that coaching is crucial to enabling new professionals to shape their personal skills, whilst critically reflecting on the practices in their contexts. They recognise that this requires systematic interactions to develop professional reflective practice support, allowing the new teachers to engage with the ongoing honing of their teaching skills in a school context.

According to Haggerty and Postlethwaite (2012), closer attention is required to the school context itself rather than the new teacher's developmental needs in isolation. They suggest that in some schools support can be shallow, focusing on tips and supporting them to fit the expectations of the school context. Ovenden-Hope *et al.* (2018) also focus on wider school context learning when they suggest that professional learning communities are central to '...the development of high-quality teachers with improved self-efficacy and confidence to support their desire to remain in teaching...' (p. 596). They suggest the wider school context requires trusting relationships within a developmental and non-judgemental community to support new learning. It is significant to this paper that the school culture's role is recognised by Bettini *et al.* (2018). They suggest the importance of new teachers being encouraged to draw upon their social networks to support them in managing their workload challenges.

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This includes their school's culture of 'collective responsibility' (Bettini et al., 2018, pp. 114) and regular access to frequent supportive learning conversations with colleagues or mentors.

### **Reducing workload**

More recently in England, there is a flurry of documentation and policy around the reduction of workload to support the recruitment and retention challenges facing the teaching profession (DfE, 2018) and (DfE 2019b). Workload is recognised as one contributory factor influencing teacher recruitment and retention (Barmby, 2006). Interestingly Worth *et al.* (2017) found that teachers are still working longer hours across more intensive periods compared to other professions. Worth et al. (2017) suggest that working intensively over fewer weeks of the year can lead to dissatisfaction with work-life balance and poor well-being amongst the teaching workforce. The National Audit Office (NAO, 2017) offers an explanation for attrition, confirming that workload issues are a significant barrier to teacher retention with teachers being subjected to relentless bureaucratic demands surrounding planning and assessment. The work of Smithers and Robinson (2003) emphasised the significance of workload issues in retention, alongside other factors. This suggests a broader framework of explanatory factors which offers a more nuanced picture of a complex issue, rather than relying on a single causal factor.

This background context was relevant when, in 2018, new teachers contacted their two former Higher Education Institution (HEI) tutors. The NQTs, as they were titled at the time, were seeking support as they were struggling in their first teaching jobs. It became clear that some were contemplating leaving the profession or had already submitted their resignations. This triggered the research focus and our questions emerged:

1. What was happening?
2. Why are former student teachers, who met the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012) at a good or higher level, struggling so much in their first year?
3. What is their story?

### **Methodology**

The research project was shaped from the outset by the emergence of anecdotal evidence, which provided early data and became the stimulus for the research project. Two ITE tutors, working for the same University but on different campuses and different programmes, were contacted by their former students. The new teachers were struggling in their current ECT roles and sought an opportunity to off-load and share their stories. This triggered a response in the tutors and a desire to gain a greater understanding of what was happening during their first year in the job. The tutors became conscious that they were morphing into researchers and that data was already being collected, without having set up a specific research project, ethical permission had yet to be granted. However, as the tutors began to fully embrace the role of researchers, they were encouraged by the work of De Hoyos and Barnes who state that 'all is data ... don't have to wait for interview data.' (2012, p. 18). Furthermore, there was the additional factor of the relationship between the researchers and these new teachers. This was seen as significant because all parties, researchers and participants, shared some common identity. This resonates with Gallias (2008) cited in Clarke and Braun (2013) who refer to the reflexivity of researchers and their participants as well as the importance of common identity.

Within the qualitative paradigm, use was made of a case study methodology. As within many areas of research, case study as an approach is a contested issue. However, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) state that there is no need to secure a single definition for a case study when a definition is in fact not essential. For these purposes, it is accepted that a case study provides a 'unique example of real people in real situations' (Cohen et al., 2018, pp. 376). Thomas (2011) also notes that a case study allows detailed examination of the topic. It is recognised that the research was very much about the people in whom the researchers had invested within their ITE programmes and with whom they had continued

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to maintain a trusting relationship. Therefore, a methodology allowing the consideration of needs, views, and perspectives of real people was central to the approach.

### Methods

Having established the methodological approach, a relevant data collection method was sought. Central to this qualitative piece of research was the desire to seek the authentic voice of the new teachers thus recognising the significance of the notion of insider epistemology (Tangen, 2008). Narrative stories appeared to be the appropriate method to ‘conceive, capture and convey the stories and experiences of individuals.’ (Savin–Baden and Major, 2013, pp. 231). Cousin (2009) expresses that this method allows for data to be viewed holistically and can provide a lens for exploring how individuals make sense of their experiences, ‘Narrative inquiry is particularly useful if you want to know something about how people make sense of their lives through selective stories they tell about noteworthy episodes’ (Cousin, 2009 p 93).

The researchers contacted former students from their university, who were currently new teachers and then invited them to participate. A sample of sixteen students volunteered to participate, eight from the four-year undergraduate QTS programme and eight from the PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education) with QTS school direct programme. As a result, sixteen ‘meetings’ were arranged, eight from each of the researchers’ former student groups. Meetings varied in their form; some were face to face and others were virtual. All students in the sample had met the Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2012) at a good or better level. However, the sample was multi-variant as it was composed of new teachers who: studied on different campuses,

- trained as undergraduates or postgraduates,
- varied in age
- came from a range of geographical locations
- qualified through different routes to QTS

**Table 1.** Participant Information.

Participant	Gender	Programme	Context for ECT employment	Remained in teaching during first year after qualifying
1	male	PGCE School Direct	• Known school • Same year group	Yes
2	female	PGCE School Direct	• Known school • Same year group	Yes*
3	female	PGCE School Direct	• New School • New year group	Yes
4	female	PGCE School Direct	• Known school (placement school) • Across year groups	Yes
5	female	PGCE School Direct	• New school • New year group	Yes
6	male	PGCE School Direct	• New school • New year group	Yes
7	female	PGCE School Direct	• New school • Same year group	Yes
8	female	PGCE School Direct	• known school (placement school) • same year group	Yes
9	female	4-year undergraduate	• New school • New year group	Yes*

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10	female	4-year undergraduate	• New school • New year group	Yes
11	female	4-year undergraduate	• New school • New year group	No
12	female	4-year undergraduate	• New school • New year group	Yes*
13	female	4-year undergraduate	• New school • New year group	Yes*
14	male	4-year undergraduate	• Known school • New year group	No
15	female	4-year undergraduate	• New school • New year group	Yes
16	female	4-year undergraduate	• New school • Across year groups	Yes

The research sample included more female than male teachers, which is in line with the original cohorts. Each researcher had taught one of the sample groups on their respective courses and therefore had prior knowledge and a relationship with them. The relationship between the researcher and previous student contributed to the openness and honesty perceived within the stories.

The research had now become formalised, but it was important to maintain the participant-led approach. In the meetings it was critical that there was an opportunity for the new teacher to talk. To facilitate this one simple, open question was chosen: 'How is it going?' allowing the participants to share their stories, events and issues from their first year in teaching, as *they* chose. This enabled the participants to lead their story and the researchers to listen, to gain insight. It was felt, that by asking a non-value driven question, an authentic, non-directed and genuine voice from the participants would be heard. This adheres to the principle of narrative inquiry 'The only general rule across all contexts is to listen more than to speak' (Cousin, 2009, p100).

Ethical deliberation was considered using the guidelines of the researchers' HEI and informed consent was obtained from all participants with the option to withdraw from the research at any point.

### Analysis

The analysis of the narrative stories was influenced by the work of Cousin (2009) who draws on the work of Savin-Baden (2004), using an 'interactionist – interpretivist approach' (Cousin, 2009, pp.104) with a focus on reflexivity. This approach draws on not just *what is said* but *how it was said*, revealing subtexts within the data. Specific to this work was the staged approach to the data-analysis. This enabled collaboration as the two researchers, created a discourse around the validation of emerging issues. This collaborative process supported understanding the content and sub-text of the stories told. This correlates with Cousin's view that interpretation should focus on 'what the narrator said...' and 'how the story was told.' A developed framework for analysis was created and followed these steps:

- Step 1 - Researcher listening to own sample of former students' stories as they were told (8 each), and taking immediate notes
- Step 2 - Researcher re-listening to own sample of former student's stories, and creating systematic reflective notes
- Step 3 - Researcher listening to research partner's sample of stories and making systematic reflective notes
- Step 4 - comparison and interrogation of reflective notes
- Step 5 - discussion and recording of emerging issues

In keeping with Cousin's (2009) approach to the use of narrative stories, each step of the process and in particular the recording in tabular form and the subsequent discussion, all became part of the analytical process. Mellor (2001) refers to the following four elements of data-analysis: data, writing, exploration, and ideas. He claims they become interrelated in the process of the research methods. Like Mellor, this framework allowed for movement between steps in order to make sense of key messages. It also facilitated the opportunity to hear the other researcher's interpretations of the participants' stories. Sharing the data began to affect the identities and practices of the researchers as ITE tutors. On completion of step 4, the researchers were completely immersed in the data and knew the new teachers' stories. Because of the established links that the researchers had with the participants, there was knowledge about the individual whose story it was and how they were reporting their experiences. The continual discussion and reflection between the researchers (Step 5.) elicited the opportunity for key factors to emerge. The key factors for teacher success were identified by examining the participants' narratives, eliciting the sub-text of what was inferred and through capturing the researchers' discussions.

### **Results**

Some stories reflected success, with narratives focusing on the personal satisfaction found in the teaching profession for those individuals. Others told more distressing stories, referring to their disappointment in the profession and the reality of the role of the teacher. From the stories and the analysis undertaken, the following factors emerged as the ones that were of significance. There were eight factors identified, one of which was workload. However, seven additional significant factors emerged, these were: support, trust, philosophy, values, relationships, disposition and leadership.

### **Discussion**

The results acknowledge that workload is a factor contributing to the success or otherwise of the first year, as noted by Barmby (2006), Worth (2017), DfE 2018 and DfE (2019b). Whilst many of the participants discussed workload, it certainly was not the only factor. Whilst some new teachers referred to strategies of support to manage their workloads stating, *'There was support from my mentor, who was in the same year group and supported me with collaborative planning.'* (Participant 1). Others referred to the 'reality shock' of managing their workload across a sustained period or the responsibility that comes with having your own class, *'[I]...had a bit of a break-down, planning until midnight...'* (Participant 11). However, in contrast to current government rhetoric, their stories indicate that workload was not perceived as the sole or even the key trigger to their dissatisfaction.

Analysis of the participants' stories indicates an interrelated nature between our key factors. It could be suggested that the eight key factors span across the complexity of school systems, with some being located within the person, others within the school and some within the inter-play between both. Amongst the eight significant factors, it is argued that four of them; trust, leadership, support, and relationships are within a similar dimension relating to the connectivity between the teacher and the school context.

Our data suggests that the chosen mentor or coach is key and pivotal to the supporting relationships required to develop reflection within the wider school context. This has resonance with Coker (2017) and Ovendon-Hope et al. (2018) who suggest the need for equal, trusting relationships within a collective coaching school context. This aligns and builds on the work of Bettini *et al.* (2018), Haggarty, and Postlethwaite (2011) who recognise the significance of school culture but further suggests the importance of the whole professional learning community. Whilst Bettini et al. (2018) discuss the notion of school culture facilitating novice teachers to manage their workload, we suggest a much wider importance of the role of the school culture in influencing the success and retention of new teachers. This seems to resonate with Sims and Allen (2018) who claim that working conditions are a crucial factor in teacher retention.

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Du Plessis and Sunde (2017) and Ovenden-Hope *et al.* (2018) recognise the importance of the wider school context and the significance of trust. However, agreeing with Le Cornu (2013) our findings suggest that trust is more significant than merely trusting leaders. Trust is a symbiotic relationship and new teachers are most successful when they are treated as trusted professionals. Within the stories there were specific references to trust having a positive impact on success in the first year of teaching, *'I love it...I became more confident each term...I feel I am trusted.'* (Participant 7). Some of our participants shared specific stories relating to their senior leaders. They recounted how these leaders referred to them as professionals and trusted them to get on with the job. This seemed to help the new teacher to feel secure and thrive in their working environment. There were also some who referred to a lack of trust in those around them, *'I don't have much faith in my mentor...she did a course, but it's her first time I think.'* (Participant 13). This implies a breakdown of professional trust in those chosen to support them in the role of mentor. Others shared events, which did not specifically refer to trust, but they chose to focus on episodes that appeared to undermine their professionalism from the outset. Within the data, there were references to our participants being over observed and judged in the classroom. One participant referred to being formally observed during their first week of teaching, implying a culture of judgement and undermining the new teachers' self-belief in their role.

The significance of leaders was evident in many of the stories heard, making leadership a significant factor. The participants chose to recount incidents involving their leaders. One shared, *'Our senior leaders keep saying you are trusted as professionals,'* (Participant 6) referring to how they were given freedom and flexibility to plan for their pupils. He compared this to the over-scrutiny of his planning which he had experienced in placements during training. Others referred to perceived poor leadership, *'I had no faith in the head teacher; [he] just did not support staff.'* (Participant 3). Within the stories, there were also many accounts about significant changes in leadership. This led to the new teacher feeling isolated, judged, and unsupported. This evidence confirms the points noted by Du Plessis and Sunde, (2017) that school leaders are crucial in facilitating the success of the beginning teacher.

Many of the participants talked specifically about the high level of support they had received through regular discussions with leaders, mentors, and the wider school team, *'My mentor has been very helpful...we had a slot every week where [mentor] pointed out things or shared good practice and tips. [Mentor] guided me through Ofsted. Others in the team have been supportive too.'* (Participant 7). Support clearly emerged as being important to their success. Some had also actively sought support from outside of their school settings and referred to how they had gained useful advice from external networks, online materials or groups, housemates, and family members. Whilst there was clear reference made to quality support, others were quite blunt about the lack of it stating that, *'The school really hasn't supported me.'* (Participant 10). This suggests a need for the new teacher to secure a network of support beyond the professional communities as suggested by Ovenden-Hope *et al.* (2018) and Haggarty and Postlethwaite (2012).

The new teachers referred often to the significance of supportive relationships contributing to their success in a school setting. When relationships were strong, they seemed able to ask for support from several sources. In contrast to this, others referred to a lack of supportive professional relationships and claimed that they did not feel accepted or liked. As a result, this contributed to a lack of self-efficacy undermining the professional skills of that new teacher, *'I felt useless...they just didn't like me.'* (Participant 12). Contributing to the importance of relationships was the fact that a considerable number of the new teachers were already known to their schools prior to them taking up their first post. For example, many of them had completed placements in the school where they went on to be appointed. This appears to have contributed to them being supported and trusted by others in the school, *'I could talk to... [range of colleagues] ... they always made time for me.'* (Participant 16).

It would appear that the four factors: trust, leadership, support, and relationships cannot be just viewed as separate entities. From the analysis it is clear that they are interrelated. For example, when



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leadership is strong, the noted factor of trust appears to flourish. In addition, the data suggests that trust is mutual and thrives best when support is effective. For any of this to occur, it must be underpinned by effective relationships that develop beyond induction requirements.

It is considered that the two factors of values and philosophy can also be linked together, as they are fundamental to the pedagogy and practice of both the new teacher *and* the school. It could be argued that values and philosophy contribute to the new teacher's belief system and their identity as a teacher. The results indicate that where there was disconnect between the school's values and philosophy and those of the individual, this caused significant disillusionment with the role of the teacher and teaching. It was found that where this disconnect appeared most extreme the new teachers were leaving their posts and for some the teaching profession. The stories illuminated some strong moral principles, exposing the tensions between personal teacher values and school practices, policies, or cultures. Some referred to the positive implications when there is a sense of shared values, *'I felt understood; they knew where I was coming from.'* (Participant 5). Others recognised when their personal values did not fit with the school or practices where they were employed. *'The tension between my values for education versus [school leaders'] pressure for outcomes puts me off [teaching].'* (Participant 13). In some ways this can be seen to be connected to Veenman's notion of the 'reality shock' (Veenman, 1984, pp143). Veenman refers to the ideals that trainee teachers can form during their course and how this can be challenged once in the classroom. Our research would indicate that this disconnect is formed not just from ideals but from strong values and philosophy formed during the teacher education programme. This tension of personal values and philosophy is illustrated in one participant's story, which focused on a senior leader challenging the new teacher's impact on pupil progress. When referring to a specific child's lack of progress, the leader referred to a child as 'child 12' not only removing the identity, the name and holistic view of the child but also being unwilling to consider the child's current difficult personal circumstances. This was a pivotal moment in the new teacher's experience resulting in them stating, *'this is not the job I thought it was.'* (Participant 14). Because of this exchange, the new teacher chose to leave the teaching profession.

Many references to personal philosophy for education emerged from the data. One participant claimed, *'...there is something in this school that just appeals [to me].'* (Participant 15) in reference to how they perceived they 'fitted' into the school's ethos. However, for some of the respondents their stories revealed the disillusionment between their personal views of education and the reality of the job. One new teacher stated that the reality is, *'...a million miles from what I thought teaching was.'* (Participant 14). As a result, individuals were left feeling disillusioned or frustrated by this mismatch. Another referred to the pedagogy and curriculum for her class of five-year-old children. She discussed the pressure she was feeling to boost writing results and the expectation to timetable sustained writing daily. She stated it is just, *'wrong, wrong, wrong'* (Participant 13) exemplifying the personal wrangle she was experiencing between her own philosophy for education and school practices or policy. This participant's experiences suggest that she had little autonomy within her classroom and therefore would not be able to develop or thrive in a way that Aspfors and Eklund, (2017) suggest that her contemporary beginning teachers in Finland might do.

Disposition we consider is a unique factor amongst the eight since this would seem to rest solely within the new teacher. Whilst circumstances may challenge or assist the disposition, we suggest that a person's disposition is a factor particular to the individual. This reinforces the work of Boyd *et al.* (2016) and Caena (2014) who refer to the requirement for the teaching profession to have a strong mind-set through self-belief, self-awareness, and resilience. The data seems to suggest the importance of personal disposition, with some individuals being more able to cope with the challenges of teaching and the wider professional expectations in a context. References were made to the impact of the job on the individual, *'It's going well. I am enjoying it and it's not too stressful.'* (Participant 8). In contrast with this Participant 11 who stated, *'I lost my confidence and spent two weeks sobbing.'* Horrifyingly in some cases, as tutors who knew these individuals as students, we were in a position to see the decline in

personal disposition over a relatively short space of time. Our formerly successful trainees were now, in many cases, presenting well-being and health-related issues. Disposition also seems to be presented in the way stories were told, not simply by what was said. Some participants spoke angrily about their experiences, presenting themselves as individuals who had overcome challenges and taken action to change their situations by moving jobs or seeking support. Others were very tearful and crushed by their situation, resulting in extended periods of absence, resignations, and in some circumstances career changes.

### **Conclusion**

Drawing upon the evidence from this research project, it would appear that there are implications for several stakeholders: school staff, policy makers, and those involved in ITE.

It is clear that schools have a crucial role to play in developing new teachers in the profession through strong leadership with appropriately skilled mentors. This aligns with the work of Ovenden– Hope *et al.* (2018) and Bettini *et al.* (2018) who both stress the importance of those on-going coaching conversations which are part of the school's culture. However, there are other more subtle yet imperative qualities, which are vital to the success of the new teacher and beyond. These unmeasurable qualities of trust, support and approachability in relationships are ones that schools must establish and nurture. We suggest that it is these qualities that provide the culture within the contexts that Haggerty and Postlethwaite (2012) recognise as important. It is recognised that this is a challenge for school leaders in a climate of high accountability and performativity.

Those involved in the planning and delivery of ITE should be mindful of their role in developing a teacher's disposition and helping student teachers to develop the resilience required to meet the accepted demands of the profession. Values and a philosophy for education are also matters that ITE programmes and school experiences can shape. ITE providers need to be aware that both student teachers and schools hold a range of values and philosophies and therefore should explicitly raise awareness amongst student teachers of the dilemma that can occur when there are differences. ITE may also have a role to play in advising student teachers when applying for jobs, in order to avoid this disconnect. Closer consideration of these factors may help to bridge the gap recognised by Du Plessis and Sunde (2017) between ITE and in turn support individuals to find a teaching post which is suitable for them.

Current national policy focuses on the recruitment and retention of the teaching workforce. Since 2016, guidance documents have a clear focus on the reduction of workload in order to support the profession. However, it seems that policy has not necessarily led to a change in practice and the evidence from this specific research would indicate that the demands on workload vary from school to school. A further salient point from our research is that workload is only one of eight key factors affecting new teachers' success and that the other factors would appear to have some link to school culture – an issue worth further investigation. Indeed, Damien Hinds, Secretary of State for Education, recognises the role of school culture and is committed to transforming support for teachers (DfE, 2019c). He seems to resonate with our findings when he states,

When their efforts align with the moral purpose that brought them into the profession, when the support and professional development they receive helps them do their job better, when they feel their work supports pupils to progress, then teachers love the work they do (DfE, 2019c, pp.8).

Policy development as revealed in the Early Career Framework (DfE, 2019a) appears to recognise the need for reduction in workload and increased support. However, further investigation is required as to how the more pertinent and critical factors of trust, philosophy, values, relationships, disposition, and leadership identified in this research, are to be addressed within the ECF. This was a small-scale research project; nevertheless, significant, and pertinent data emerged from it. If stakeholders are concerned

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about improving retention and success of the new teacher, then serious attention needs to be given to key factors other than workload.

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